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Contents

Arab Identity, Nationalism and Fragmentation:
Uprisings in the Contemporary Middle East

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How are we to understand the overlapping identities and loyalties made so apparent in the Arab uprisings that have taken place under vastly different circumstances across the contemporary Middle East? Even the most serious observer may experience difficulty in attempting to isolate a comprehensive definition of which countries, regions, and populations justifiably constitute the modern Middle East.

Nevertheless, a historical analysis of the nationalisms found in those Arab states broadly included in popular understandings of the Middle East would seemingly be a logical point of entry. However, a survey of contemporary discourse on the state of nationalism in the Arab world reveals that the majority of scholars, usually acting as outside observers, have concerned themselves with either arguing for--or against--the notion that the Arab world does, or has, constituted a unified homogeneity which lends itself to manifestations of Pan-Arabism in one way or another, be they political, economic, or cultural. Recent and violent adumbrations of longstanding, sometimes pre-Islamic, ethnic and religious differences coupled with the seemingly incontestable theories of globalization and the disintegration of the nation state as a political entity have required scholars to seriously reconsider identity and nationalism in the region.

On the surface, the social cleavages so prominent in the contemporary Middle East may appear to have only emerged following the recent uprisings which have taken place in several Arab countries since 2011.[1] However in reality, the nature of many

of these divisions are pre-Islamic, ethnic, linguistic, even ancient. As such, it is exceedingly difficult to speculate, much less pinpoint exactly when certain forces ignited this current period of apparent discord. We can, however, identify intermittent flashes of divisive conflict being stoked in the region since at least the beginning of the divide-and-conquer methods pioneered by European colonial powers in the wake of the Ottoman Empire. Ethnic and religious minorities further clashed under the neo-colonial methods employed by Arab leaders who, in many instances, replaced and replicated the divisive practices of the proceeding European colonial administrations.[2]

The swift action of autocratic Arab leaders who violently, but largely successfully, managed the seemingly impending clash of minorities in the Levant helped to give purpose to the nation state in this context; namely the protection of minorities. What receives far less attention is the authentic nationalisms, which developed in the process of holding together vastly diverse and divergent nation states. This principle will be further demonstrated through an examination of the Iran-Iraq War. Short-lived and often failed attempts at Pan-Arabism further reveal the surprising strength and resilience of the individual Arab nationalisms, which we will discuss. Indeed, though almost entirely artificial in their colonial inceptions, Arab states have been largely successful in fostering genuine national identities in post-colonial period.

Substantiating such a broad overview of Arab national development will help to frame the contemporary division and social movements at play in the Arab world. Too often, recent discourse regards the violent interaction of various identities in contemporary Arab countries as nothing more than a common case of fragmentation, or as it has been referred to more recently, 'Arab Balkanization.' However, by painting a narrative in equally broad strokes of fragmentation and globalization theory, such discourses have misplaced the nuance they sought to add. The almost schizophrenic fluidity and rapidly evolving internal politics, which

characterizes the political life of Arab, states like Syria, Iraq and Egypt, implores observers not to be sated by essentialist perspectives that seek to neatly, and briefly, explain the complexities of the political transition underway. At the same time, we cannot conceptualize the national identities of Arab states without examining the emerging, or perhaps always present but now empowered, local identities which are defined by ethnic, religious, and ideological lines rather than by the arbitrarily drawn borders.[3]

Such speculation, espoused most heavily in journalistic sources, eagerly envisions a uniform future *for* the region which entails the tumultuous fracturing of Arab states, most of whom have been hostile to American interests and interventionism, into small, and unthreatening, 'statelets' organized according to ethnic and religious cleavages.[4] But, such essentialist, and suspect, assays of Arab fragmentation are of considerable consequence if only because of their remarkable capacity to dictate and steer political discourse and policymakers alike surrounding the region's future.

Dabashi elaborates on the dangerous nature of such conjectural forecasts, arguing that "the shrinking size of the world has made remote political events into household concerns here in the West. In the age of radical contemporaneity and mass media, quick explanations, understandings and solutions are packaged and advertised."[5] Instead of forecasting the disintegration of Arab nation states, or racing to neatly organized but only partial explanations, this paper will explore the hybrid identities and loyalties which have developed from the, often benign, interplay between regional, national, and global bodies. This discussion of misplaced identity in the Arab world will compel an examination of rising subnational entities, and their commensurate cosmopolitan structures.

The abundance of new technologies and institutions, which have enabled greater independence and integration of subnational regions in the global economy, will also be of great significance. The accommodation, and in some cases, infusion of political Islam and other organic structures in the emerging democratic nationalisms will be also considered critically. The concluding portion of this paper will delineate the necessary conditions for the resurgence of the nation state in the Arab world, and explore what implications this response may hold for a supposedly post-colonial era. Lastly, the presence and development of hybrid identities in the process of global integration will be questioned in its relation to resurgent Arab nationalism to demonstrate the resilience and flexibility present in many Arab states.[6]

The merciless and daunting violence of the Syrian Civil War has provided the outside observer with many reasons to fear that relations between minority groups in that country have been shattered beyond reconciliation.[7] Indeed, it is widely understood that the religious, ethnic, and political divisions, which have simmered just below surface of the Arab World for decades have existed for centuries, are now beginning to boil over. On the surface, it seems difficult to imagine any reconciliation, much less a shared national identity prospering between Alawites and the Sunni's who have slaughtered each other in such shocking circumstances. Nevertheless, there is much to be gained from recognizing the inherent ancient and heterogenous nature of the Middle East as George Antonious did as early as 1938 in his groundbreaking and formative work, *The Arab Awakening*.[8]

In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that countless narratives, most of which are journalistic in nature, have emerged to forecast and even predict an inevitable break-up of Arab states into smaller states that are to be defined along ethnic, religious or ideological lines. When compared to the colonial borders which define much of the Middle East, this view may appear to be

sufficiently nuanced, or at least, a less arbitrary conceptualization of Arab identities. And yet, most versions of this narrative call for a radical redrawing of not just Syria, but of the entire Middle East.[9] These sweeping forecasts of a shattered Arab world are perhaps best epitomized by Robin Wright who recently imagined how five Arab countries could break apart into no less than fourteen 'statelets.' It is difficult to not consider skeptically such an audacious view *for* the Middle East, which includes the deconstruction of many states, including Syria and Iraq, which have historically stood as strategic rivals and opponents to U.S. interests in the region. Similarly, it is no secret that smaller, less self-sufficient Arab states would represent a much weaker and easily divided opposition to U.S. intervention in the region. As such, this paper seeks to understand whether these bold predictions are rooted in evidence-based analysis or if they represent little more than opportunistic conjecture. Central to all versions of the Arab fragmentation theory is the disintegration of the nation state, as its ability to suppress rising regional, social, and religious minorities appears to be declining. But the failure of nation state in assuaging and controlling these social cleavages is a global one, which has been brought to prominence by the political fluidity of the uprisings in various Arab countries. Moreover, many of the divisions of the Arab world are ancient and have surfaced in one form or another, several times in recent memory. We need to look seriously at the colonial foundation that the modern Middle East was constructed upon if we are to understand the present.

An eternal melting pot, the Middle East encompasses countless peoples, faiths, and histories. One of the longest-running and most recent empires in the region, the Ottoman Empire, collapsed in the early twentieth century after many years of hemorrhaging territory and influence. Curiously, much of the failed Turkish Empire was carved up and traded by the imperial European powers, rather than by the Arabic-speaking populations living in those areas.[10] Early in the twentieth century, the

enormously influential Sykes-Picot agreement was used by the European powers to carve out new spheres of influence from the former territory of the Ottoman Empire.[11]

In their colonial ambitions, these new European rulers sought to impose all the characteristics of a modern, Westphalian state in their new domains. But in doing so, the Europeans tried unsuccessfully to apply modern solutions to centuries old divisions of religion and ethnicity. A preeminent example of this failure can be seen is the French Mandate of Syria, an experiment that resulted in the creation of six smaller statelets that included enclaves for Maronite Christians, Druze, Alawites, and Sunni Muslims. Then, in 1920 the State of Greater Lebanon was officially created, but from the start the country faced significant obstacles to national unity.[12] Maronite Christians lived near the coast or towards the center of the state, while the South was dominated by a sizable population of Shia Muslims.

Additionally, the North was home to significant pockets of Alawite and Sunni Muslims, with the Druze largely scattered throughout. Tragically, these fragile demographic divisions would later play an oversized part in the fifteen-year long, Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) which claimed more that 120 000 lives, and displaced many more.[13] Even today, religious tensions in Lebanon have wreaked havoc, as a series of recent and deadly car bombings that have once again thrown open old tensions has undoubtedly shown.

The fault lines that run through much of the Arab world create unique circumstances in each country and are variously divided among categories of ethnicity, race, religion and ideology. Moreover, these deep divisions did not only emerge in response to the political tumult experienced during many of the Arab uprisings, instead they had always been present and often active. Despite the enormous challenges - and bloodshed - autocratic leaders like

Hafez al-Assad and Saddam Hussein had been largely successful in suppressing internal divisions within their respective countries.[14] Arab leaders also undertook bold attempts to reinvigorate (often imagined) prestigious national heritages, as in Iraq and Egypt. Moreover, one could argue that Arab Dictators benefited immensely from the outlet that the newly created State of Israel provided them, as they were able to channel and redirect social discontent into a foreign power. Saddam Hussein's planned attacks on Israel during his own imperial invasion of Iraq not only shifted the narrative of the baldy unacceptable war but also allowed him to seize on the populism of his actions and develop a national identity, which projected itself as a bulwark against Zionism.

As we consider the future of Arab national identities we would be remiss to disregard the meaningful and authentic nationalisms that have emerged since the colonial era, even in the most artificially created Arab states. Too often, narratives of Arab fragmentation do not give credence to these national identities, assuming that they are too arbitrarily created to warrant any serious consideration. Furthermore, the sweeping theories which seek to remap the Middle East make few distinctions between Sunni and Shia states, the theoretical Arab democracies of Egypt and Iraq, and the monarchical states of Persian Gulf, the latter of which have been significantly more effective in weathering their own revolutionary storms.[15] Bahrain, with its significant Shia population, is a notable but unique exception. Moreover, the development of a nationalism under the direction of a charismatic Arab leader, even if authoritarian, has been viewed as a positive and emancipatory response to European colonialism and domination. Gokcel explains, "Arab nationalism was reactivated in response to the domination policies pursued by the Europeans in the Arab world."

Critics of strong Arab national identities have repeatedly misconstrued the sentiment of Pan-Arabism as evidence of a

challenge to individual nationalisms. In fact, the short-lived legacy of attempts to establish Pan-Arab nationalism (*umma arabiyya*) demonstrates the resilient nature and power of individual Arab nationalisms in the face of attempts at union. Though significant, the failure of Pan-Arabism cannot be attributed merely to the shifting of political alliances, or even military failures. More accurately, as seen in the case of the United Arab Republic (UAR), the domineering prominence of one Arab state over others, namely Egypt under the Gamal Abdel Nasser, served as a much greater obstacle to Pan-Arab unity. Gokcel explains:

> The conflicts that took place in the Arab area after the end of the Second World War demonstrated very clearly that the Arab world was a state structure in which the unity objective promoted by the pan-Arab ideology was very difficult to achieve. Therefore, there were a series of conflicts between various Arab states, which did not add value to the idea of Arab unity, such as the conflict between monarchists and republicans in Yemen, the one between Iraq and Kuwait, after the latter proclaimed its independence, in 1961, the conflict between Morocco and Tunisia around the issue of Mauritania, the civil war in Algeria, the Algerian-Moroccan conflict etc. In addition, the Arab world proved to be quite broken into pieces following the First Gulf War (1991), once with the US military intervention in Iraq (2003) and, recently, following the conflict in Libya.[16]

Among other failed attempts at an Arab union is the conspicuous example of the monarchist rival Arab Federation (AF). The speedy collapse of the Arab Federation was only further testament to the strength of individual nationalist identities in the Arab world and the complexities of attempting to merge two radically differing systems of governance. Moreover, one may

argue that the temporal presence of a charismatic leader such as Nasser is utterly necessary in forging any structured attempt at Arab political unity. The great plurality of ethnic, religious and ideological identities which had to be included in Pan-Arabism presented significant challenges to those narratives which imagined all Arab's as a united nation with a shared language, religious and heritage.[17]

However, it was competing imperial and national interests within the Pan-Arab movements that ultimately, and understandably, rendered them unfeasible.[18] On this point, we should be careful not to orientalize by unduly painting Arabs' national identities as being generally predisposed to imperialism. This position, usually adopted by less than serious observers of the region, seeks to grossly attribute all of the region's social and political shortcomings to the existence of an essential Arab character; the same *Arabism* which Antonious showed to be a fantasy.[19] Moreover, broad portrayals of Arab nations as destructive powers constantly vying for imperial dominance are not only unwarranted, but reincarnated forms of orientalist discourse which is content to describe autocratic despotism as an *eastern* phenomena fundamentally contrasted and opposed to to the supposed liberal, democratic ideals of the West.

While it is possible to imagine the triumph of Arab nationalisms over the corresponding narratives of neighbouring Arab states, is it also imaginable that such recent and arbitrarily created Arab nationalisms could compete with faith-based identity? In light of reboiled tensions between Sunni Arabs and the minority Alawite Shia Muslims fighting in Syria, this question takes on renewed significance. To understand the hybrid identities and social dynamics at play in such seemingly binary scenarios we must examine past conceptualizations of what it means to be Arab, or Muslim, or Sunni, Shiite and so on. The still raw memory of the 1980-1989 Iran Iraq War provides us with a contemporary

example in which to consider these relationships. During the devastating, opportunistic war waged by Saddam Hussein following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, we are able to glimpse the hybridity of identities in the Arab world.[20] The surprising resilience of Arab Nationalism was demonstrated by the Shia regiments who served on the front lines of a Sunni-controlled army and fought against the recently created Shia theocracy of Iran.[21] It is equally notable that this impressive commitment to nationalism was present in the aggressor and continued throughout the bloody and destructive conflict. It is clear that though bruised and torn, the *Leviathan* is very much alive in the Arab world of today.[22] Though convenient in their simplicity, we must question the integrity of narratives, which misappropriate the current political flux experienced in many Arab countries with a wider process of globalization which is, as expected, taking place on a global scale.

Moreover, globalization is still widely believed to be driven by economic forces. Friedrichs states that there is "a broad consensus that the economy is the engine of globalization" and that "concomitantly, it is fair to say that globalization discourse is inherently economistic."[23] The forces of economic globalization are certainly profound but they are gradual, and simply cannot not account for the rapid and fluid divisions of identity in the contemporary Arab world. In fact, the political isolation and largely insular economies (excluding the export of oil and its derivatives) which characterize many Arab states, may actually serve to mitigate the encroachment of globalization and its' attack on the nation state's purpose and sovereignty.

The tumultuous and uncertain political, and economic environment, which has seemingly challenged the legitimacy of many Arab states, may in fact afford these states with unique, and probably temporary, opportunities to reassert themselves, strengthening their existential purpose and relevancy among the majority. Pillar elaborates on the seemingly paradoxical resilience

of nationalism in the African context, "Africa continues to be a monument to the strength of the nation-state as a point of reference and object of competition, no matter how arbitrarily drawn its boundaries or deficient its central governments' control over their territories".[24]

Much of Africa is defined by colonial borders which are equally arbitrary to those found in the Middle East, and this example lends important insights to understanding the nationalism found in contemporary Arab world. It is clear that attributing too much significance to the obstacles posed by European colonialism, or even the notorious Sykes-Picot plan, is to belie the authentic and deeply profound nationalisms that have emerged out of these less than perfect national inceptions.

Beyond the inability of arbitrary borders to prevent the development of strong nationalism, we see that the recent armed struggles, foreign interventions and social divisions, which have riddled many Arab countries since the end of World War II, have provided myriad opportunities for the effective development of these Arab nationalisms. In a purveyance of the modern state system Herz rightly asserts that, "people, in the long run, will recognize that authority, any authority, which possesses the power of protection."[25] If this principle is applied to the tumultuous environment present in many Middle Eastern states including Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq one can envision how the nation-state may actually reassert itself and thrive in its ability to swiftly and efficiently manage interfaith conflicts, non-state actors, and lawless regions (Sinai for example) which threaten the economic and political stability of its' citizens. Max Weber famously articulated a similar position, namely the state's monopoly on violence being legitimate. Jachtenfuchs elaborates on this monopoly and helps us to frame the significance of civil conflicts in Arab countries. He states: "It took centuries for the state successfully to centralize control over the means of coercion

against all major rival groups. This monopolization has now become a generalized expectation. A state that is unable to uphold this monopoly is considered a 'failed state.'"[26]

Indeed, Arab states are currently locked in an existential war for their continued relevance, but fundamentally, Arab states still have much too offer their citizens. The swift and effective dispersal of force provides near endless opportunities to show its competency and purpose to a majority demographic. Jachtenfuchs continues: "With respect to the legitimacy of the use of physical force, this means that only the state has a generally accepted right to use force against its citizens or against other states. Other groups or individuals may use force in exceptional cases, but their use of force is not generally considered legitimate."[27]

This theory of legitimate uses of force is manifest in contemporary Egypt, where a pragmatic and perceptive General Abdel al-Sisi has recognized the tarnished but still immensely valuable brand of legitimate state-sanctioned violence. The masses, even a majority of Egyptians, appear to have agreed with al-Sisi's analysis of the deteriorating economic and political situation which had arisen under the ineffective and increasingly authoritarian Muslim Brotherhood regime, and culminated in the July 3, 2013 ouster of President Morsi. Since seizing power under controversial circumstances, General al-Sisi has only had to replicate his initial response. In bold displays of *realpolitik,* Gen. al-Sisi has continually crushed political dissenters and any minority interest or ethnic group that has openly challenged the military-led government's monopoly on violence.[28]

But if Arab states are able to reassert themselves and their national narratives through entrenched means, what implications does this hold for the development of new political systems in the Arab world? The domineering, monopolizing actions of General al-Sisi's new central government or the brutally violent attacks and

indiscriminate shelling of the Syrian regime upon its own citizens can be certainly be viewed as an interventionist approach into specific, peripheral spheres of Arab society, be they ethnic, religious or ideologically united communities.[29]

In this light, it is not difficult to assume that such reassertions of the Arab state are little more than postmodern reincarnations of colonial, imperialist policies. And while there is undoubtedly truth within this claim, it is hard to view the reassertion of Arab states as universally neo-colonial, or imperialist, if only because of the organic manner in which they are reemerging and redefining themselves. Arab states may succeed in redefining and re-engaging disparate minorities and peripheral ideologies as they seek to recreate, or at least rebrand themselves following the uprisings which began in 2011.

In describing the newly interpreted and once-again relevant position of nationalism in the new global order, Pillar describes how: "The Westphalian state has been sold successfully worldwide, despite its made-in-Europe label."[30] The successful export and contemporary production of nationalisms in the Arab world is no knock-off either. Arab national identities have built upon the principles and framework laid down in Westphalia but they have also added local, and religious understandings to their political systems. Banality aside, the nation state may have a monopoly on violence but no country or cultural tradition can justifiably claim a monopoly definition on the development of national identity. These modifications to the Westphalian model do not represent mere accommodations for religion and local conceptions of democratic rule but rather integral and still developing parts of a new political system.[31]

Arab *Leviathans*, heaving and convulsing under the weight of their respective ethnic, religious and social cleavages may emerge stronger, more agile and most importantly, more authentic

and representative. The rising influence and inclusion of Political Islam in the Arab governments serves as an important harbinger of structural and constitutional changes that seek to identify and build on the shared values of democracy and Islam. This more nuanced view of development is far from simple and its results may surprise and confuse Western audience who expect to see a near identical reflection of Western liberal ideals.[32] The inclusion of Political Islam in Arab democracies may differ quite radically from Western perceptions and norms of democracy, substituting Islamic principles like Justice where we might place Liberty. Language aside, the validity of these new democracies and their forms should be judged on their actions and their treatment of minority groups and ideologies which gave rise to them.

In some instances however, Arab states may be undergoing radical reshaping as regional, or subnational entities emerge and engage with both national and international structures. But, the development and ascendency of these regional players need not represent the stark fragmentation imagined by those who forecast the break-up and dissolution of most Arab states. Instead the rise of provinces, states, and even municipalities is being facilitated by a myriad of new technologies in communication, banking and transport which allow these internal bodies to effortlessly transcend hard shell of the nation state to interact, integrate and trade with the global economy in new ways.[33]

Framing the long-term retreat of the state in the Arab world should not be viewed as a mutually exclusive dichotomy between discourses of globalization and fragmentation. Moreover, the economical and political ascent of regional bodies can never fully account for the hybrid, and often competing identities and loyalties present in overlapping systems of Arab authority. Harvey explains the rise of subnational regions in this context and demonstrates how the "complicated relationship across scales in which local initiatives can percolate upwards to a global scale and vice versa at

the same time as processes within a particular definition of scale—interurban and interregional competition being the most obvious examples—can rework the local/regional configurations of what globalization is about."[34]

This complicated relationship of cooperation between local and global bodies does preclude the role of the state, though it may decenter its authority and functions to peripheral regions and groups in some instances. Therefore, rather than disintegrating, the nation state is being pulled, gradually, between two cooperating forces of globalization and fragmentation. However, fragmentation in this context does not refer to the unlikely possibility of new, independent small scale Arab states divided according to irreconcilable religious and ethnic divisions. An abundance of new technologies, and even a limited "cosmopolitan" identity, is making it easier for regions and subnational jurisdictions to access the global sphere in a meaningful way, but this development must work in tandem with the nation state's sovereignty.

This principle is baldly evident in the hybridity of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Discourses of Syrian Kurdish fragmentation should consider seriously the milder, hybrid approach, which has emerged across the border in northern Iraq. The subnational body operates within the state system and reaps the benefits of this hybrid model of autonomy and identity. Iraqi Kurds have gained limited self-rule, and a local, more representative form of government that is sensitive to Kurdish identity and ethnic concerns without sacrificing the security, structures, and nationalist identity of the nation state.

Friedrichs offers a partial explanation as to why subnational bodies may actually prefer limited self-rule over unbridled independence; "there is no viable alternative to the problem-solving capacity of the nation-state in crucial realms of social life, namely the provision of political peace and social order within its borders and the organization of collective action with and beyond

the national territory."[35] In the narrower context of the contemporary Middle East, the necessity of the functions and protections of the state are observable in clashes between ethnic and religious communities.

The binding heritage, language, or cultural traits which loosely define any future subnational regions are likely to be equally influenced by the economic and social interplay between their global subnational counterparts which allows us to imagine a third, hybrid but cosmopolitan identity forming.[36] While ethnic or religious subregions within Arab states would be closely tied to their individual nationalisms, they would undoubtedly be influenced profoundly by shared, yet individually shaped conceptualizations of an emerging cosmopolitanism. The multiplicity of identities that may be represented under a cosmopolitan system is described by Kurasawa, "cosmopolitanism does not signify being from nowhere or everywhere at once, but rather embracing the simultaneous existence of multilayered local, national and global identities."[37]

The Basque People, living in modern-day France and Spain provide a unique example of how "biethnic identity" can circuitously transcend the fixed borders and find a appropriate status within the structure of a supranational body such as the European Union.[38] Cosmopolitanism does not demand a homogenous identity spread equally across all regions, instead a reasonably heterogeneous hybridity of perspectives that fundamentally values human rights and the rule of law will add complexity and vitality to the system.[39] As such, hybrid identity should be viewed as a necessary but encouraging aspect of rising subnational bodies, not conflicting with narratives of Arab nationalism but complementing and enriching the modern state's integration with the global sphere.

The future of Arab nation states is still very much one of flux and of profound change. However, post structural discourses that strive to carefully examine of the multiple identities, technologies, and religious traditions at stake in the unfolding changes in the Arab world will provide us with a more nuanced, informed and comprehensive analysis. This paper has sought to reveal how premature, uninformed, or simply subjective forecasts from outside observers are of little value in the long term.[40] Moreover, political bias and motivation in these conjectural assays of fragmentation in Arab states should not be dismissed as insignificant. Such accounts rely on essentializing understanding of the Arab world and its supposedly homogenous character to align with interventionist optimism.

While it is baldly apparent that the Arab states are under existential siege from the forces of both globalization and greater regionalism, it is unrealistic to speculate or even predict the absolute disintegration of significant and authentic forms of Arab nationalism. This paper's chronicling of the development of individual Arab nationalisms, though sometimes contrived in their embryonic stages, has ultimately proven them to be potent and resilient forms of identity. Moreover, the contemporary Arab world is providing unique and likely short-term opportunities for the Arab states of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan to reassert their sovereignty. However, this reassertion of individual nationalisms in compatible with developing forms of hybrid identity and the rising economic and political significance of subnational regions. This discourse holds great importance for understandings of leaner and more organic, authentic Arab nationalisms, and more broadly for the emerging relationship between Arab states and developing global and regional sphere.

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Diaosi:
China's "Loser" Phenomenon

Kris Best

In late 2011 and early 2012, a new slang term – "*diaosi*" – exploded on the Chinese social media scene. A crude and derogatory word similar to the English "loser", the term took on a life of its own as many Chinese youths, predominantly but not exclusively male, began to identify with the label and proclaim themselves "*diaosi*".[1] The mass appeal of the term was enough to land it the number one spot on China Radio International's top 10 list of internet buzzwords in 2012 (Ru, 2013) – but what could press so many young Chinese to suddenly and publicly declare themselves to be "losers"? This paper will seek to explain the emergence and significance of this phenomenon by: i) investigating the meaning of the term; ii) placing it in the economic and social context of the post-1980s reform period; and iii) devoting particular attention to the state policies that have directly driven its development.

Diaosī (屌丝) roughly translates to "loser", but its use by Chinese youth indicates a much more complex meaning than the English term alone can convey. A *diaosi* is defined by what that they lack: wealthy parents, powerful *guanxi* (关系, connections), good looks, charm with the opposite sex, and, as they view it, a promising future. *Diaosi* are generally perceived to be poor, but the actual wealth they possess matters little; "*diaosi*" is still a popular identity among white-collar workers and intellectuals, with even the Chinese pop culture icon Han Han describing himself as "a pure *diaosi* from rural Shanghai"[2] The defining feature of a *diaosi* is not their current circum-stance, but their humble background. They regard with bitterness the excess and privilege afforded to the *fu'erdai* (富二代), the "second-generation rich" children of urban elites, and they contrast their lives with those of their affluent

counterparts. For men, the opposite of the *diaosi* is the *gaofushuai* (高富, "tall, rich, and handsome"); for women, the *baifumei* (白富美, "white, rich, beautiful"). The *diaosi* perceive themselves to be at a fundamental social and economic disadvantage in comparison to these second-generation wealthy youth.[3]

Although the term is used with an air of self-mockery, the *diaosi* identity appears to be a means of solidarity for those that claim it. An analysis of the term's use on the popular social media platform Weibo by researchers at Harvard University found that the word was used in a positive context 46% of the time, versus 34% in a negative context and 20% in a neutral context, with associations becoming more positive over time.[4] In contrast, *gaofushuai* and *baifumei* have developed pejorative connotations.[5] When it does appear in a positive context, the word *diaosi* usually accompanies stories of encouragement or success, lending the term an interesting dual nature. *Diaosi* is at once a form of expressing self-pity and frustration with the status quo by those that feel powerless – a sentiment that one is doomed to be a loser for life through forces that lie outside one's control – while at the same time, for those identified *diaosi* who have succeeded, it conveys the positive sense of being a "self-made" man or woman, insisting that any success achieved is a result of their own efforts, in spite of their disadvantaged starting point.[6] The *diaosi* identity is offered as both an explanation for failure and a reason to celebrate success.

The *diaosi* identity also includes an inescapable gendered component, as self-identified *diaosi* are overwhelmingly male. Writers disagree on whether women can also be considered *diaosi*; at the centre of this debate is the observation that one of the most prominent characteristics of the *diaosi* stereotype is the inability to find a romantic partner due to a poor appearance or lack of material wealth.[7] In fact, some commentators prefer to view romantic failure as the defining trait of a *diaosi*, rather than family wealth.[8] However, examples of the *diaosi* label being applied to women do exist in Chinese social media – for instance, in the viral

"female *diaosi* dialogue" image macros[9] – and previously cited articles from the Chinese press seem to indicate that the *diaosi* identity is not entirely monopolized by men. The gender dimension of the *diaosi* phenomenon will be treated with more detail in a later discussion of the one-child policy.

Implicitly or explicitly, the *diaosi* concept is usually linked to the circumstances of the *balinghou* (八零后), the much-discussed "post-80s generation" to which most of them belong, which is notable in Chinese society as the first generation born after Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms began in 1978.[10] The context of the reform period is critical for understanding the *diaosi* phenomenon, as the reform era drastically reshaped the China experienced by the *balinghou* relative to previous generations. To note just a few of the changes influencing youth in this period, rural-to-urban migration became a possibility for the first time for many with decollectiv-ization in the countryside and the loosening of the house-hold registration system;[11] domestic and foreign popular media (e.g., television programs) became more widely accessible; and economic expansion and market-oriented reforms gradually allowed for the development of a cosmo-politan consumer culture, which came to be intimately associated with the *balinghou*.[12] This section will consider the dominant forces shaping the social context of the *balinghou* in the reform era.

The new possibilities that became open to youth as a result of the economic reforms came to inspire what Lisa Rofel describes as a "desiring China"[13], in which the state and concept of "desire" is at the heart of what it means to be a citizen-subject in post-socialist China. The *balinghou* learned to desire – and to justify their desiring – through popular media; the specific object of their desire (a possession, a person, a lifestyle) is not as important as the nature of being a "desiring subject" themselves. Indeed, evidence shows that the *balinghou* are perceived by themselves and their parents to be more materialistic, more success-oriented, more sexually open, and more permissive of

others' desires (e.g., queer identities) than their predecessors.[14] At the same time, the diffusion of popular media that provoked desire also brought awareness of relative deprivation, particularly for rural and migrant youth, who became more aware than ever of the large gap between what they desire and what they feel they can achieve.

Accompanying the rise of desire in general has been the increasing social value placed on material wealth in particular. In the words of the popular reform era slogan, "to get rich is glorious" (*zhifu guangrong* 致富光荣).[15] Rosen in particular argues that the state under guidance of the Chinese Communist Party has carefully cultivated a class of affluent or aspiring youth more interested in accumulating wealth than engaging politically, noting among other things that the most supported statement in one survey of values among Chinese students in 2001 was that "Modern man must be able to make money."[16] Even among more economically disadvantaged migrant youth, material wealth has become more important for its own sake. Whereas previous generations of rural-urban migrants worked in cities for the primary purpose of remitting funds to their rural families, migrants of the *balinghou* generation prefer to live a more materialistic lifestyle, spending their money on consumer goods and urban experiences (e.g., karaoke parlours) for their own enjoyment.[17] In general, material well-being has become a greater indicator of the value of an individual across Chinese society since the 1980s.[18]

In contrast to their parents, the *balinghou* have also grown up in a Chinese state that has begun the process of individualization – emphasizing the individual identity distinct from the collective – with the dismantling of both the communes in the countryside and the work units in the cities (the "iron rice bowl"). Yan observes that, at some time during the late 1980s to early 1990s, "the meaning of the communist slogan 'regeneration through self-reliance' had changed from a slogan of ideological collectivism to a slogan of individualism in everyday life

competition".[19] As a result, the *balinghou* have more choices than previous generations they are free to choose their own jobs, migrate to cities for economic opportunity, and pursue lives and identities independent of their families and former collectives. However, as the state withdraws, the Chinese individual or household is now assumed responsible for the cost of their own well-being and success.[20] This is particularly true for migrants, who bear the cost of their own maintenance and social reproduction, but the situation of migrant youth will be discussed in detail in the section on state policies.

In the context of all these changes spurred by economic reform, the *diaosi* feel that they have been left behind. Coming from less affluent households, they experience desire, twisted into bitter longing through media portrayals of wealth and romance that remind them of the disadvantaged space they occupy; they have few financial resources in a society and a state that increasingly values material wealth; and they are conscious that they have the freedom to make choices for themselves, but also that they lack the social or financial means to take full advantage of that freedom. It's hardly surprising, then, that the *diaosi* feel at a fundamental level that they have "lost out at the starting line" (*cong qipaoxian shang jiu yijing shule* 从起跑线上就已经输了) compared to more privileged members of their generation.[21]

Thus far, the role of the Chinese state as it relates to the *diaosi* phenomenon has been discussed only as the motivator behind key social and economic forces that were developing during the post-1980s period. This section will sharpen the focus on specific policies of the state and consider three policy areas affecting outcomes of the *balinghou* in greater detail. These are: education and employment outcomes; migrant workers and the household registration system; and the one-child policy. Linking all three of them, but the first two in particular for our purposes, is the persisting rural-urban divide that has been alluded to throughout the earlier discussion of economic reform and the

balinghou. Although rural and migrant youth are far from having a monopoly over the *diaosi* identity, they have perhaps more reason than their urban counterparts to feel disproportionately put out by an unequal political and economic system. This premise of inequitable policies shaping the different experiences of rural versus urban youth of the *balinghou* is therefore fundamental to understanding the *diaosi* perspective.

Education in the Chinese state is particularly unequal along the rural-urban divide. From 1993, the national government began dividing universities into "elite" and "non-elite" status, with the elite universities receiving the largest share of public funding. Students admitted to elite universities benefit from top-notch professors and generous tuition subsidies, while students attending non-elite universities pay higher tuition and in many cases receive a substandard education, particularly since reforms in 1999 allowed for the rise of private for-profit colleges and vocational schools.[22] Entrance to the elite universities is determined by the *gaokao* (高考), the national college entrance exam, which must be taken in the region of the student's *hukou* (户口, household registration). The largest share of spots in an incoming class is reserved for local students – that is, students with *hukou* in the cities where elite universities are located. Urban students are thus able to enter elite universities with significantly lower scores on the *gaokao* than most rural students.[23] Even within urban areas, the educational system is skewed in favour of the wealthy; high scores on the *gaokao* are associated with attendance at "key" high schools which receive a greater share of public funding. Entrance into these high schools is highly competitive and favours students from wealthy families willing to pay large fees to enroll their children.[24] The quality of education one can expect to receive at any level is determined by a combination of family wealth and the location of one's *hukou* (rural or urban).

Attendance at an elite university has increasingly become a critical factor affecting employment outcomes of post-

secondary graduates with the emergence of what some have called the Chinese "ant tribe" (*yizu* 蚁族). These are the hundreds of thousands of university graduates in urban areas that are either unemployed or toiling away at low wages similar to those of low-skilled migrant workers.[25] Kan notes that 54.7% of the "ants" in major cities are indeed university-educated migrants from rural areas, and an additional 38.3% have migrated from smaller cities and towns.[26] Pressure continues to mount each year as the number of new university graduates increases, with graduates from rural areas, non-elite universities, for-profit colleges and vocational schools being further squeezed from the labour market.[27] As a result, 2013 was declared by many Chinese bloggers and Weibo users to be "the worst year in history to graduate"[28]– at least so far. Some have suggested that China's economy is simply not creating enough white-collar jobs to absorb all the university graduates that it now produces, and that some graduates, those with less affluent backgrounds, weaker *guanxi*, and less prestigious degrees, will necessarily be forced into accepting jobs below their skill level and wage expectations for years to come.[29]

Rural *balinghou* youth have been able to move to cities for education or work as a result of reforms to the *hukou* system during the 1980s. These reforms allowed rural Chinese greater mobility to pursue employment in urban coastal areas as migrant workers, supposedly on a temporary basis, and typically in low-skilled fields such as construction, manufacturing, service industries, and domestic services.[30] The *balinghou* are referred to as the "second generation" or "new generation" of these migrant workers. Despite the fact that many of them were either born in cities or moved to cities at a young age with their migrant parents, their inherited rural *hukou* affords them few legal protections and little access to education, health care, and other social services, as welfare programs are locally financed and therefore generally restricted to local *hukou* holders.[31] Most of these "migrant" youth have little experience or identification with the countryside, yet are excluded from the mainstream urban community. They are

considered neither "peasants" nor "workers" but "peasant workers", even though most of them are unfamiliar with agricultural labour and would prefer to become permanent urban workers – an in-between state that Huilin and Ngai characterize as the "unfinished process of proletarianization"[32]. Migrant youth therefore have difficulty pursuing education and employment that they find meaningful due to their perception as "outsiders" and the restrictions of their *hukou* status.[33]

China's infamous one-child policy further contributes to the angst of the *balinghou,* being the first generation born under the policy, which was enacted in 1979.[34] The various results of the one-child policy have been well-catalogued by researchers, but two effects in particular that have great significance for the *diaosi* phenomenon are the weight of family expectations and the grossly imbalanced sex ratio in the *balinghou* and later generations. The burden of family expectations is especially severe in the Chinese context for a number of reasons: a stronger expectation than in Western liberal democracies that children support their parents in old age, in part due to an inadequate social security system;[35] a cultural tendency to equate worth with academic success; and the lingering collectivist assumption that one's success or failure is a reflection of the whole family's effort.[36] Urban youth are the subject of much of this pressure to succeed, as the one-child policy was most strictly implemented in cities, but rural youth also feel the weight of their parents' disappointment. Migrant youth of the "ant tribe" in particular may feel ashamed to leave their poor working conditions and return to the countryside after their parents have invested so much money in their education to little return.[37]

As noted in an earlier section, adding to the difficulties of these youth is the gendered aspect of the *diaosi* phenomenon, which reflects the frustration of many young single men who are unable to attract partners. These are the infamous "bare branches" (*guanggun*, 光棍), the estimated surplus of 1.2 million men per year entering a marriageable age that may not find partners due to

the result of the one-child policy's interaction with the Chinese cultural preference for sons.[38] The relative scarcity of heterosexual women and the resulting competition in the dating market means that men of a lower social status – rural men, migrants, or those simply less affluent or attractive – are at a disadvantage when seeking a spouse, and many of them may never marry at all. However, not only young men are under pressure: a cultural backlash against "leftover women" (*shengnu*, 剩女) shames educated urban women that go unmarried (by choice or not) past the age of 27, whom the All-China Federation of Women refers to as "yellowed pearls" worth "less and less" as they age.[39] While the *diaosi* identity remains more strongly associated with the particular dating pressures faced by young men, it is worth noting that both sexes within the *balinghou* experience frustration or harassment associated with the gender dynamic resulting from the one-child policy.

To conclude, *Diaosi* is far more than an Internet buzzword or a simple online fad. The willingness of so many young Chinese to speak positively of or identify as "losers" speaks to a disillusion with social inequalities built into the status quo and recognition that such inequalities are fundamentally unfair. The *diaosi* phenomenon has much deeper roots in the interplay between the social and economic forces that shaped China during the reform period and specific policies pursued by the Chinese state that have further institutionalized inequality since the 1980s. Youth identifying as *diaosi* feel left behind by a changing country in which they are conditioned to desire, yet made aware of what they can't possess, have little money in a society that values wealth more than ever, and are conscious of their freedom as individuals but limited in how they can exercise their new identity. State policies in education, migration, and the one-child policy add to their frustration by further perpetuating inequality between rural and urban areas and the poor and wealthy households within them, leading rural, migrant, and even less affluent urban youth to feel as

though they have already "lost out at the starting line", with little chance to catch up with wealthier members of their cohort.

Although the *diaosi* may perceive their prospects to be bleak, their collective identity is a source of support, reinforcing the legitimacy of their feelings and providing solidarity in the form of mutual recognition and even encouragement. In declaring themselves "losers" and revelling in their identity as such, they are rebelling against the stereotypical material values of their *balinghou* generation and rewriting their terms of success. They are redefining identities like *gaofushuai* and *baifumei* pejoratively through their contempt, preferring to elevate the achievements of those *diaosi* who have managed to succeed through their own efforts, despite their humble beginnings – in a way, promoting the individualization of success.

Diaosi as an identity has a broad and powerful appeal, with the ironic result that those who willingly call themselves "losers" in China appear to be in better company than they suppose. The fact that *diaosi* identification is not limited to one particular group of Chinese youth but has been claimed by "ants" and pop culture icons alike is also telling of a deeper social trend. It indicates that dissatisfaction with the unequal situation of the status quo is shared among youth from diverse backgrounds, transcending the usual divisions in Chinese society and ultimately giving the *diaosi* phenomenon the power that allowed it to bring the frustration and disillusion of China's youth to mainstream attention.

Notes

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The Court at the Ballot Box:
Shelby County v. Holder and the Voting Rights Act

Michael McDonald

Voting serves as a mechanism to allow for individual expression of opinion in choosing a government, and is therefore integral to any democratic society. The citizenry's right to cast a ballot, then, must be enshrined and defended at all costs. The history of voting rights in the United States is a tumultuous affair characterized by contentions of race and gender. While African Americans and women were ultimately successful in securing *de jure* enfranchisement, it took many years for these rights to solidify. In the case of African Americans, it was not until the enactment of the *Voting Rights Act* (VRA) in 1965 before their democratic rights were properly guaranteed, and the Fifteenth Amendment brought into full force.[1] The Act prevented Southern states from discriminating against voters on the basis of race, thereby ensuring that all Americans could execute their constitutionally assured right.

However, the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* – to reject fundamental provisions in the Act – has once again brought the issue of voting rights to the forefront of the public sphere. What then are the implications of the decision? Is racist, discriminatory policy still evident in the South, or have states evolved to full inclusivity? In order to determine the effects of this ruling, it is necessary to undertake an extensive analysis of the history of the case, the arguments on either side, and ultimately the opinions of the Court. Through this examination it will be illuminated that the Supreme Court of the United States has an enormous influence in national policy and operates outside of the realm of public opinion. Moreover, it will be indicated that the decision reached in *Shelby County* has the potential to disproportionately reduce African American turnout in Southern States; this must then serve as an impetus for policy makers in

Washington to adopt new enforceable provisions of the *Voting Rights Act*.

Before discussing the way in which the case rose to the Supreme Court, it is necessary to engage in a brief discussion of the political and adjudicative history of voting rights in the United States. Despite the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment's provisions that prevent voter discrimination, many African Americans in Southern states were disenfranchised through literacy tests and other "voter qualifications."[2] Early in his presidency, Lyndon B. Johnson expressed his disdain over the fact that "the [local] registrar is the sole judge of whether [an African American]" is entitled to vote.[3] To correct this, he pushed Congress to enact the *Voting Rights Act* (1965).[4] The Act itself "outlawed any 'voter qualifications or prerequisite to voting,'" and Section 5 implemented "preclearance requirements"[5].

If states with a history of voter discrimination wished to change voter laws, they needed to gain approval from either the Attorney General of the United States or a trio of D.C. District Court justices.[6] It is the differential treatment of states under the VRA that caused Southern states to vehemently oppose the law. Indeed, Section 4(b) set "forth a formula for determining if a [particular] jurisdiction" is subject to Section 5's requirements, which some states believe violates their sovereignty.[7] While the intent of the preclearance requirements are clearly to ensure that states who previously have discriminated against voters do not revert to form, it is evident how these provisions could be misconstrued as contrary to state sovereignty.

Various states have consistently challenged the constitutionality of Sections 4(b) and 5 throughout the near fifty-year history of the *Voting Rights Act*. In order to conceptualize the basis of these challenges, it is first necessary to understand that the VRA is formally "emergency legislation," and that these key provisions of the Act require frequent Congressional extension.[8]

The *Voting Rights Act* has faced its most stringent opposition at these times of reauthorization; numerous states and counties have challenged the Act before the Supreme Court of the United States. The VRA's preclearance requirements and coverage formula were first challenged in *South Carolina v. Katzenbach* (1966), where the Court decided that "covered jurisdictions" had been rationally singled out, and therefore, that the provisions were necessary to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment.[9] This paved the way for the full introduction of the Act, and subsequently, the realization of enfranchisement for many Americans. Congress reauthorized the VRA's preclearance requirement in 1970, 1975, and again in 1982, prompting two Supreme Court challenges in *Georgia v. United States* (1973) and *City of Rome v. United States (1980)*; neither of which were successful.[10] The number of early challenges by the states is emblematic of the intensely federal system in the United States, whereby individual states seek to enhance their own jurisdictional powers, subsequently reducing federal influence.

In recent years, the Supreme Court of the United States has refined the *Voting Rights Act*, thereby reducing its effectiveness. The VRA was first curtailed in *Georgia v. Ashcroft* (2003), and further diminished in *Northwest Austin v. Holder* (2009), which found that Section 5 "must be 'justified by current needs'" and that Section 4(b) must clearly indicate that targeting of specific states "is sufficiently related" to racial disenfranchise-ement.[11]

These consistent court challenges are also emblematic of the way in which other contentious legislation has been challenged. Unquestionably, proponents of particular concerns see the Court as a body capable of shaping policy, outside of the realm of electoral politics. The latest challenge to the VRA occurred earlier in 2013 in, *Shelby County v. Holder*, and resulted in the most impactful Supreme Court decision on voting rights. In 2006, Congress had extended preclearance requirements for an additional twenty-five years in a near unanimous Senate and House vote (Ewald, 2009: 84). Shelby County took issue with this extension, and saw that the

Supreme Court had left key questions unanswered in *Northwest Austin*; they "sought a permanent injunction" to "cease enforcement of Sections 4(b) and 5"[12] Shelby County lost its bid in the D.C. District Court, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit also upheld the constitutionality of the two sections, ideating "that Congress did not exceed its powers" through the 2006 reauthorization, as the formula "is still relevant to the issue of voting discrimination".[13] As a result, Shelby County appealed to the Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments on February 27, 2013.[14]

In *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), the Supreme Court of the United States was faced with contending constitutional arguments from both parties. A writ of Certiorari was issued to address the question: "Does Congress' decision in 2006 to reauthorize Section 5 of the VRA under the pre-existing coverage formula of Section 4(b) [exceed] its authority under the Fifteenth Amendment and thus [violate] the Tenth Amendment and Article IV of the U.S. Constitution?"[15] The Respondents, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice (DOJ), sought to advance the idea that the Fifteenth Amendment provided the inherent justification for the Voting Rights Act. Shelby County, however, believed that the preclearance requirement violated states' rights.

In order to contextualize these arguments, it is necessary to understand their constitutional premise. Firstly, Article IV, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution grants "Full Faith and Credit" to every state, and Section 2 enshrines a right for all citizens to be equal in each state.[16] Similarly, the Tenth Amendment stipulates that "powers not delegated to the [federal government]" are to be delegated "to the states respectively".[17] From these two provisions, it is apparent how Shelby County believed that preclearance requirements in the *Voting Rights Act* transcended congressional power, as elections are typically ceded to the states. However, this neglects key provisions of the Fifteenth Amendment, which

stipulates that the right to vote must not be "abridged… on account of race," but also that "Congress shall have power to enforce [this right] by appropriate legislation".[18] In the case of the Fifteenth Amendment, the VRA's constitutionality is seemingly apparent, but unquestionably there is a key contradiction between the relevant constitutional clauses.

Numerous amici briefs supported the Petitioner in its claims that the VRA was unconstitutional. Alabama – the state in which Shelby County resides – submitted an amicus, suggesting that the state had changed a great deal since 1965, and that due to "a new generation of leaders with no connection to [voter discrim-ination]," there is no longer a necessity for preclearance of voting laws.[19] In fact, they suggested that the preclearance requirement not only inhibits their full participation in the Union, but that Section 5 creates a burdensome process that prevents "much-needed reforms" from materi-alizing.[20] As evidence, they cite a recent instance in which the state legislature undertook an effort to modernize residency requirements, but was forced to contend with a laborious process to gain approval; a process that non-covered states would not have had to undergo.[21] Such assessments illuminate the potential violation of the "Full Faith and Credit" clause, which seeks to ensure equality among the states. These briefs, written by "states and other counties" who were subject to the Section 4(b) coverage formula, formed the foundations of the argument in *Shelby County*.[22] They contended that preclearance creates a non-uniform standard of voting law reform within the Union, and that state sovereignty is thereby violated through federal domineering of election laws.[23] The Petitioner also compounded this by declaring "that Congress [had] failed to [provide] an evidentiary record sufficient to justify renewing the VRA," as they had based Section 4(b)'s formula on 1964, 1968, and 1972 "election data".[24] Additionally, they took issue with the D.C. Circuit's ruling as it "would [essentially] justify preclearance in perpetuity" – thereby rejecting the emergency intent of the Act – and also with the coverage formula, suggesting that it was

inapplicable today.[25] The opinions presented in the amici and the oral arguments delivered, created a strong case for the repeal of Sections 4(b) and 5.

The Respondents also presented a compe-lling case for VRA preclearance necessity, and were similarly supported by amici curiae. In an amicus brief filed on behalf of Dr. Patricia Broussard and her law students, a case is made to suggest that, "Section 5 [of the VRA] does not run contrary to the Tenth Amendment," as the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment restricts any state interference of the right to vote; simultaneously it grants the federal government the ability to enact "parameters around states' behaviour".[26] Further to this, Broussard suggests that Section 5 was reauthorized based on "statistics, judicial findings, and first-hand accounts of discriminatory action," all compiled into a 15 000 page document.[27] Finally, it is suggested that the Court should examine all behaviour – past, current, and potential – discussing the way in which 700 000 minority voters could be disenfranchised by "photo ID laws".[28] This amici attempted to showcase the contemporary applicability of preclearance provisions in protecting enfranchisement, thereby legitimating Sections 4(b) and 5 through the Fifteenth Amendment. Further amici curiae briefs examined the Supreme Court's history of supporting the VRA, thereby suggesting that *stare decisis* had set the Act as well within the confines of the Fifteenth Amendment.[29] The Attorney General furthered the argument, by discussing how significant "evidence of racial [voter] discrimination" was found in "covered jurisdictions… such as objections to preclearance requests," thereby solidifying the importance of Section 5.[30]

In response to Shelby County's formula concerns, Holder asserted that the coverage formula is not actually "the focus of Congress' concerns," and that whether or not the formula is flawed, it is "relevant" due to its identification of "specific areas that Congress wishes to subject to preclearance requirements".[31] This is an interesting argument as it contends that the Fifteenth

Amendment grants Congress full powers to prevent racial voter discrimination. Yet, this begs the question, does the Amendment give Congress blanket power to implement preclearance, regardless of factual data? To address this, the Attorney General suggested that "bailout" and "bail-in" provisions prevent state disparity, in that "jurisdictions may either be added or removed from the preclearance requirement, depending on whether it is shown that, for the past ten years, they have not violated the VRA".[32] In essence, the Respondents' argument can be summarized in that preclearance is essential for the maintenance of equal voting rights, and that specific jurisdictions continuing to exhibit elements of voter discrimination must be monitored until they can demonstrate otherwise.

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court of the United States found Section 4(b) of the *Voting Rights Act* to be unconstitutional; Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the majority opinion and was joined by Justices Scalia, Kennedy, Alito, and Thomas.[33] The Court found that while "voting discrimination" still exists, "the conditions which originally justified these measures no longer characterize voting in the covered jurisdictions.[34] The Chief Justice also explained that Sections 4 and 5 were initially intended as temporary measures, and that in the 8-1 *Northwest Austin* decision*, the Court raised serious questions about the constitutionality of the sections, and the "[differentiation] between the states" that it promotes.[35] The decision further explores the immense tradition of states' rights within the United States, and declares that equality amongst the states is integral "to the harmonious operation" of "the Republic".[36] This emphasizes the role that maintaining a strong federal system – whereby states enjoy a great deal of individual sovereignty – plays in constructing the Court's opinions. In explaining why Sections 4(b) and 5 were originally validated, Roberts discussed the *Katzenbach* precedent by which "'legislative measures not otherwise appropriate' could be justified by 'exceptional conditions'".[37] This underscores the principle that preclearance was originally enacted as an emergency mechanism,

and therefore, it reasons that an emergency cannot exist in perpetuity.

The Court also contended that while the coverage formula was originally rational – as it focused on the region with the largest discrimination – today, things have changed.[38] It suggested that in "covered jurisdictions," voter registration and subsequent voting rates are equal, if not higher, to those in non-covered regions. Therefore Congress' decision to reauthorize Section 5, based on an antiquated coverage formula, is not effective in curtailing voter discrimination.[39] The majority also critiqued Holder's defense, suggesting that the assertion that "there need not be any logical relationship between the criteria and the reason for coverage," is elementary, and does not provide justification for targeting Southern states today.[40] The Court purported that Congress must, "if it wishes to divide the States," create a new logical formula; subsequently it criticized Congress for its failure to act in addressing the questions raised in *Northwest Austin*.[41] Given these conditions, Roberts eloquently reiterated how, "striking down an Act of Congress 'is the gravest and most delicate duty that [the] Court is called on to perform,'" but that it must "declare Section 4(b) unconstitutional".[42] Justice Thomas joined the majority, but declared in his concurring opinion that Section 5 should also be found unconstitutional, as the conditions that precipitated the statute in 1965, are no longer visible today.[43] The Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* clearly emphasized the limitations of the Fifteenth Amendment, and the emphasis on state equality.

As with any contentious case, there was a compelling argument constructed to criticize the majority's decision. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote the dissent, and was joined by Justices Breyer, Sotomayer, and Kagan.[44] Firstly, Ginsburg emphasized the VRA's necessity in ensuring the actual implementation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment, after a Century of persistent voter discrimination.[45] As to why preclearance was still applicable

today, the dissent argued that there had been many recent instances where the Attorney General had "declined to approve," voting law changes.[46] As evidence, Ginsburg presented Congressional findings that there were in fact 626 Department of Justice objections from 1982 to 2004, as opposed to 490 objections from 1965 to 1982.[47] This suggests that voting discrimination is still a dominant issue, and that many states still attempt to advance policies that would effectively disenfranchise some. Ginsburg also argued that the 390 to 33 House vote, and 98 to 0 Senate decision in the 2006 reauthorization of Section 4(b) clearly indicated the rationality of the coverage formula.[48]

In addressing the constitutionality of preclearance, the dissent argued that, "the Constitution vests broad powers in Congress to protect the right to vote," – through the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments – and that Congress has a responsibility to use these powers, so as to ensure de facto implementation "of the Civil War Amendments".[49] This is emblematic of the way in which the two Amendments seemingly give Congress full power to secure their enactment, and do not textually place any limitations on this ability. The dissent focused on the fact that improvement of Southern voting rights' can be directly correlated with the *Voting Rights Act* and therefore expressed concern that historical disenfranchisement could return in the absence of preclearance.[50] It subsequently emphasized that "when political preferences" are influenced by race, it can result in "natural inclinations of … ruling parties" to construct a "predictable outcome," a particular concern with voter identification laws.[51] Ultimately, Ginsburg criticized the Court's inability to recognize that improved Southern voter rights are directly pursuant to the preclearance requirement in Section 4(b).[52] Furthermore, where there is "greater racial polarization in voting," there is also a greater need for "measures to prevent purposeful race discrimination."[53]

The decision in *Shelby County* reveals much about how constitutional philosophies impact the justices' decisions, and also

the way in which the Court operates. The majority's opinion is of particular interest, as there seems to be contradiction within the ruling itself. In a way, the reversal of Section 4(b) on the grounds that it is no longer applicable today – given current voting trends – seems to reflect an evolving constitutional view. That is to say that while the Court initially upheld the constitutionality of the *Voting Rights Act* in *Katzenbach,* based on the provisions contained within the Fifteenth amendment, it reversed that decision in *Shelby County*. This was adjudicated on the predication that Southern states had evolved, and no longer expressed blatant voter discrimination; in other words, society had morally progressed to a point where a Constitutionally recognized Act was no longer necessary. Justices of the majority would contend, however, that the Court had in fact only permitted the emergency extension of such powers in order to rectify an immediately pertinent issue. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe that there is no provision within the Fifteenth Amendment that restricts Congressional action to only temporary.

Structuralism is the most dominant philosophy in the opinion and the majority uses it to suggest that the coverage formula is unconstitutional as it creates inequity among the states, and enhances federal interference. This therefore contradicts the primacy of states' rights and state sovereignty, a central theme throughout the U.S. Constitution, and history of the Union. The decision also reveals a great deal about the internal makeup of the Court, and the way in which the 5-4 split is characteristic of the politics of the Court. Indeed, the four-justice coalescence behind Ginsburg's dissent "[underscores] their profound disagreement with the direction of the Court".[54] Finally, the decision also indicates that the Supreme Court has an ability to mould policy, and operates outside of the realm of public opinion. For instance, despite the VRA's popularity with large portions of the population – in particular minorities, youth, and the impoverished – the Court struck down the coverage formula.[55] This clearly distinguishes the Judiciary from the Legislative, as Justices do not worry about their

public approval or popularity, due to their unelected stature.

   The 2013 decision is also highly impactful for minority voters, and these implications must serve as an impetus to enact a new coverage formula. Following the decision, Attorney General Holder expressed his deep disappointment in the decision, and acclaimed voting discrimination to be a real, contemporary issue that must continue to be addressed.[56] Such a blatant condemnation of the Court's decision, by the top-ranking legal official in the country nonetheless, evidences the level of disagreement with the Supreme Court decision. Ilya Sharpiro, however, – in his article for a New York law journal – advances his support of the decision, agreeing with Justice Thomas' concurring opinion that both Sections should have been found unconstitutional, as they ignore the progress made in the last fifty years.[57] This of course dismisses both Ginsburg's dissent and the conception that the greater enfranchisement of minorities today, is a direct result of the *Voting Rights Act.* Perhaps the largest implication will be that, while discriminatory voter laws can still be challenged – such as voter ID provisions – the "laws will go into effect," before "the legal battle is fought out".[58] This could therefore pave the way for the enactment of similar laws, ultimately reducing minority turnout and impacting the political nature of the nation. It is for this reason that President Obama has called on Congress to enact a new formula, thereby rendering Section 5 useful once again.[59] Unquestionably, Congressional action is necessary to protect and secure the voting rights of all Americans.

   In conclusion, the Supreme Court of the United States has an enormous amount of influence over public policy, operating outside of the realm of political opinion. In *Shelby County v. Holder* they struck down a key provision of the *Voting Rights Act* that helped to ensure African American voter rights were protected in the South. In so doing, they revealed a number of things about their compos-ition, and their judicial theory, showcasing the way in which the Court can extrapolate on certain Constitutional

themes to support its opinion. Moreover, overturning the preclearance coverage formula in Section 4(b) has major implications for minority voters in the United States. It means that states with a history of racial voter discrimination will now be free to introduce changes to their voter laws, without federal approval. Although conditions have certainly improved in the South, many of these improvements have been a direct result of the VRA. As Justice Ginsburg said, "throwing out preclearance … is like throwing out your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet".[60] The Court's decision has placed the onus on Congress to enact a new rational formula, in order to protect the voting rights of all Americans in 2014 and beyond.

Notes

[1] Alec C. Ewald, *The Way We Vote: The Local Dimension of American Suffrage* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University   Press, 2009).

[2] Ewald, *The Way We Vote,* 2009.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Jeremy Amar Dolan and Zemlin Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, Cornell Legal Information Institute, 2013. http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/cert/12-96.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ewald, *The Way We Vote*, 2009.

[9] Dolan and Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Dolan and Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013.

[13] The Oyez Project, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013. http://www.oyez.org/cases/2010-2019/2012/2012_12_96.

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[15] Dolan and Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013.

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Office of the Alabama Attorney General, *Brief of State of Alabama as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioner,* January 2, 2013. http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/supreme_court_preview/briefs-v2/12-96_pet_amcu_soa.authcheckdam.pdf

[20] Ibid.

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[22] Dolan and Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Patricia A. Broussard, Sabrina Collins, Stacy Hane, Akunna Olumba and Named Students and Organization of Florida A&M University College of Law, *Brief of Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents,* 2013. http://goo.gl/W0QcDU.

[27] Broussard et al., *Brief of Amici Curiae*, 2013.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Dolan and Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Dolan and Zachhary, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013.

[33] Supreme Court of the United States, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 12-96, 2-2013. http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-96_6k47.pdf.

[34] Ibid., para. 2.

[35] Ibid., para. 4, 6-7.

[36] Ibid., para. 9-11.

[37] Ibid. para. 11-12.

[38] Supreme Court of the United States, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013, para. 13-4.

[39] Ibid., para. 13-4, 18.

[40] Ibid, para. 18-9.

[41] Ibid., para 20, 24.

[42] Ibid., para. 24.

[43] Ibid., para. 2-3.

[44] Ibid., Ginsburg dissenting, para. 1.

[45] Supreme Court of the United States, *Shelby County v. Holder*, para. 3-4, 2013.

[46] Ibid., para. 5.

[47] Ibid, para. 13.

[48] Ibid., para. 6-7.

[49] Ibid., para. 9-12.

[50] Ibid., para. 18-9.

[51] Ibid., para. 21.

[52] Supreme Court of the United States, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013, para. 36.

[53] Ibid., para. 21.

[54] David M. O'Brian, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd. 2011).

[55] Bill Barrow, "GOP Has Tough Choices on Voting Rights Act," *AP Big Story*, July 5, 2013. http://bigstory.ap.org/article/gop-has-tough-choices-voting-rights-act-0.

[56] Eric Holder, *Attorney General Eric Holder Delivers Remarks on the Supreme Court Decision in Shelby Count v. Holder*, Department of Justice, June 25, 2013. http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/ag/speeches/2013/ag-speech-130625.html.

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http://www.npr.org/2013/06/25/195599353/supreme-court-up-to-congress-to-fix-voting-rights-act

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Marx's Gravedigger's Dialectic:
How it Relates in a World of Transnational Corporations and Mass Militaries

Grayson Kerr

The ideas proposed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their Communist Manifesto became a revolutionary new way to look at and decipher the hardships and inequalities that the working class was facing in a newly industrialized world. At the time of the Manifesto's conception, workers were flocking to the cities to find work in the brutal conditions of Europe's post-industrial revolution factories. While the working class during this time period were likely aware of class inequalities between owners and owned, managers and producers, and oppressors and oppressed, the Manifesto – designed as a handbook to be distributed to workers – sharpened and honed the awareness of these inequalities, and provided working class citizens with a group to blame their terrible working conditions on.

Paradoxically, the group upon which most of the blame is put for oppressing the workers, the bourgeoisie, is the group which Marx believes will eventually tip the scales in favour of a working class or proletariat revolution. Arguably one of the most famous and contested notions Marx and Engels put forward in their manifesto, was the theory of capitalism being its own "grave-digger(s)"[1] and the rise of the proletariat after capitalism has died off; Marx and many future academics in the Marxist tradition propose these two happenings as "inevitable".[2] In this essay, I will argue that Marx's grave-digger's dialectic is not inevitable as he, and some current Marxists, believe. This is due in part to the unforeseen rise of transnational corporations, and the fervent willingness of capitalist states to protect their corporate interests with powerful and seemingly undefeatable military and intelligence complexes.

I will structure the argument in this essay by discussing why Marx's prediction of the destruction of capitalism through capitalism has not proven to be correct. I suggest that the reasons behind Marx's prediction not occurring derive from circumstances that Marx could not have predicted during the time period he lived and wrote from. I will argue that transnational corporations have provided a method through which capitalist states can control most forms of resistance from the workers, even if they have reached the point at which they desire a revolution. I will then suggest that Marx also underestimated the willingness of capitalist states to protect these corporate interests with military and intelligence power. After providing my argument, I will discuss how I believe Marx may have responded to my thesis and the main points he might have raised, were he still alive. I will finish by countering Marx's possible objections and will provide a brief conclusion to my argument. Periodically I will refer to points made in lecture and the Communist Manifesto itself. I will start by providing a short preface to my argument.

It is evident throughout the Communist Manifesto that Marx draws heavily from the state of Europe during the time period he is writing from or in other words, the Manifesto is "very much of its own time".[3] Just as many who saw the Nazi regime as a welcomed return to order from chaotic post World War I Germany could not have predicted the outrageous atrocities they would commit, Marx would have been hard-pressed to predict the extent to which future massive transnational corporations would take over production. That is not to say that Marx was blind to the centralization of workers within major companies. His theory of globalization is a compelling and often referenced argument. I am arguing that he could not have predicted the sheer size of the massive, modern corporate conglomerates that we are so familiar with today.

As the Marxist hypothesis suggests, the gravedigger's dialectic has "turned out not to be inevitable…so far, but many

Marxists argue that…it is becoming more likely as inequalities increase globally".[4] While it would be difficult to argue that inequalities are not increasing globally as the hypothesis states, I suggest that along with these globally increasing inequalities are the equally increasing abilities of capitalist countries to suppress the discontent required for large-scale revolution. Along with this increase in ability to suppress discontent, the ability and willingness of military and intelligence complexes to intervene to protect capitalist corporate interests has also increased in the 20th century. To represent this, I will refer to notions of imperialism and capitalist dominance presented in John Bellamy Foster's article "Naked Imperialism". I will now discuss how transnational corporations are able to control and censor discontent.

One of the most destructive traits of transnational corporations is evident in the first half of the name, the fact that they are transnational. The significance of this is often simplistically underestimated. Yes, their transnational nature means that they are usually large companies who have expanded internationally, but the significance lies in that they have the ability to select the cheapest possible country to produce their products in, and the ability to pick up and move if they feel there will be resistance from the workers in their factories. Marx predicted that globalization would eventually bring people from all sectors of the working class together in large factories and this would result in the sharing of common traits such as a dislike for the capitalist system and a desire for change. Marx likely could not have predicted the ability of these corporations to close shop and move with the ease that they do.

While workers may have a small chance to organize to express their discord with brutal hours, bad conditions, and small wages, the company simply needs to move their manufacturing operations to a different country and with many underdeveloped countries desperate for employment opportunities, these corporations will likely have no trouble in finding a cheaper

producer which they can exploit to an even further extent. During the time period that Marx lived in, if companies could not afford raises in labour costs or the lost profits associated with a strike then it would often mean shutting down.

It is interesting to note that while transnational corporations are often exploiting the producers of their products, this is not what the consumer sees. The consumer likely sees a large corporation, which may hold a massive share of the market, but also has morals and values and may even donate to different charities or sponsor community welfare interests within the consumer state. This may be true in the capitalist state where they are selling their products but they are often connected to the producing companies indirectly or through a series or system of vague contracts and connections which allows the company to claim it did not know about the brutal conditions and wages if these things are somehow revealed. In Marx's lifetime, large conglomerates likely owned factories within the consuming state that had the company name emblazoned over the front of the building. It is hard for the proletariat to rise if they are not even seen or heard from, and the connection between the corporations and the producers is often hard to see by the general public in the capitalist state.

I will continue my argument by providing a hypothetical example of the type of situation I suggest above. Imagine a large multinational technology company which I will call Global-Tech for the purpose of this argument. Global-Tech specializes in portable notebook computers for travel and work. The manufacturers of these computers were at one time located in the capitalist state where Global-Tech originated from but have since moved to a developing country to reduce manufacturing costs. If one were to examine Global-Tech's website, there would likely be a story in its "about us" section that describes how the company started in the capitalist state but moved elsewhere in order to bring consumers better products; there is nothing mentioned here about labour costs. The company hangs on to its identity as a

manufacturer of goods in line with the values of the capitalist country, which is the side that the consumer sees. In reality, however, it relies on cheap labour from exploited workers in brutal and substandard working conditions to produce its products through a series of contracts and subcontracts which leaves little to no connection between Global-Tech and the producer except for the fact that the producer's products are ending up on Global-Tech shelves or in large technology retail stores. Now if discontent over the working conditions and treatment of workers in the factories that Global-Tech is associated with reaches a tipping point where a strike is inevitable, Global-Tech will likely give the company an ultimatum stating that the factory management has the choice to either end the strike, or Global-Tech will move to another manufacturing company in another country. Managers will likely agree to crack down on the strike, often violently, and this can involve military and police intervention by the state, if it is a state-owned company, as may be the case in countries where most of the market is nationalized. This example shows how transnational corporations hold power over their producers and can suppress any attempt at a proletariat rise. Even though, as Marx predicted, the transition to factory work would build "conditions of communication and association among the workers",[5] the ability for this new found class awareness cannot move beyond the factory for fear of losing what is often the only form of income the workers have and the prospect of being met with violent suppression.

Now that I have discussed my argument concerning how transnational corporations affect the proposed inevitability of Marx's "gravedigger's dialectic," I will discuss the second part of my argument regarding the willingness of capitalist states to intervene with their military and intelligence complexes to protect or promote capitalists interests abroad. This can be considered another method capitalist states use to deny the Marx's "gravedigger's" theory from taking place. As I suggested in the case of transnational corporations discussed above, capitalist

countries had militaries during Marx's time and it was not uncommon for states to go to war for capitalist or more commonly imperialist interests. What has changed, and what I believe Marx could not have predicted, was first, the size of the standing militaries that many capitalist states keep, and second, the willingness of these states to deploy overwhelming military power in circumstances which may not even be considered armed conflicts. As John Bellamy Foster suggests in "Naked Imperialism," capitalist states – like the U.S. – are not even trying to hide their imperialist nature anymore; they suggest that dominated states must fall in line with their capitalist objectives or face destruction, sold as "preventative" or "preemptive" wars to the public.[6] The other side of this overwhelming military power is the ability of capitalist states to use their intelligence services to aid capitalist interests and prevent the working class from its supposedly inevitable rise. The United States has many well documented events that I will use as examples for the following argument; however, other capitalist countries have participated in similar activities.

I will start by discussing the size of standing militaries in capitalist states today. In Marx's time and even up to and including World War II, it was common for countries to keep militaries between wars, yet when the countries went to war or began an imperial conquest against a foreign nation, units were often raised to increase the military's size to something that could achieve victory. Today, the military in capitalist states functions as almost a state within a state. It has its own set of rules and laws, its own police forces, its own driver's licensing branch, and military bases so large that they often appear as sprawling cities. Greg Easterbrook is quoted in Foster's "Naked Imperialism" as stating that current U.S. military forces are "the strongest the world has ever known…stronger than the Wehrmacht in 1940, [and] stronger than the legions at the height of Roman power".[7] While there have been some cutbacks recently to military spending after the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, no longer are units simply

disbanded after they have served their purpose in a conflict. They often still train and prepare to deploy in the name of national security.

Another example of a change in the willingness to deploy overwhelming military power to aid capitalist interests is military force being deployed for events that fall outside of the definitions of war or when deployed in conflicts, protecting capitalist interests above all else. An example of militaries being deployed outside the definitions of war could be how the United States often deploys large naval fleets to conduct show-of-force exercises; these occur in the vicinity of South Korea or Japan when countries such as China or North Korea make territorial claims. The reasons for these are not only for the protection of allies. Rather, it is likely that South Korea and Japan hold many American business interests. Another somewhat clichéd example of militaries protecting capitalist interests would be the American invasion of Iraq. The rationales for the conflict's beginnings is too lengthy to discuss here, however the initial days of the invasion provide an example of the focus on capitalist interests above all else. In the first few days of the invasion – and in some cases before the official invasion began – American military troops captured key oil facilities owned by Iraq. Now a popular counter-argument for this would be that troops had to capture these facilities or risk the potential of another environmental disaster like the last American-Iraqi conflict where Saddam Hussein's troops destroyed oil wells. I would argue that although this theory holds some weight, it does not give an explanation for why offices of the Iraqi oil industry were some of the first to be captured in Iraq's capital at a time when some of Iraq's most treasured landmarks and museums were being looted and destroyed. These two examples demonstrate how capitalist countries increasingly use their militaries to protect capitalist interests and intervene when they feel that these interests are threatened, even if this perceived threat does not occur as a result of war. As Rashid Khalidi describes in his article "Resurrecting Empire", America risks being perceived, through its

invasion of Iraq, as "stepping into the boots of western colonial occupiers who are still remembered bitterly throughout the Middle East".[8] Foster's "Naked Imperialism" argues that this return to colonial styled imperialism is not only accepted in the U.S. but is also intentionally included as part of their foreign policy.

The other side of this intervention by capitalists, to protect their interests, is the operations of capitalist intelligence services to serve interests other than protecting the general public from harm. It seems fairly logical that intelligence services have a duty to protect business interests, concerning the state abroad, in the form of counter-intelligence; however many capitalist intelligence services do not engage in counter-intelligence alone. There is a tradition among intelligence services in the Western world of intervening, usually covertly, in the political affairs of foreign nations to achieve outcomes that suit capitalist interests in that country regardless of how those capitalist interests suit the desire of the foreign nation's people. A famous example of this is the CIA intervention in Iran in 1953, which took the democratically elected Prime-Minister Mossadegh out of power, and replaced him with a more totalitarian leader in order to advance capitalist interests in Iran's oil industry. This is certainly not the first or last time that the CIA has been instrumental in a regime change. Changes such as this have occurred recently in the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan in 2001/2002 and in the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq in 2003. The CIA has entire sections devoted purely to political intervention and regime change. This indicates the capability and willingness of capitalist states' intelligence services in participating in political intervention to advance capitalist interests in foreign nations.

The next part of this essay will focus on the possible counter-arguments that Marx may have suggested to my thesis if he were still alive. It is important to note here that there are no absolutes in this counter-argument; this is only how I *imagine* Marx might have objected to my argument. The first counter-

argument I believe Marx may have suggested is that the length of time needed for capitalism to destroy itself is extensive. Transnational corporations and the willingness of military and intelligence complexes to defend capitalist interests may be just a link in the processes required for the inevitable rise of the proletariat. In their article "Marx and Engels: In Praise of Global-ization," authors Susan M. Jellissen and Fred M. Gottheil propose that the internationalization or globali-zation of the world economies forces the working men of the world to have "no country" making "national differ-ences among them increasingly vanish".[9] Context-ualized in my argument, this could actually propose that the increase in transnational corporations could be helping to advance the inevitable rise of the proletariat and simply needs more time to reach this point.

Another argument that I imagine Marx might provide is noted within part one of the Communist Manifesto itself. It is the section in which Marx proposes that "when the class struggle nears the decisive hour...a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat".[10] Marx specifically points out that this mobile section of the bourgeoisie is made up of ideologists who understand "the historical movement as a whole".[11] I believe that Marx would argue that while inequalities have increased, the tipping point or "decisive hour" has not yet been reached and will depend on further globalization to reach the point at which differences between the working class truly disappear and bourgeoisie ideologists or a "small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift".[12] Only then, I believe Marx would argue, could the rise of the proletariat and the destruction of the capitalist system become inevitable.

At this point I will provide my objections to the counter-argument presented above. I will start by saying that Marx as well as the authors Jellissen and Gottheil bring up compelling arguments in their respective works. I believe that the Marxist notion that inequalities are increasing as globalization spreads

capitalist interests across the world is correct, however I do object to these inequalities making Marx's gravedigger's dialectic inevitable as Marx and some current Marxist's may suggest. The increasing inequalities suggested would have the ability to increase resentment among those exploited by capitalist interests; I believe, though, that capitalist transnational corporations have demonstrated that they can out manoeuvre and over power any form of resistance from the proletariat. Their ability to simply pick up and move to a new manufacturing location of lower labour costs in the face of any form of resistance means that resentment will be suppressed even whilethe proletariat is being brought together and is sharing ideas and views on their exploitation.

The other side of my objections to the counter-argument noted above regards the capacity for capitalist states to use their overwhelming military force to control and protect capitalist interests abroad. If as Marxists propose, the rise of the proletariat is inevitable, how does the proletariat plan to deal with the massive military and intelligence complexes held by many capitalist nations that will do anything to protect capitalist interests? One has only to look at the way that capitalist states will deploy military forces for events that are not even considered war, or at the way that intelligence services can implement regime change – to suit capitalist interests – to realize that there are serious hurdles in the proletariat rising. Capitalism cannot be expected to destroy itself when its corporations and militaries extend a form of such absolute power over the proletariat. The working class in many countries faces no choice but to accept the brutal factory conditions they are presented with because the alternative is to not work at all, and face the prospect of having little to no income.

In this essay, I have discussed why I believe that Marx's theory on capitalism destroying itself is not realistic due to circumstances that Marx could not have foreseen during his lifetime. I argued that the rise of massive transnational corporations, and particularly their ability to move to

manufacturing plants located in different countries, leaves the workers free to be exploited by the corporations through brutal working conditions and low wages. Yet, the consumers of these products in the capitalist states rarely get to see this side of the large corporations. The other reason, which I argued made the inevitable rising of the proletariat class unrealistic, is the willingness of capitalist states to use their large militaries to protect and advance capitalist interests in foreign states. I have suggested that war is no longer a prerequisite for these military deployments. After presenting my argument, I discussed a brief counter-argument on how I believe Marx would object if he were still alive today, using excerpts from the Communist Manifesto, and an article discussing how globalization relates to the unification of the working class and working class ideas. After presenting this counter-argument, I discussed my objections to why I believe that transnational corporations and massive capitalist military – and intelligence complexes – would be able to defeat even the strongest desire by the working class for changes to their working conditions.

Both Marx and current academics in the Marxist tradition present very compelling arguments on globalization and the eventual rise of the proletariat, but they underestimate the sheer power and will of capitalist countries to keep their system alive and protected.

Notes

[1] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

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