

MIR

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THE JOURNAL

The McGill International Review is an annual publication of the International Relations Students' Association of McGill (IRSAM) that provides undergraduate students at McGill University with the opportunity to publish exceptional academic work from the field of International Relations. Established over a decade ago as a subscription-based academic journal with professional contributors, its concept underwent a revitalization two years ago to recognize outstanding undergraduate work. The McGill International Review has grown over the years and the articles in this volume offer great diversity and encompass a myriad of issues pertaining to international relations.

We sincerely thank all the editors for their dedication, determination, vision and unwavering enthusiasm. We hope to continue recognizing excellent writing in the years to come.

Sincerely,
Sumaira Mazhar
Vice-President, Internal Operations
IRSAM 2012 – 2013

FOREWORDS

As the last year has indicated, international politics is not just about states anymore. While states can and do still act as the primary shapers of the global political order, the collection of articles in this volume of the McGill International Review reflect how the roles of inter-state organizations and sub-state actors continue to expand.

Perhaps the most notable phenomenon in the past year has been the influence of “voices from below,” that is, grassroots mobilization, often by underrepresented communities. Such mobilization was evident here in Canada with the emergence of the Idle No More movement in response to Bill C-45, as well as continued cross-border activism in both Canada and the United States in response to climate change in general and oil sands development and pipeline construction in particular.

Elsewhere, we have witnessed thousands protesting austerity measures in European capitals, hundreds of miners marching for labor rights in South Africa, and scores demonstrating for tighter punishments for sexual assault in India. We have also seen a number of challenges to state authorities led by women, including Pussy Riot’s controversial protest in Russia, Malala Yousafzai’s phenomenal resilience and commitment to girls’ education in Pakistan, and countless Syrian women who are taking on a myriad of roles in their country’s civil conflict.

The past year has also seen a mix of unprecedented cross-border communication, from the controversial but undeniably notable viral dissemination of “Kony 2012,” to direct contacts between seemingly unlikely individuals like America’s Dennis Rodman and North Korea’s Kim Jong Un. Many are also waiting to see what kind of global outreach might extend from the selection of Pope Francis as the first Latin American pontiff. We are also continuing to witness ever shifting roles for inter-state organizations, including established actors like the United Nations and the European Union, as well as newer actors like the Friends of Syria Group.

The articles in this volume of MIR provide valuable insights into the changing roles of states, individuals, social movements, and international organizations in shaping the trajectory of the global political order. As a professor in McGill’s Department of Political Science, I sincerely thank the MIR editorial board, the International Relations Student Association at McGill (IRSAM), and all the contributors for their efforts in producing this journal and amplifying new voices in the study of international politics.

Julie M. Norman, PhD

Department of Political Science, McGill University

FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

The McGill International Review strives to help undergraduate voices be heard and discovered. How, you may ask, does the research of undergraduate students in International Relations fit into the larger debate on pressing public policy issues? To this, I say many of today's policy dilemmas will not be resolved this month, this year, or even within the next decade. Solving these domestic and international issues will be the challenge of the current and recent undergraduate students.

The seven articles featured in this edition of the journal address a number of the long-term challenges that will become the life's work of today's undergraduate students. The diverse topics explored in this journal encompass issues such as uneven global power relations and hegemony created by the West, changing cultural identities of individuals in the diaspora, as well as the role of women and social media in activism. Assessing the roles of institutions in domestic and international contexts, and their sustainability when plagued with issues such as transparency and public disillusionment also represents a key challenge for our generation and generations to come - as is again explored by some of the articles in this journal.

To my phenomenal editorial board, I would like to thank you for all your efforts, insights, and commitment without which a journal of such caliber would never have been realized. To Professor Julie Norman from McGill's Department of Political Science thank you for your insightful foreword and well wishes. Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to Sumaira Mazhar, our editorial consultant who managed to keep us on track throughout this yearlong process.

The high level of intellectualism, creativity, and passion of my peers at McGill inspire me. These papers are critical, engaging and enlightening and testify to the high quality of academic work produced by undergraduate students at McGill University. The future looks bright when there are so many talented people thinking about how to make the world a better place. I hope that these papers will broaden your perspective as much as they have mine.

Laila Rupani
Editor In Chief

MEET THE EDITORS

Born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya, Laila swears by the magic of an African Safari having been on 20 such experiences and still counting. Going through her days with a 'Hakuna Matata' mentality, it is a very rare sight to see her fraught or stressed out. Currently pursuing a B.A in Economics and International Development Studies, she begins, ends and spends an unhealthily large part of her day absorbed in current affairs articles on multiple media platforms. Over the past two summers she has interned at the Aga Khan Foundation, East Africa as well as the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy in Bangalore, India working on public-private-civil society partnership initiatives.

Editor In Chief: *Laila Rupani*

Along with serving on IRSAM's Board of Directors as Vice-President of Internal Operations, Sumaira is heavily involved with the McGill International Review as the Editorial Consultant this year. She has had quite a journey as an editor. Starting as the inaugural Editor-in-Chief of her high school newspaper, The Student Times, she went on to be an integral part of her CEGEP's campus newspaper, The PaperCut as the News Editor. She now serves as the Student Representative on the Editorial Board of OT Now, a publication of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy. She is excited to be a part of the McGill International Review as it gives her the opportunity to combine her extensive editing experience with her passion for international relations.

Editorial Consultant: *Sumaira Mazhar*

Currently in U1 studying Physiology with a minor in Computer Science at McGill, Alice sees herself pursuing a career in medicine in the near future. While one hand reaches out to answer her endless scientific curiosity, she also searches for sublimity, especially through art and design, with enthusiasm. She enjoys learning way too excessively thus she constantly wishes for more time to spend in her free time and laments over the lack of it. With a pen in hand and a plethora of ideas, she is up for something good for MIR this year!

Design Editor: *Alice Shen*

Kevin Coles

Kevin Coles is a 4th year Economics and Finance student at McGill University. After interning at The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong this past summer, he is excited to return to the McGill International Review as a Senior Editor. He recently served as the Editor-in-Chief of The Ambassador, a publication of the McGill Model United Nations Assembly. Additionally, he has been involved with Liberal McGill for the past three years, serving as its VP Finance. This September, Kevin will be joining the Toronto office of an international management consulting firm full-time.

Calin Radu Giosan

Radu Giosan is in his 3rd year at McGill University and is pursuing a Joint-Honours Political Science and History degree with minors in Economics and Italian. He spent last summer interning in Brussels at the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) while also attending conferences at the European Parliament and European Commission on a daily basis. Additionally, he is an active participant at Model United Nations Conferences at McGill.

Andrew Tyau

Originally from Hong Kong, Andrew grew up in Vancouver before making his way across the country to Montreal. Finishing his third and final year at McGill studying International Development Studies and Political Science, Andrew hopes to pursue graduate studies in the United Kingdom. Over the past summer, Andrew interned at a boutique consultancy firm, health care NGO, and the Hong Kong office of Kirkland & Ellis LLP. With a strong interest in international affairs and IRSAM's initiatives, Andrew is excited to be a part of MIR as a Senior Editor.

Chris Liu

Chris Liu is currently a U2 student in Honours Political Science, with a Minor in Philosophy. Chris will be interning in Singapore this summer with Dr. Chee Soon Juan, who is the leader of the opposition Singapore Democratic Party. Following his undergraduate studies, Chris hopes to pursue a PhD in Political Science. His research interests include Chinese politics and East Asian foreign policy.

Faraz Alidina

From Toronto, Ontario and of Tanzanian descent, Faraz is a Joint Honours Middle East Studies and Political Science student. He currently works with the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies as their Somalia Desk Officer and with the Institute for Middle East Studies Canada. He is also an avid traveler, having visited parts of Europe, North and East Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

Henry Fieglar

Henry Kasimir Fieglar is a U1 student currently pursuing a double major degree in Philosophy and History, with a minor in political science. Though born in Toronto, Canada, Henry has spent much of his life abroad. He has lived in Cuba, Syria, Mali and Cyprus. When not working diligently as an editor for the McGill International Review Henry enjoys long walks on the beach and candle-lit dinners. Henry hopes to see the journal further develop into a comprehensive and reputable international relations publication and believes he can bring a unique energy and perspective to its ranks. He hopes to be a long-term contributor and member of the pre-eminent international relations journal at McGill University.

Nicole Georges

Born and raised in Kitchener, Ontario, Nicole Georges spends her time dabbling in the fields she really loves: politics and history. This past summer she had the tremendous opportunity of interning with a Senior Fellow at CIGI and the Brookings Institute at the University of Waterloo, as well as having interned at a law firm in Ottawa. She also serves as an Arts Rep to SSMU, where she sits on both the Arts Undergraduate Society and the Students' Society of McGill University councils. She hopes to pursue these passions (wherever they lead her) after her time at McGill. She is excited to be a part of the McGill International Review this year as she believes it is an exposé of McGill's talent; reflecting the diverse, serious, and challenging dialogue that seems to be innate among McGill students.

Esther Lee

Esther is in her 2nd year at McGill university, studying honours International Development Studies and minoring in Middle East Studies and International Relations. Hailing from the restless metropolis that is Toronto, Esther feels most at home in the bustling atmosphere of a city. As a model united nations participant and a member of the McMUN 2013 Secretariat, she has always been a keen follower of foreign politics and an unapologetic critic of global diplomacy. Esther is excited to explore her journalistic interests through the McGill International Review and looks forward to excavating undergraduate intellect within McGill's diverse community!

Minu Walia

Minu Walia was born and raised in Mississauga, Ontario. She is in her third year of her Bachelor of Arts degree and is a double major in Political Science and Canadian Studies. Minu is a passionate individual that is committed to promoting change in the world. This past summer she interned at a grassroots NGO in New Delhi, India, where she worked on projects which spread awareness on the rights of children. Minu has been an active member in variety clubs and programs throughout campus, such as the International Relations Students' Association of McGill, and the Women in House Program.



From L to R: (*Top Row*) Henry Fieglar, Kevin Coles, Calin Radu Giosan, Faraz Ajidina, (*Middle Row*) Andrew Tyau, Sumaira Mazhar, (*Bottom Row*) Chris Liu, Esther Lee, Laila Rupani, Minu Walia, Nicole Georges, (*Not Present*) Alice Shen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

10

Sophia Sunderji
The U.S. and Belgium's Perpetuation of Authoritarianism:
The Democratic Republic of the Congo

18

Shaina Agbayani
Betwixt in Between: Multiple Mobilities of South Asian
Women in and out of the Diaspora

26

Valentin Robiliard
America's Secret Wars: Has Obama Gone Extreme?

38

Radu Giosan
Democratic Deficit From Below: Elections and the Electorate

50

Karel Asha
"Mothers at Home and Activists on the Street?" The Role of
Women in the Syrian Revolution of 2011-2012

66

Melisa Yorgancioglu
Investigating Social Exclusion for Overcoming It

78

William Debost
Seeking Relevance in the Twenty-First Century Global Ar-
chitecture: The Case of the OECD

Author **Biography**



Sophia Sunderji is a 3rd year McGill student, pursuing a BCom in Management, with a double minor in International Development and Economics. She has nurtured her passion for global affairs and development from a young age and is currently involved in a social business team, an Economic Development Club and IRSAM at McGill. Although Toronto will always be considered her hometown, Sophia absolutely loves living in the upbeat city of Montreal. When not immersed in the world of foreign affairs, she enjoys playing the piano, writing, spends time with friends and baking.

The U.S. and Belgium's Perpetuation of Authoritarianism: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Sophia Sunderji
Faculty of Management

Abstract

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's political sphere has been forever altered by the dominant interests of the West, most notably the United States and Belgium. Upon independence, democratically elected Patrice Lumumba was prepared and eager to lead the Congo to peace and prosperity. However, naturally, the political and economic interests of the U.S. and Belgium were placed ahead of concern for the Congo's security and success. The U.S., supremely concerned about their dispute with the Soviet Union as well as their investments, collaborated with Belgium to orchestrate the execution of Lumumba. The result? The destabilization of the Congo, which ultimately led to the rise of one of the world's most brutal authoritarian regime, under Mobutu. The remnants of Mobutu's neopatrimonialism, violence and human rights abuses – abetted by U.S. military aid – are still seen and felt today by the Congolese people, reflecting the global hegemony created by the West.

Why does the influence of external actors facilitate the continued existence of an authoritarian regime? Dominant international players often exert their authority for the purposes of personal gain and strategic interests, at the expense of fragile states. International backing decreases the developmental capacity of the state and encourages state rulers to rely on clientelism, whereby the leader gains legitimacy from a network of clients and pockets state wealth, instead of implementing a rational-legal system.¹ This influence was particularly evident in the Cold War context, at a time when democracy had the potential to prevail in current-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yet, the United States and Belgium possessed their own political and economic agendas, namely preventing the spread of communism, victory in the U.S.-Soviet Union Cold War and the West's economic interests in natural resources. The U.S. and Belgium destroyed the Congo's potential for a hopeful and democratic future, by orchestrating the assassination of the democratically elected Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, a potent threat to the West whose ideals did not align with American and Belgian interests. While Belgium claimed the assassination to be a “political immaturity of the Congolese”, de Witte asserts that Lumumba was overthrown due to “the

important international players who engineered [the] intervention in the Congo from the outset.”²¹ The West’s motivations, based on self-interest, thus facilitated the rise of autocrat Mobutu Sese Seko, a brutal dictator infamous for his corruption of the Congo and cruel human rights abuses. After assisting Mobutu in his rise to power, the U.S. supported his brutal regime by providing military and financial aid, which transformed Mobutu into the master of neopatrimonialism. The West’s neocolonial desires to extend their control over the Congo, in order to exploit investment opportunities, ultimately prevented the Congo from pursuing national unity, democracy and economic independence. The United States and Belgium therefore facilitated Mobutu’s authoritarian regime in post-colonial Congo by directly facilitating Mobutu’s rise to his dictatorship and fuelling his dependence on neopatrimonial rule, in order to gain political and economic advantages and pursue their own interests.

Political Interests: Containing the Spread of Communism

The tension between two rising superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, came to dominate the international stage directly after World War II, later known as the Cold War. The tension was played out at the expense of newly independent and fragile post-colonial Congo, which gained independence on June 30, 1960, after pressuring their colonizer, Belgium, to grant them full sovereignty. The U.S. was adamant in keeping the Congo away from communist influence and, as a result, executed all in their power to maintain close contact with the nation and oversee its governance. In fact, the U.S. and Belgium both supported a conservative future for Congo, often referred to as *EurAfrica*. From the very beginning of Congo’s sovereignty, therefore, international tension was imminent in the nation, dominating the

Congo’s political scene. Congolese President Joseph Kasavubu’s moderate ideals rendered him willing to accept the West’s support and he thus aligned himself with the West’s desires of maintaining a close connection. However, much to the U.S. and Belgium’s dismay, Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected Prime Minister, was a radical leader with a grand pan-African vision for the Congo. Lumumba sought to restore the nation to its original, pre-colonial state. As a nationalist leader, Lumumba’s political ideology did not coincide with Belgium’s attempts to “transfer power in an orderly fashion to a well-groomed moderate leadership group that could be expected to advance Western interests.”³ Instead, a politician of fiery courage and high hopes, Lumumba longed for genuine independence and control over his nation’s resources, in order to increase the standard of living for his citizens and promote national unity. His popularity amongst the Congolese was unparalleled. However, Lumumba’s nationalistic goals threatened the West, who were concerned about communism and also yearned for control over Katanga’s rich resources, notably copper and uranium. Not known for their subtlety, the U.S. and Belgium were both keen to exert their power in a nation that was not their own. The Congo soon came to realize that the notions of freedom and equality – to which they had aspired at independence – were merely euphemisms for a continuation of foreign domination, leading to the prevalence of neocolonialism in the Congo.

The days following independence saw the spread of mutiny within the newly named Democratic Republic of the Congo, a period between 1960 and 1965 that came to be known as the Congo Crisis. The crisis was not simply an internal conflict. Rather, the predicament was spurred on by Belgian-US interventionist measures and, as always, backed by the United Nations, which increased the legitimacy of their actions.⁴ The Congolese army was abated by a Belgian intervention in attempts to restore order. The Belgian military then intervened once again, in the Katanga secession – a province seeking independence

1 Ludo de Witte’s *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba* is a written account of the truth behind Patrice Lumumba’s death. The book reveals the instrumental role of the U.S., Belgium and the CIA in the deliberate murder of Patrice Lumumba.

– on July 10, 1960, under the pretense of protecting European lives and property.⁵ The Belgians went so far as to drive all non-Katangese soldiers out of Katanga – this, in essence, represented a form of ethnic cleansing. Belgium’s primary purpose in its military involvement in both the secession and army was based on supporting the *moderates*, to prolong their control over the region, and furthermore, prevent the spread of communism. Belgium’s “foreign interference in Congolese affairs” thus resulted in the split between moderates and radicals, eventually giving way to Mobutu’s authoritarian regime.⁶

² Instead of supporting Lumumba’s nationalist ideology for the sake of a democratic and prosperous Congo, the West’s “external sponsorship and backing only deepened the crisis, as many of the people politicized by radical nationalist parties perceived the moderates as traitors to the national cause.”⁷ It is highly evident that Belgium’s interference exacerbated internal political tensions within the Congo, adding unnecessary challenges to Lumumba’s role of maintaining stability in the nation. Such repressive interference aligned perfectly with the West’s ultimate goal of destabilizing Lumumba.

Meanwhile, Lumumba was not content to simply sit idly by and tolerate the absurdities of outside forces intervening without his consent. Lumumba and Kasavubu therefore sought after support from the UN, to protect their nation from outside interference; yet, the UN adamantly refused, as Secretary-General Hammarskjöld fully endorsed the West’s interests. The Congolese leaders thus felt compelled to appeal to the Soviet Union for support, which provoked the U.S. to label Lumumba as a communist, though he most certainly was not. Much debate exists regarding Lumumba’s alignment with

communism. Notable scholar Urquhart places the blame on Lumumba and his request to the Soviet Union, arguing that he instilled fear and apprehension amongst the international community and other African governments.⁸ However, Urquhart fails to understand a crucial point; Lumumba felt obligated to appeal to the Soviet Union, as the UN had already refused to provide aid. Left with no viable options, Lumumba chose to take action through the Soviet Union to rid his nation of foreign intruders, and not to align his nation with the Soviet’s communist ideology. Furthermore, as Schatzberg asserts, the West’s fears regarding Lumumba’s proliferation of communism were unfounded, as Lumumba was “a populist and a nationalist rather than a communist.”⁹ U.S. concerns of communism proliferation were therefore exaggerated to justify the U.S.’s intrusion in the Congo.

Hostility towards Lumumba grew, founded primarily on the conflicting views for Congo’s future between Lumumba and the West. It is thus evident that the military intervention of Belgium underscored its strategic interests in controlling the Congo and ensuring U.S. victory over the Soviet Union. This prevented Lumumba from leading his country in a manner that would benefit the people. Foreign intervention furthermore prevented Congolese nationalism and democracy from taking flight, thus setting the stage for an authoritarian leader, upon whom external actors could exert their control. Lumumba himself recognized the West’s “only vision of Africa [was] lion hunting, slave markets and colonial conquest” due to their “lust for [the Congo’s] wealth.”¹⁰ The geopolitical interests of the U.S. and Europe ultimately converted Congo into a field of diverging viewpoints, with a fateful conclusion.

The Assassination of Lumumba: Orchestrated by the U.S. and Belgium

Together, Belgium and the U.S. played an instrumental role in the assassination of Lumumba, a defining mark in Congo’s history, revealing the

² While the *moderates* refer to the political group whom advocated conservative political ideology, the *radicals* were progressive nationalists led by Lumumba, who supported positive neutralism and the pan-African ideals. This split is, in part, what aggravated political tensions in the Congo and allowed for the establishment of an authoritarian regime (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002).

extent to which the West facilitated Mobutu's rise to power. De Witte's revelation confirms the key role of external forces in Lumumba's murder, specifically how President Eisenhower authorized the operation to 'remove' Lumumba from the political scene. The U.S., Belgium and the United Nations then worked alongside Kasavubu to orchestrate an elaborate plan to eliminate Lumumba. In fact, the Belgian ruling class was responsible, by and large, for Lumumba's death. The minister for African affairs in Belgium, Count Harold d'Aspremont Lynden, signed a document in 1960 that called for the elimination of Lumumba.¹¹ After being dismissed from government by Kasavubu under Belgium's orders, Lumumba was placed under house arrest. Ultimately, Lumumba's fate lay in the greedy hands of the West. He attempted to escape in order to rally up popular support, but was eventually captured, tortured then assassinated on January 17, 1961.¹² The U.S. and Belgium evidently paved the path for Mobutu's ascension to political power as President and facilitated his rise as a cruel dictator, soon to become infamous for human rights abuses and widespread corruption. Although it was a police commissioner who carried out the act of assassination itself, the responsibility lay in the hands of the Congo Committee, Belgian representatives in Congo, as well as the UN and the U.S.¹³

Much controversy existed regarding the death of Lumumba, due to the contradictory myths spread since his assassination. Many Belgian authorities, such as Mr. Wiggy, out rightly denied involvement in Lumumba's death claiming that "the Belgian government had no hand in Lumumba's arrest, detention, transfer, treatment and final fate."¹⁴ Yet, de Witte's accurate account provides proof of Belgium's orchestration of the morbid affair, as both

the Belgian and U.S. governments authorized and planned the assassination. Furthermore, Belgium openly admitted to its "moral responsibility" in the assassination of Lumumba four decades after his assassination.¹⁵ Despite the denials concocted to conceal their selfish incentives, the U.S. and Belgium's veritable actions and motivations have been revealed. This murder has been termed "an international crime, incompatible with the United Nations Charter" and a "violation of basic human rights" by Moscow and France.¹⁶ Authorities of the UN permitted this unjust act of indecency, despite its clear infringements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a UN document adopted in 1948 and signed by the U.S. and Belgium. Dependency theorists would certainly agree that this reinforces the global hegemony that perpetually favours Western countries, enabling them to pursue their self-interests, regardless of the detrimental effects on other nations. The great voice of national unity and democracy in Congo was silenced, largely attributed to the actions of the West.

Mobutu's Neopatrimonial Rule: Facilitated by the West

Once in power, Mobutu's next major challenge involved remaining in power. Not only did the U.S. play a critical role in bestowing upon Mobutu the authority he soon came to abuse, the Americans also enabled Mobutu to stay in power. Due to his externally backed regime, Mobutu effortlessly established an authoritarian regime and ruled as a dictator for thirty-two years. Authoritarianism is characterized by political centralization and repression, although varies in the extent to which the ruler controls the nation. Mobutu's rule was a strict, right-winged dictatorship, wherein he exerted full control and depended primarily on neopatrimonialism – a "hybrid political system where customs of patrimonialism co-exist with rational-legal institutions."¹⁷ Like many other post-independence African rulers, Mobutu combined aspects of African patrimonialism, such as loyalty and gift-giving traditions, with the formal regulations of a rational-legal system. This enabled Mobutu to employ

3 De Witte describes three levels of responsibility in the assassination of Lumumba, namely the Congo Committee, Belgian representatives in the Congo and the police commissioners who carried out the act. Though initially considered rumours or conspiracy acts, this has since been confirmed as historical fact (de Witte, 2001).

clientelism, characterized by a patron-client circle, in which Mobutu distributed wealth and resources to his loyal circle, namely the ruling elite class. The clients, keen on receiving benefits, helped Mobutu preserve his power.

Yet, to ensure the satisfaction of his clients and his own protection, Mobutu depended on external actors. At the centre of the clientele ring sat Mobutu, surrounded by personal bodyguards, to ensure the safety of this ostentatious leader. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) viewed Mobutu as an anti-communist ally and was therefore content to train Mobutu's personal guard. The nation itself was renamed Zaire under Mobutism and became equated with its leader, representing the epitome of personal rule and established Mobutu's legitimacy. Unlike Lumumba, whose legitimacy was derived through the support of civil society and democracy, Mobutu acquired legitimacy through his charismatic and traditional rule, clientelism, the manipulation of state resources, and coercion. Fundamental state structures of the Congo were abolished in favour of the convoluted system of loyalty rewards, punishments and patron-client networks. Upon the surfaces of bank notes, this fearsome autocrat's face, name and decree instilled fear in every corner of the nation. The extent to which he depended on corruption gave rise to a whole new concept, kleptocracy, or rather the concept of 'government by theft.'¹⁸ In fact, Mobutu frequently "stashed much of the country's economic output in European Banks" resulting in a situation where "state institutions came to be little more than a way of delivering money to the ruling elite."¹⁹ Mobutu's use of neopatrimonialism depended on corrupt practises and did not allow the Congo to implement formal institutions. This lack of accountability was corrosive to the state, ultimately enabling Mobutu to cling onto his authoritarian regime.

This begs the question of how Mobutu was able to gain these resources, in order to maintain this extensive and impenetrable network. Mobutu's

nationalization of the Congo's mining industry certainly enabled him to accumulate resources and pocket its wealth, thus filling his own back pocket while emptying that of his nation's. In fact, he embezzled \$400 million a year during the 1980's through revenue earned from the state's copper and cobalt exports.²⁰ Yet, the U.S. Defense Department also played an instrumental role by providing the Congo with one of the largest U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) missions and military attaches, along with \$3-4 million for training Zairian military personnel.²¹ In fact, the U.S. provided a grand total of \$850 million in economic and military aid to Zaire between 1960 and 1976.²² The U.S. also physically equipped Mobutu with the military equipment necessary to maintain his authoritarian regime for the purpose of their alliance. Mobutu notably "used his U.S.-supplied arsenal to repress his own people and plunder his nation's economy for three decades," revealing the harsh implications of the West's imperialist actions.²³ This was all in the name of national and global security, as justified by the U.S. The resources enabled Mobutu to maintain his capitalist cronies, distribute wealth to the ruling Congolese elites and stow away large amounts in foreign bank accounts. Without this financial and military support, how would Mobutu have remained in power? As explained by Ndikumana and Boyce, "Mobutu's ability to retain power, while leading his country to economic and political ruin, was largely due to [Western] support."²⁴ Mobutu therefore would not have been able to distribute resources to satisfy his clients and maintain his power without international support. The universal truth is at last revealed. This dire situation illustrated "what the Western ruling classes are capable of when their vital interests are threatened."²⁵

The U.S.'s repressive role thus legitimated Mobutu's rule, allowing his brutal reign to continue. Furthermore, it is highly evident that the relationship was based on an affiliation between the U.S. and the Congo's dictator who ruled the nation, as U.S. policies

were oriented towards “the man rather than the country or the government of Zaire.”²⁶ By ensuring that a pro-West leader maintained power, the U.S. could easily exert its influence over the Congo. The U.S.’s purpose in supporting this ruler was ultimately to accrue benefits. In addition to ensuring that the Congo did not conform to communism, the U.S. also benefitted by using Mobutu to advance its own political objectives in Angola. Keen on supporting a rebel group, who was fighting against the Angolan government who supported the Soviet Union, “[the] U.S. [used] Zaire as a springboard for operations into neighbouring Angola.”²⁷ The U.S.’s close ties with the Congolese leader no doubt enabled the U.S. to gain many advantages. One must then ask if the containment of the threat of communism was the sole motivator behind the U.S. and Belgium’s keen interest in the Congo? Alas no, for the attractive lures of economic incentives too had a hold on the greedy hearts of Western nations.

The U.S. and Belgium’s Economic Interests

The U.S.’s involvement in Congolese affairs was cemented from the start with the U.S.-Zairian special relationship. President Dwight Eisenhower established this bond in the 1960’s with an underlying purpose of manipulating the Congo to favour the U.S.’s interests. The U.S., under both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, argued that the American policy towards the Congo prevented communism from penetrating Congo, thus averting the spread of communism. The U.S. administration at the time moreover maintained that “territorial disintegration, regional instability and, ultimately, communist expansion into the heart of Africa” was the sole alternative to Mobutu’s repressive regime.²⁸ However, the expansion of communism was not an inevitable consequence. Many solutions, such as supporting Lumumba’s democracy, would have allowed the Congo to fulfill their hopes for an economically prosperous future and democratically

sound political sphere. This pretense of anti-communism sentiments, though certainly still one reason for external intervention as explained in the case of Belgium’s military interference, was not the primary motivation. Instead, economic interests underscored the intervention measures of the U.S. and allowed for the sustenance of Mobutu’s regime.²⁹

The central geographic position of the Congo proved to be an advantageous location for the U.S. Economic exploitation of the Congo dates back to Belgian King Leopold’s plunder of Congolese rubber, ivory and other similar natural resources in the 19th century. Though the Congo’s independence in 1960 signified freedom, it certainly did not relinquish the Congo from the tight grasp of Belgium, both politically and economically. Naturally, the U.S. soon recognized the glorious prosperity of the Congo and its abundance of cobalt, diamonds and copper. In fact, as discussed by scholars Hartung and Moix, “Zaire could provide the U.S. with access to important resources, transportation routes, and political favors.”³⁰ The U.S. State Department’s Africa Bureau therefore became immersed in the U.S.-Zaire relationship – or, more accurately, the U.S. and Mobutu relationship – and strategically maintained close ties between the two. Ambassador Sheldon B. Vance, who was the U.S. representative in Kinshasa, played a primary role in the expansion of U.S. activities into the Congo, from 1969 to 1974.³¹ Indeed, Vance organized a visit from the White House to Zaire to encourage foreign investment, which led to the establishment of numerous American companies in Zaire. The U.S.’s implementation of Mobutu’s dictatorship and the maintenance of close relations with him ultimately contributed to one of their end goals: easy access to Congolese minerals. The Congo was evidently regarded as an economic entity more so than an independent state. The U.S. consequently experienced an increase of \$500 million in mining and energy investments in the Congo by 1973.³² The magnitude of these U.S. investments alone illustrates the advantageous position of the U.S. by nurturing a

close relationship with an authoritarian ruler.

Mobutu's yearnings for marble palaces and leopard-skin hats ultimately superseded his interest in preserving a cordial relationship with the U.S. As a result, Mobutu nationalized the Upper Katanga Mining Union in 1967, enabling him to exploit the revenues of these exports. This signaled to the international community the start of Zairianization, whereby private and foreign-owned companies were all nationalized and the West could no longer profit from the Congo. Perhaps this was the much-deserved fate that awaited the West after actions of a self-interested nature.

Conclusion

The U.S. and Belgium's dominant hand was evident from the very beginning of Congo's independence, meddling in what should have remained regional affairs. The Congo's independence thus resulted in neocolonialism, what Frantz Fanon describes as the "traveling salesman of colonialism." Post-independent Congo was a weak state in need of a leader to bring sovereignty and justice to its people along with economic and political change to the nation. While pan-Africanist Lumumba certainly possessed the capacity to carry the Congo forward, this political leader was victimized by the greedy intentions of the U.S. and Belgium. The Cold War context and U.S. and Belgium's strategic interests rendered the Congo a battlefield of tension, chaos and mutiny. The U.S. went several steps too far, allowing "security translated into support for corrupt dictators" and actively participated in the demise of the Congo.³³ The thousands of Belgian soldiers, multiple operations to destabilize the Congo, convoluted murder plot, and outright corruption were instigated by the U.S. and Belgian to destabilize the Congo, ultimately resulting in the rise of one of the most brutal authoritarian regimes of history.³⁴ In order to increase investments and triumph over the Soviet Union, the U.S. undermined the Congo's attempts to create national unity and pursue economic development. Ultimately,

this reinforced the hegemony between the West and the Democratic Republic of the Congo that continues to exist today.

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Betwixt in Between

Multiple Mobilities of South Asian Women in and out of the Diaspora

Shaina Agbayani
Department of Political Science

Author Biography



Shaina is an Equity Studies (ad-hoc program) student, with a minor in Political Science. She loves women and writing about us. She also loves men and those in between, and wants us to think about our struggles collectively. She thinks that talking about race in Canada is important, and that paralleled in importance is talking globally about colonialism. In her spare time, she engages in piano-grounded low-brow political song-writing, walks her imaginary elephant, and hangs out with fierce feminist Filipina women, with whom she forms the "Babae Collective." She possesses borderline-cult love for SSMU's Plate Club. She likes structures.

Abstract

This paper argues that the cross-cultural space occupied by South Asian diaspora women situates them in a unique position in relation to the patriarchies of both cultures to which they belong and for which they are seen as bearers of cultural preservation. I parallel nationalist discourse in the British colonial context and the protectionist discourse in the diaspora context. Nationalist qualms in colonial India were geographically grounded where Indian demographic and cultural dominance could mitigate Indian anxieties over cultural encroachment. In the diaspora, anxieties over preserving women's status as lynchpins of traditional values are exacerbated by the proximity and dominance of Western culture.

This impacts the extent and perception of diaspora gender activism. Within the Indo-Canadian community, backlash against women's socio-political activity can manifest itself in the form of decrying activism as practices of cultural renegades. In host nations, Indian women's gender activism can be perceived as legitimizations of cultural paternalism. Accordingly, narratives of rescuing brown women from brown men, replicating the rhetoric of British colonizers in India, are employed to justify paternalistic attitudes and intervention.

I conclude that South Asian diaspora women's esoteric experiences of cultural hybridity prompts them to become aware of and negotiate the national, racial, gendered, and economic intersectionality of their identities.

In her analysis of gender and transnationalism, Pnina Werbner asserts that the South Asian diaspora of liberal democratic nations share a committed struggle of lobbying Western governments for enhanced citizenship rights¹. She furthermore illuminates the importance of diaspora women in building powerful transnational organizations². While she recognizes both the tremendous potential for socio-political action possessed by the diaspora community, and gender as a constitutive discourse of the community's mobility, she neglects analysis of how gendered dialectic in Indian diaspora community suppresses the social and political mobility of diaspora women, particularly mobilization around issues of gender. This paper argues that the marginal location of the Indian diaspora vis-à-vis the hegemony of Western culture in North America generates protectionist gender discourse that exploits the perception of women as bearers of culture. In effect,

women's socio-political mobility in the diaspora is curtailed in order to encourage women's compliance to caricatures of Indian femininity that corresponds with particular imagination of how Indian traditions and values ought to be preserved.

In order to understand how these gendered mechanisms of suppression operate in the diaspora, I will first outline how the corporeality of diaspora Indian women becomes embedded with cultural meanings, as Indian women's corporeality does in nationalist discourse in India. This emphasizes their roles as preserving agents of community values and morality, generate the need for a regulating community "gaze." Then, I will delineate how, within this new cultural milieu, the inability to reconcile traditional principles and practices and their gender patterns with the new social units and forms of material reproduction in the diaspora further circumscribes women's sociopolitical activity by assigning to women's bodies a disproportionately heavy mental and physical workload. Finally, I will identify how women's self-awareness of the liminal space they occupy as hyphenated Indians in a predominantly white, Western nation serves to circumvent their sociopolitical activity when it finally is in motion, particularly activity related to issues of gender.

I will conclude with an observation of how the conflict between Indian diaspora community's gendered ideological "oughts" and the "is" of Western culture creates destabilizing yet invaluable nervous conditions of cultural interrogation for women in the diaspora.

Indian Women of the Diaspora: Cornucopia of Culture

An understanding of the parallels and discrepancies of gender discourse between the colonial/nationalist and diaspora/defensive contexts is valuable for understanding the unique sociopolitical locality of Indian women in the diaspora. As Chatterjee observes in examining the gendered impacts of colonialism on India, when marginally situated in a milieu of colonization that warrants cultural defence, the 'women's question'—how women's minds and bodies are hermeneutically reconstituted in light of colonial

cultural threat—is revived for the purpose of Indian cultural definition³. While nationalist qualms in colonial India were grounded in an environment where Indian demographic and cultural dominance could be leveraged to mitigate Indian anxieties over cultural appropriation, in the diasporic context, anxieties over the need to preserve women's status as the lynchpins of traditional community values are exacerbated by the proximity and hegemony of the countervailing Western culture. Thus, protecting women from the ills of Western modernity becomes particularly pressing.

In the diaspora, "the modern West is not just a theoretical threat or a relationship that comes out of global international and economic political ties,"⁴ but a tangible threat that is institutionally and locally, on the level of day-to-day interaction, ubiquitous. Thus, in a more urgent and immediate way than that in the colonial context, women become signifiers of cultural boundaries⁵. As Neelu Kang notes in her research on women activists in the Indian diaspora, the private space of family is fundamental in the preservation of Indian culture and construction in the diaspora as women are expected to be responsible for maintaining the Indian home by remaining true to her womanhood⁶. Accordingly, any challenge to family structure by wife or daughter translates into a betrayal of national cultural values⁷. As the transmitters of culture in a milieu where Western modernity's dominance signifies consistent cultural dissolution for the Indian diaspora, women become integral to upholding the norms and identity of the ethnic collective⁸.

In the diaspora, mobilizing community identity is a strategy for Indians to assert their rights to cultural self-determination from a marginal location⁹. History can be understood as a constant negotiation between particularity and universality, a process of negotiating the Self from the Other¹⁰. The need to establish differentiation is particularly compelling from a marginal location. For non-white diasporic communities in the West, the power struggle between communities is pivotal—national and community identity are imagined in the context of racism and white cultural hegemony¹¹. Thus, in the Indian diaspora, the politics of cultural authenticity, preservation, and identity become

fundamental for securing community stability. Insofar as women are perceived as the paragon of community identity, cultural authenticity, preservation, and identity, concepts of femininity become inseparable from these politics¹². The consequent density of the female role in maintaining community virtue in the diaspora subjects women to the myopic gaze of the community, circumventing women's social and political activity so that their behaviour complies with a blueprint for cultural preservation that outlines a fixed design of the Indian community's traditional values and how women can preserve this.

The Community Gaze: Monitoring Women in the Diaspora

The gaze of the community onto the individual in the public sphere is potent for holding individuals accountable to certain norms of behaviour; "there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints, just a gaze."¹³ While the public sphere—especially as it is associated with white Western society—comes to be interpreted as a dangerous space for South Asian women in the diaspora¹⁴, it provides a site to host a regulatory community gaze. This gaze constitutes an incipient nationalism that serves to interpolate women by rendering them conscious of how their public behaviour complies with esteemed cultural norms of feminine behaviour.

For this gaze to monitor women so that their behaviour reflects the aspired virtuosity of the dominant voices in the community who wish to 'preserve' certain fixed essentialized notions of the community's culture, a codified—whether formally or informally—set of expectations as to the appropriate behaviour of femininity must be understood and normalized by community members through intersubjective processes of gender role socialization in the public and private sphere.

Gender inequality perpetuates itself largely due to socialization at home, where women internalize knowledge and attitudes that legitimize and normalize inequality¹⁵. Partly internalized are expectations that girls help their mothers with domestic labour, participate in the feminized work of organizing festivals

and ceremonies, reproduce South Asian culture through knowing how to cook particular foods, wear particular styles of dress, and observe particular religious customs¹⁶. There exist greater socialization expectations for daughters to embody traditional ideals of behaviour compared to sons¹⁷. As a result, it is not unordinary for girls to be vigilant about their public behaviour by performing ideals of girlhood in front of parents and community to cope with familial and communal demands¹⁸. Affirming this, Handa observes that all the second-generation Indian youth that she interviews understand how to behave so as to be accepted as good daughters and community members: "they were all concerned about their sexual representations in one way or another and were very aware that their behaviour has an impact on how their family is viewed by the rest of the community."¹⁹ Thus, through the community gaze, Indian diaspora women develop awareness of how to perform certain brands of femininity in order to optimize their perceived degrees of allegiance to an ethnic collectivity.

Praise Be The Patriarchy: Women's Bodies at and as the Diaspora Temple

Religion operates as a significant institutional arena for the communal gaze to maintain gendered values, beliefs, and customs of the Indian community in a manner that holds women's bodies accountable to certain norms of behaviour. As Helen Ralston notes in her research on the Indian diaspora community in Atlantic Canada, religious activities in everyday life become an important factor in reconstructing personal and social ethnic identity and in transmitting key elements of cultural identity to children in the alien context of Atlantic Canada²⁰. She furthermore notes that when worship cannot happen in the temple, it is women's role to provide worship at home²¹. The mother's role to instruct the children in value orientation rituals, beliefs, and ethics to face the cultural challenge of everyday life in Canada is gender definitive²². Moreover, the temple can promote a cultural heritage whereby women's subordination is integral²³. As the temple preaches the maintenance of the family unit at all costs, religious doctrines and their concomitant cultural assumptions can operate to justify

the oppression and subordination of women²⁴. In effect, religion circumscribes Indian diaspora women's activity insofar as it endorses uneven gender scripts that assign to women a disproportionate role in domestic work and culture-reproduction, including religious culture. Women's bodies become the temple. As religious institutions reassert women's disproportionate domestic and religious responsibilities, the time and resources that women channel to these responsibilities supplant the time and resources that women can apply to non-religious and non-domestic forms of social activity.

The Mind and Corpus of Indian Women's Experience in the Diaspora

While women's bodies in a literal sense becomes the temple for cultural reproduction in the diaspora, on a hermeneutical level, Indian women's bodies become *discursive* sites of competing cultural discourses²⁵. The control over the bodies of Indian women becomes a power struggle²⁶ due to their ascribed role as reproducers of both Indian and North American culture. Accordingly, women's bodies and minds palpably experience the diaspora differently from men. Dion's study of gender and cultural adaptation in immigrant families finds that, compared to their male counterparts, employed female immigrants were almost eight times as likely to exhibit depression²⁷. A study on the Indian diaspora in Canada found that 50 per cent of women, compared to 36 per cent of men, reported experiencing intergenerational conflicts based on cultural values²⁸. As highlighted by the authors of the study, women, who comprise half of the Indian community in Canada, comprised 14 per cent of the question respondents²⁹. The dominance of the male voice of the household can be attributable to the corporeal burden with which women are disproportionately faced, and the limitations on their time and resources that this can generate.

Usha George notes that domestic responsibilities are disproportionately assigned to women in the Indian diaspora. South Asian women bear double workloads, oftentimes more than their non-South Asian counterparts. Insofar as traditional patriarchal beliefs in South Asian communities dictate that women bear most of the responsibility for providing family support

and sustenance, women disproportionately engage in domestic work compared to their husbands, in addition to their salaried work³⁰. While George's research is focused on middle- to lower-class women, other research examining mostly higher-class South Asian women in the Atlantic Canadian diaspora also finds a disproportionately feminized division of labour in the Indian diaspora. This labour is increased in breadth and quantity due to the loss of the extended social structure prevalent in India³¹. Thus, Indian women's relegation to domesticity breaches class divides in the diaspora. As constraints of domestic life render time a scarce commodity that prevent women from putting healthy practices into place³², the principles of *sewa* (selfless service) and the narrative of South Asian women's self-sacrifice for the community reaffirms itself³³. As an upper class interviewee who discovered the difficulties of everyday life in Atlantic Canada expressed:

"Back home you could get help.... Your mother, servants.... You find yourself all alone when you come here, doing everything ... all of a sudden you are put in another culture with all the physical work ... no social contact. If I had to go out and dress all three of them ... by the time I put on my coat I don't feel like going anywhere ... why did I ever come here?"³⁴

As her usual close-knit and extended family network and community support are lost or substantially reduced, a dependence on the nuclear structure and the relationship with her husband is heightened³⁵. The interviewee's relatively high position in the class hierarchy was subordinate to her disadvantaged gender position as a wife and a mother in an arranged marriage³⁶. The interviewee's professed exhaustion is important, as it speaks to the difficulty borne by Indian diaspora women in attaining the opportunity to care for, nourish, and replenish her own body, the one that is vital to the nourishment, care, and reproduction of the broader Indian family, community, and culture.

Indian immigrants already encounter economic, systemic, informational, cultural, and linguistic barriers to accessing support and services outside of their cultural

communities³⁷. For diaspora woman, the magnitude of domestic commitments further limits her opportunities to avail herself to the integrative resources that the non-Indian community may offer. In effect, the corporeal boundary between North American community and Indian community—the Indian women—is further defined by the lack of opportunity for women to transcend the sociocultural and economic barriers posed by disproportionate domestic responsibilities.

Activism: Community Stigma

In the Indian diaspora, the discursive centrality of women as preservative agents of culture poses significant restrictions to their sociopolitical mobility, which is further limited by women's disproportionate domestic responsibilities. We will now examine: (a) the depth of the community's epistemology of women as bearers of culture; (b) South Asian women's self-consciousness of their cultural role; and (c) how the lived, material phenomenology of class operate interdependently to restrict women's sociopolitical mobility in the realm of community activism.

The caricature of women as bearers of culture within the diaspora narrative of cultural protection renders activity that does not comply with the normative contours of appropriate Indian femininity an affront to the community. Activism is a project that entails community consciousness building and mobilizing in the public sphere that encourages critical reflection of a community's status quo. As dominant, normalized gender narratives in the Indian diaspora relegate women to the private sphere to consolidate her domestic role as preserver and reproducer of culture, women activists are seen as destabilizing the community structure, and a threat to the family and social cohesion³⁸. Accordingly, some women activists receive threatening phone calls from within the community³⁹. In this regard, the manoeuvrings women in the Indian diaspora can surpass the boundaries between public and private in a manner that prompts male voices in the community to decry women's sociopolitical activity as an exercise of cultural betrayal.

It is important to note how the phenomenology

of betrayal infiltrates the entire community, women included, to circumscribe their political activity. Within the dichotomies of modern/backward and conservative/progressive often espoused in liberal multicultural nations in regards to ethnic gender relations, women activists face the dilemma of critically improving women's status while upholding their own cultural esteem, to address gender issues in delicate ways that do not expose their cultural peers to exploitative paternalism from the white majority⁴⁰. Thus, women activists increasingly face internal tension in addressing the reality of epidemic gender violence in the Indian community without being seen as cultural renegades⁴¹. This dilemma is particularly pressing when there exists a dominant narrative with rigid character outlines, starring the ethnic father as the villain, the white society as the rescuer, and the ethnic girl as the passive victim⁴². The desire to evade complicity in promoting this narrative constitutes an internal tension and a potential mechanism of self-policing that can suppress diaspora Indian women's activism.

Additional significant internal constraints on the sociopolitical mobility of Indian women of the diaspora include class mobility (or lack thereof) and the limited number of issues that are regarded as appropriate for purposes of mobilization within the Indian community. As Vaid notes in her research on Indian women's activism in the North American diaspora, "activist women tend to be highly educated, mostly either possessing or pursuing a graduate degree, working as social scientists, doctors, businesswomen, computer scientists, journalists, film-makers, [and] lawyers."⁴³ The majority of the groups' core members in the organizations examined included few women who work at home or in working-class occupations⁴⁴. Working-class patterns of socioeconomic activity generate epistemological, material, and temporal barriers to the understanding of the value of activism, and to the actual physical exercise of community activism.

When activism is finally actualized, it is not ordinarily mobilized around experiences of gender and class, which can be stigmatized as inappropriate topics of discussion by those who wish to preserve the status quo in the community. Thus, there exists a dearth of dialogue

around the gendered practices that disadvantage women in the Indian diaspora community. Ralston notes that none of the South Asian women's organizations in Atlantic Canada were specifically advocacy-oriented, or worked with other advocacy-oriented organizations⁴⁵. Women's rights were not issues of concern and critical gender issues were not the matter of discourse or action as there was no open discussion for gender violence⁴⁶. Similarly, Vaid notes that although numerous regional associations of immigrants from India exist across North America, these organizations are largely cultural or religious in their concerns, and tend not to address issues of sociopolitical significance⁴⁷. Accordingly, the recent government commissioned research on the Indian diaspora in Canada found that issues of importance to Canadians outside the diaspora, such as human rights, are not yet key issues for Indo-Canadians⁴⁸. This lack of political and gender-conscious dialogue and activity amongst Indian women in the diaspora community partly reflects women's ambivalence in furnishing both of the cultural communities between which they occupy a liminal space with fodder with which they can further certain patriarchal claims.

Within the Indian community, patriarchal backlash against women's sociopolitical activity can manifest itself in the form of decrying female activism as a betrayal to the community. As a member of Manavi, an Indian women's organization in New Jersey, notes, the group intentionally decided not to self-identify as feminists, pragmatically understanding that identifying themselves as such would create hostile social criticisms and pressures amongst traditional Indian community members that may ultimately render their work ineffective⁴⁹. For the host nation, Indian women's activism surrounding gender issues can be cast as a practise that legitimizes paternalistic governmental intervention in the community. The narrative of 'white men rescuing brown women from brown men,' replicating the rhetoric of English colonizers in India, can be employed to justify racist cultural intervention. As such, the potential patriarchal regulation subjective to women in both schemas can serve to deter to dialogue surrounding gender amongst women in the diaspora.

Conclusion

Indo-North American women's bodies bear disproportionate mental and physical brunt as they incarnate sites of competing cultural discourses, such that their sociopolitical activity is circumscribed. As women's cultural-reproductive role becomes salient in the Indian diaspora's marginalized cultural position, the proximate threat of Western hegemony can catalyze defensive cultural discourse that reinforces patriarchal attitudes. As these women are suspended in a liminal space between the liberal democratic secularism of North America and the more conservative and religious space of the Indian diaspora community, they experience a cultural friction through which they problematize and negotiate the intersections of gender and cultural identity in the gaze of both Indian and North American cultural institutions. Through the community gazes, Indian women in the diaspora become aware of how performing a particular brand of femininity affects their perceived degree of allegiance to an ethnic collectivity. Despite and because of this phenomenological burden, diaspora women can avail themselves of the cultural friction generated by the antitheses of their multicultural subjectivity, which affords them dialectic reflexivity. Hegel notes:

"the understanding cannot release itself from the fixity of these antitheses. The solution therefore, remains for consciousness a mere ought ... which seeks a reconciliation without finding it.... The truth only lies in the conciliation and mediation of the two ... [which is] in its nature and in reality accomplished and always self-accomplishing."⁵⁰

The *nervous condition* of women prompted by their role as bearers of a marginal culture in the diaspora is a double edged sword—it is noxious to the extent that it can catalyze defensive and offensive patriarchal intervention and monitoring by both of the communities to which the women belong. Nonetheless, this condition valuable insofar as it engenders a site of contesting values that elicits the dialogue by which they can develop the critical faculties through which they

become aware of and negotiate the racial, gendered, and economic intersectionality of their identities. These esoteric experiences optimize their capacity to employ their liminality as a means of deconstructing, critiquing, and resurrecting themselves from the multitextured patriarchies with which they are met, to discover in their reflection about their intersectional identities “the truth [that] lies in the conciliation and mediation ... in its nature and in reality accomplished and always self-accomplishing”⁵¹. Indian women’s Hegelian reflexivity becomes particularly important with the increasing need for knowledgeable female Indian interlocutors in the dialogue on how governments can balance certain principles of Western liberalism with certain ethnic gender practices vis-à-vis North America multiculturalism. As frequent protagonists in this dialogue, Indian women must possess autonomy and self-determination over how they are represented. This autonomy can be best developed through critical reflection and (perhaps Hegelian) dialectic that prompts their examination and understanding of how discourses of class, race, and gender intersect with nationalism to calibrate diaspora Indian women’s relationship with patriarchy.

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America's Secret Wars

Has Obama Gone Extreme?*

Valentin Robiliard
Department of Political Science



Author **Biography**

Valentin Robiliard graduated from McGill in June 2012 with a BA Honours in Political Science and a minor in International Development Studies. He is currently completing his MSc in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His academic areas of interests include strategic studies, US foreign policy and conflict prevention and resolution.

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Abstract

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 triggered a fundamental shift in the American way of warfare. Beyond the conventional military campaigns in 2001 Afghanistan or 2003 Iraq, The United States Global War on Terror – renamed ‘Overseas Contingency Operations’ by the Obama Administration – has increasingly been characterized by clandestine special operations in Northern Pakistan or off the Coast of Somalia, and strategic unmanned observation missions and air strikes from the skies of Yemen to Libya. With rising concerns surrounding the lack of transparency or congressional oversight over these new practices of war, it becomes necessary to review the institutional framework that guide the conduct of foreign policy in the United States, to determine whether the Obama administration has gone extreme and is slowly disconnecting the American public from its wars.

Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 triggered a fundamental shift in the conduct of warfare globally. Already observing a decline in conventional state-versus-state warfare since the end of the Cold War, the Western World – and particularly the United States – has been fighting a fourth generation warfare since 9/11.¹ From Afghanistan to Iraq and Libya, the United States has put countering insurgent groups, terrorist organizations and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction at the top of its foreign policy agenda. These new threats have sparked new ways of going about America’s biggest foes. Beyond the traditional military campaigns in 2001 Afghanistan and 2003 Iraq, the United States has been involved in complex counterinsurgency operations in southern Afghanistan, strategic unmanned observation missions and air strikes in Yemen and Libya, and clandestine special operations in northern Pakistan and off the coast of Somalia. Most can as such recall the series of drone strikes in the early days of the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, as well as the famous Osama Bin Laden raid carried out by Navy SEALs Team Six in early May 2011. This recent shift away from putting heavy boots on the ground and towards using America’s elite warriors and outstanding counterterrorism intelligence and technology has sparked a debate among academics and policy-makers, both in Washington and abroad. In line with the United

States Constitution, the President, as Commander in Chief and foremost diplomat, is expected to follow a set of guidelines when leading his country into war. Specifically, he is expected to abide by the system of checks and balances established by America's founding fathers, through consulting and seeking approval from Congress when engaging in military action. However, given the dynamic nature of these new threats and the urgency and secrecy required when responding to them, the executive must sometimes be able to circumvent political and bureaucratic barriers to the use of force and unilaterally control the suppression of these emerging threats. The difficulty in a democracy like the United States then is to find the appropriate balance between accountability, transparency, oversight and effectiveness. The public must remain connected to its wars, though these wars must be carried judiciously. In the United States, the increasing use of drones and Special Forces by the current administration has drawn criticism towards Obama's 'secret wars', and is increasingly considered a threat to good civil-military relations and ultimately to democracy.

The following will explore these new practices of warfare, and examine how they fall – if they do – into America's institutional frameworks to the conduct of foreign policy. I will argue that while the legislation and institutional guidelines have evolved to adapt to the modern conduct of warfare, these remain widely inadequate to the 'secret wars' emerging post 9/11. As such, the current administration has widely abused the need for secrecy and has been able to circumvent legislative barriers to the use of force, whether overt, covert or clandestine.

The first section will review the institutional arrangements that have guided the conduct of conventional warfare in the United States. The second part will explore the historical mechanisms regulating the conduct of covert operations. Finally, I will ask where Obama and his 'secret wars' fit today, if these wars are inherently novel, and if they threaten democracy.

I. Conducting Warfare: Institutional Arrangements

Before exploring America's secret practices of warfare, it is important to understand what institutional arrangements have historically guided the conduct of conventional war in the United States. This section will seek to do so by exploring America's constitutional history from its founding fathers, to the Vietnam era, and until the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

The key concern of the American founders with respect to civil-military relations was not what the military would do, but what factions of civilians might have them do.² To prevent the usurpation of power by factions of the civilian authority, the Founding Fathers chose to institutionalize the divisions among the civilian leadership by establishing a presidential system with separately elected executive and legislative bodies.³ Ideological differences, divergent foreign policy preferences and constant competition between the two bodies ensured the preservation of a system of checks and balances, preventing one body from overriding the other in the conduct of war. As such, the Constitution gave Congress the power to declare war, raise and support the armed forces, control war funding, and make all laws pertaining to the conduct of war (Article I, Section 8), while it conferred on the President the title of Commander in Chief (Article II, Section 2) and with it the power to utilize and lead the armed forces to repel attacks against the United States.⁴

Beyond the Constitution, Congress in 1947 passed the National Security Act, a fundamental backbone of good civil-military relations and the conduct of foreign policy. The Act, later amended in 1949, essentially institutionalized the role of Congress as an active participant in the formation of military policy; most notably by giving it access to military advice thus allowing it to criticize and provide alternatives to the executive's proposed military plans.⁵ However, both the Constitution and the National Security Act, while clearly establishing these two competing entities and the relationship between them, failed to explicitly establish whether or not the President was constitutionally empowered to deploy forces into hostile situations abroad without a declaration of war or other congressional authorization.⁶

This constitutional ambiguity yielded to the executive branch considerable flexibility in the conduct of warfare in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly during the perilous Korean and Vietnam Wars. By the early 1970s, the majority view held by Congress was that the constitutional balance of war powers had swung too far toward the President, away from what the Founding Fathers had envisaged, and that this balance required a correction.⁷ On November 7, 1973, Congress reasserted its role in military affairs by passing the notorious War Powers Resolution. The most important tool for congressional oversight of the use of military force, the resolution established a series of procedures for the President to follow, which gave Congress a strong grip on the conduct of military action.⁸ The primary purpose of the resolution was to ensure that the collective judgment of both Congress and the President would apply to the introduction and continued use of United States Armed Forces into situations of imminent or current hostilities.⁹ Therefore, the law reaffirmed ultimate authority of Congress to make all laws pertaining to the conduct of war.¹⁰ The resolution also mandated that the President's ability to introduce the United States Armed Forces into hostilities was contingent a declaration of war, specific statutory authorization, or a national emergency created by an attack upon the United States.¹¹ Moreover, the resolution required the President to consult with Congress before making any military commitments, and report to Congress within 48 hours the introduction of military forces into hostilities, if done in the absence of a declaration of war or congressional authorization.¹² Finally, the resolution required the President to terminate any military commitment after sixty days, unless Congress had declared war or authorized the action; had extended the period by law; or was physically unable to meet as a result of an armed attack on the United States. An extension of thirty days could also be granted if an earlier departure was considered dangerous to United States Armed Forces on the ground.¹³

At the time of enactment, President Richard Nixon, as all other presidents after him, strongly opposed the resolution. He considered it a threat to the safety of the United States, as it imposed too many restrictions upon the authority of the President, and took away, by

a simple legislative act, powers that the President had properly exercised under the Constitution for almost 200 years.¹⁴ Other concurred, suggesting that congressional limitations on presidential authority could prevent the nation from taking necessary military actions, which could be detrimental to U.S. interests.¹⁵ However, Congress concluded that it was more important to avoid another open-ended Vietnam-style conflict and that the executive branch retained sufficient flexibility to protect the country.¹⁶

The resolution did indeed allow for some latitude, but it also remained quite ambiguous. First, it is unclear what the law defines as the Armed Forces. As Vasquez (2005) and Smith (2005) have argued, democracies like the United States bear significant costs when leading their armed forces into war. When citizens are endowed with a voice and an opportunity for political participation, elected leaders must periodically answer to their electorate. Therefore, both the executive and the legislative branches will have a tendency to choose their battles before putting America's youth in harm's way.¹⁷ But does this combat selection and casualty aversion only apply to the young soldiers we praise in the stadiums, warmly welcome after their deployment, or mourn when they return home in a casket? Or does it apply to anything, human or not, that carries an American flag and is sent into hostilities? The cost of war goes far beyond the condolence letters sent to military families or body bags on national television; it includes the lives of those warriors we never hear about, the financial stress on America's budget, and the impact on America's reputation abroad.

The definition of hostilities remains also quite ambiguous. Grimmett (2010) notes that the term hostilities had replaced the term armed conflict in the final draft of the document, and that the concept of imminent hostilities was also added. In the document, hostilities include both situations where combat has started and situations where no shots have been fired but where exists a clear and present danger of armed conflict.¹⁸ So while the onset of an armed conflict is defined as shots fired against the United States, it is much harder to define what constitute hostilities. Similarly, no clear definition of what constitutes a national emergency

created by an attack upon the United States has been established. This ambiguity conveys to the executive branch considerable latitude to define and categorize emerging threats and attacks to America's national security, particularly in the new age of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

The consultation and reporting mechanisms of the resolution are also quite ambiguous. According to Congressman Paul Findley, provisions for mandatory congressional consultation are "the least precise part of the law"¹⁹. It is unsurprising then that the executive and legislative bodies have argued to establish what this consultation process really entails. The House of Representatives states that consultation "means that a decision is pending on a problem and that members of Congress are being asked by the President for their advice and opinions and, in appropriate circumstances, their approval of action contemplated"²⁰. On the other hand, the White House argues that informational briefings aimed at making Congress aware of actions about to be undertaken or already underway fulfill the requirement.²¹ Also, the executive branch has been left to define and categorize these so-called hostilities, and it has not always consulted with Congress before committing troops – contrary to the expectations of the House that consultation be conducted "in every possible instance"²². In regard to the reporting mechanisms, the executive has tried to avoid that sixty-day timeline, either by avoiding referring to the war theatre as hostilities, or by justifying their actions under international law.²³ Further, while the sixty-day deadline could be nullified by a declaration of war or a congressional authorization of military action, it remains unclear what constitutes the latter.

Different perceptions of the War Powers Resolution have guided disagreements between Congress and the White House since the 1970s. From April to May 1975, President Ford used U.S. forces to evacuate American citizens and foreign nationals from Vietnam, and to retake a U.S. merchant vessel from Cambodian naval patrol vessels. Then, he did inform Congress prior to taking action, but the House argued he did not seek congressional opinion or informal approval.²⁴ Similarly, from February to March 1981,

President Reagan dispatched 25 military advisors to El Salvador, in addition to the 19 already present there, without informing Congress, as he argued these advisors were not introduced into hostilities. Congress challenged the move and filed a suit against the President.²⁵ Similar events were reported in 1983 in Honduras.²⁶ Later that year, the Reagan administration ordered the dispatch of 1,900 U.S. Army and Marine Corps personnel to Grenada, without fully consulting with Congress beforehand.²⁷ Eleven members of Congress filed a suit challenging the constitutionality of President Reagan's invasion.²⁸ Three years later, President Reagan ordered the bombing of terrorist-linked Libyan assets, and similarly did not consult or seek approval from Congress.²⁹ Likewise, when in 1989 President Bush ordered 14,000 U.S. military forces to Panama for combat, he did not consult with congressional leaders before making his decision – although he did notify them in advance of the invasion.³⁰ Post-Cold War, the remodeling of the international system and the proliferation of multilateral UN-sanctioned operations changed the dynamics of the bargaining game between the White House and Capitol Hill. While Congress originally sided with the UN and the President in the conduct of military action (e.g. in Iraq), a series of disagreements emerged during the 1990s, for example regarding intervention in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti and Kosovo.³¹ In Kosovo as such, the Clinton Administration maintained the bombing campaign past the sixty-day deadline because it argued that Congress had implicitly authorized the action by approving a bill funding the operation.³²

II. The Mechanisms Behind Covert Operations

The criticisms towards the current administration condemning the shift away from what the Founding Fathers had envisaged and the neglect of congressional opinion or approval in the conduct of war are therefore nothing new. Yet they have evolved from blaming the administration for its unilateral conduct of conventional overt warfare, to blaming it for its increasing use of secret operations, both covert and clandestine. Covert action refers to an operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit

plausible denial by the sponsor, while clandestine action entails the concealment of the operation itself, although that operation can later be publicly acknowledged if it is discovered or inadvertently revealed.³³ Are these secret operations really a new phenomenon however? While it is more difficult to document clandestine activities throughout American history, have not covert operations always been part of America's practice of international diplomacy? This section will seek to tackle these questions, by reviewing the institutional mechanisms that have historically regulated the conduct of covert operations in the United States.

To be fair, 'secret wars' are not new to America's War on Terror. The Founding Fathers themselves "understood that the ability to capitalize on rapidly changing world developments required presidential secrecy and dispatch, [so that the nation could not] conduct its foreign policy completely aboveboard at all times"³⁴. Various intelligence operations were as such conducted during the Revolutionary War, so much that in its aftermath the Founding Fathers and Congress realized the necessity to allow the executive to circumvent bureaucratic barriers to action and unilaterally lead covert operations.³⁵ A secret fund was established on July 1, 1790 – the Contingency Fund for the Conduct of Foreign Intercourse – bestowing the President with a small portion of the national budget for clandestine intelligence purposes, with no further accounting required.³⁶ Congress did try to establish some oversight over the Fund, but overall the President remained responsible for the conduct of these unconventional forms of international diplomacy.

The 1947 National Security Act is the first critical juncture in the bargaining game between Congress and the President over America's 'secret wars'. The Act offered the first official definition of covert action as "an activity or activities of the United States Government to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly"³⁷. But most importantly, the Act created the Central Intelligence Agency, the nation's first permanent, statutory, and national intelligence entity.³⁸ Congress originally assigned oversight responsibility

to its respective Armed Services Committees and Appropriations Defense Subcommittees of the House and Senate.³⁹ However, while a structured relationship between the Agency and the branches of government was outlined on paper, in practice much of the CIA's covert action in its early days remained subject to minimal discussion and supervision.⁴⁰ CIA officials did meet with representatives of the Departments of Defense and State, and they did talk to the congressional committees responsible for their oversight, but these meetings often included only chairmen or other senior officials, they were mostly informational sessions, and were not meant for the CIA to get approval for action.⁴¹ At the time, Congress generally trusted the Agency in its efforts to discredit international communism, and so it allowed it to run its covert "Cold War Activities"⁴² without much legislative barriers.⁴³

In the 1950s and 1960s as such, the CIA ran various covert operations under the leadership of subsequent administrations. In 1953 it engineered an uprising and coup against Iranian nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh.⁴⁴ Similarly, in 1954 Guatemala, it funded and trained a small insurgency that would eventually topple the Arbenz Regime.⁴⁵ Three years later, it sponsored small dissident groups to the Sukarno government.⁴⁶ From 1960 to 1961, it ran a covert plan to get rid of the Castro regime in Cuba, using wide scale propaganda and training paramilitary forces in Guatemala. This led to the infamous Bay of Pigs operation.⁴⁷ The Agency was also deeply involved in the conflict in Laos between 1961 and 1972.⁴⁸ In 1970, it attempted to prevent the Marxist Salvador Allender to assume the presidency of Chile, and eventually arranged his overthrow and suicide in 1973.⁴⁹ However, public disclosure of these covert military operations and the intrusion of the CIA in another country's electoral process, coupled with tensions in Washington following the Watergate Scandal, triggered a firestorm of criticism towards the administration and Congress, that forced the latter to review its approach and oversight mechanisms with respect to covert action.⁵⁰

In December of 1974, Congress passed the Hughes-Ryan Act. The Act required the President to approve all important covert operations by signing

a written “finding” that the operation was important to the national security, and provide the appropriate committees of Congress with a description and scope of each operation in a timely fashion.⁵¹ The appropriate committees in the legislation were defined as the committees on appropriations, armed services, and foreign affairs, each being present in both the House and the Senate. In 1976 and 1977, the Senate Intelligence Committee and the House Intelligence Committee were added to the list, bringing the list of appropriate committees to eight.⁵² Since dealing with eight different committees was becoming difficult for the CIA, Congress agreed to repeal Hughes-Ryan and passed the Intelligence Accountabilities Act in 1980, limiting the reporting on covert actions to the two intelligence committees.⁵³ The act also stipulated that the President could deem it necessary to limit prior notice as extraordinary circumstances affecting the vital interests of the United States would dictate. In such a case, notice could be limited to the chairmen and ranking minority members of the intelligence committees, the Speaker and minority leader of the House, and the majority and minority leaders of the Senate. These individuals came to be referred to as the infamous “Gang of Eight”⁵⁴.

Further amendments were made surrounding the infamous Gang of Eight and the reporting of covert operations, triggered by scandals resulting from the public disclosure of shaky covert operations. The most notorious of these scandals is the 1984 Iran-Contra Affair. The affair was a secret operation led by the Reagan administration in the 1980s to provide funds to the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance derived from profits gained by selling arms to Iran (thereby also making a deal for the release of American hostages held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon).⁵⁵ The affair was said to be the lowest point in Congress-President-CIA relations, with the oversight process being clearly fractured.⁵⁶ In fact, members of the Intelligence Committees were kept widely uninformed of the operation’s most important details (e.g. mining of Nicaraguan harbors) while the President failed – or refused – to report to Congress on numerous occasions (particularly regarding the arms sales).⁵⁷ As a result, Congress tightened restrictions on the executive in 1991: When reporting to the Gang of Eight, (1) the President must provide a statement

outlining the reasons for limiting notification to the Gang; (2) the two intelligence committee chairmen must be provided signed copies of the covert action finding; (3) the President is required to provide the Gang advance notice of the action; and (4) the Gang must be notified of any significant changes in the plan.⁵⁸ These provisions were in effect at the beginning of the War on Terror.

Though largely invisible to the public eye and to most elected representatives, the decision process for covert action has therefore matured since the 1970s into a complex matrix of check-points and overseers. “What we have now is covert action by national consensus”, complained a former CIA Deputy Director for Operations.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, how does this decision process compare to the guidelines provided by the War Powers Resolution? It appears that the intelligence and covert operation legislation provides more leeway for the executive branch. In fact, while the President under the War Powers Resolution will be expected to work with Congress and eventually get its approval for action, the Intelligence Accountabilities Act and its amendments empower the White House to act without necessarily seeking approval from the legislative branch.⁶⁰ Further, covert operations seem not to be subject to time limitations.⁶¹ But beyond these differences, it is important to remember that both processes have been widely used and misused by every administration since the Founding Fathers. Presidents have often played one piece of legislation against the other, have found ways to avoid legislative obstacles, or simply have ignored the guidelines they are expected to follow. Therefore, for the next section, one must understand that America’s War on Terror and Obama’s ‘secret wars’ will fall under the scrutiny of both the War Powers Resolution and the intelligence and covert operation legislation.

III. Evaluating Obama’s ‘Secret Wars’

Where does America’s War on Terror and Obama’s ‘secret wars’ fit into these institutional frameworks? Where do post-9/11 emerging practices stand in relation to the historical guidelines for overt, covert, or clandestine activities?

It is important to begin by examining the legal grounds America's War on Terror was endowed with, and the scope of authority Congress has given the executive branch in the conduct of this war. Senate Joint Resolution 23, titled the "Authorization for Use of Military Force", passed on September 14, 2001 and signed into law on September 18, 2001, is the first trademark in the War on Terror.⁶² It authorizes the President "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks [...], or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons"⁶³. This resolution grants the White House extensive freedom in the conduct of war, so that some members of Congress were afraid the President might not abide by the War Powers Resolution.⁶⁴ In the war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan however, both the White House and Capitol Hill worked alongside each other, with the President regularly consulting and reporting to Congress, and Congress providing him with the legislative basis for action.⁶⁵ Similarly, before the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration worked thoroughly with Congress, eventually leading to the "Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002"⁶⁶ that granted the President authority to use armed forces against the Saddam Hussein Regime.⁶⁷

The real controversy in America's War on Terror does not however revolve so much around the two conventional military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. Rather, it has at its centre the shift at the Pentagon towards greater intelligence counterterrorism efforts and the proliferation of secret operations, particularly since the arrival of Barack Obama at the White House.⁶⁸ These operations include the small and quick deployments of elite Special Forces, the use of unmanned aerial systems – popularly known as drones – and arguably the increasing reliance on mercenaries. As these operations have been conducted under the authority of the CIA or the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), they have largely remained outside the public eye, triggering some concerns in Washington about the lack of congressional oversight.

These concerns are not completely unfounded. In fact, while the Bush and Obama administrations have had the tendency to consider the Senate Joint Resolution 23 and the intelligence legislation as legal grounds for massive military or intelligence operations, they have also deemed some operations to fall under no particular institutional framework, and therefore face no legal restrictions to action at all. As such, in 2004, then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld signed a secret order – the Al Qaeda Network Exord – that gave the military new authority to attack the al Qaeda terrorist network anywhere in the world, and with it a more sweeping mandate to conduct operations in countries not at war with the United States.⁶⁹ It is crucial to note here that while the report did encompass CIA operations, it was primarily targeted at the uniformed military, for example units like the JSOC. Yet, in technical terms, the military does not conduct covert operations; it limits its actions to clandestine activities.⁷⁰ As such, according to the administration, these operations do not fall under the intelligence legislation on covert operations, and therefore must not necessarily be reported to the legislative branch.⁷¹ The secret order was as such not discovered until 2008.⁷²

A series of clandestine operations have been conducted under this executive interpretation. For example, in 2006, a Navy SEAL team raided a suspected militants' compound in the Bajaur region of Pakistan.⁷³ That same year, JSOC sent an AC-130 and a handful of operatives – part of Task Force 88 – into Somalia to hunt senior members of al Qaeda believed to be responsible of the 1998 American Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.⁷⁴ In 2008, General David Petraeus ordered a bold helicopter-borne assault into the Syrian village of Sukkariyah to kill or capture Abu Ghadiyah, an al Qaeda cell leader who was coordinating the movement of foreign fighters into Iraq.⁷⁵ The next year, Navy SEAL Team Six carried out a clandestine mission off the coast of Somalia to rescue a U.S. container ship captain from Somali pirates.⁷⁶ Also in 2009, still in Somalia, this same elite team hunted down and eliminated Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, an al Qaeda senior official also tied to the 1998 embassy bombings.⁷⁷ More recently, these elite commandos carried out the infamous raid in Pakistan that killed Osama Bin Laden in May 2011. Last year, they

also conducted a nighttime raid in Somalia to rescue two hostages, including an American. These clandestine operations have also proliferated in countries such as Yemen, Uruguay and Ukraine.

The current administration has therefore expanded the policy of hostage rescues and targeted assassination as a staple of U.S. foreign policy.⁷⁸ Obama has increased the presence of Special Forces across the globe, reaching about 5,000 people in over 75 countries today.⁷⁹ Consistent with this, while the Secretary of Defense has announced budget cuts reaching half a trillion dollars in the next 10 years, the Special Operation Command has seen its budget double since 2001, reaching over \$10.5 billion today.⁸⁰ Its current commander, Admiral William McRaven, is even asking for more: In a February 12, 2012 New York Times interview, McRaven pushed for more funding and a larger role for his elite units who have traditionally operated in the dark corners of American foreign policy.⁸¹ The Obama administration seems sympathetic to his demands, as it sees JSOC as the best 'diplomatic' tool for use in the War on Terror, particularly as U.S. forces are pulling out of Iraq and Afghanistan. Note for example that General David Petraeus, who was commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan from July 4, 2010 to July 18, 2011, was appointed director of the CIA on September 6, 2011. As JSOC operations are conducted conjointly with CIA officers and since Petraeus is an expert on the Afghan theater, Obama appears to be gradually shifting his methods against the Taliban and al Qaeda in the war-torn country. Note as well that the former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, was director of the CIA between 2009 and 2011.

Why is this a problem? JSOC activities have remained widely off the radar of congressional oversight, including the infamous Gang of Eight. Under the Bush administration, JSOC and its then-commander Stanley McChrystal, were reportedly coordinating much of their activity with Vice President Dick Cheney or Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. Under Obama, the relationship has included the administration as a whole.⁸² Looking at the Situation Room photograph taken during the May 2011 Osama Raid, one notices the absence of members of the legislature.⁸³ This is problematic because this

disengagement effectively disconnects the public from its wars. While one often hears about these clandestine operations when they are successful (the Osama raid was referred to as the gutsiest call of any president in recent history), how many of these operations have failed? How many American lives have been lost in overnight raids and airborne assaults? Only a few reports of aborted or failed missions have been issued: In 2010, Navy SEAL Team Six mistakenly killed Linda Norgrove, the Scottish aid worker they were trying to rescue. In August 2011, 22 special operators were killed when their helicopter was shot down over Afghanistan.⁸⁴ But these tragedies are never heard of, these elite warriors do not get public welcome home ceremonies or crowds to sing their praise. Furthermore, whether successful or not, clandestine operations do impose a cost on America's reputation abroad. For instance, the May 2011 Bin Laden raid seriously damaged U.S.-Pakistani relations, and has rendered the joint counterterrorism efforts increasingly strained.

The use of unmanned aerial systems is also quite controversial. Today, the United States military flies around 7,000 drones, up from a handful before 9/11.⁸⁵ The CIA also flies a number of these drones. These carry out strikes in various countries, including Pakistan, Libya and Yemen. The number of drone strikes conducted since 9/11 has not been clearly documented, although the Obama administration has reportedly launched six times as many drone strikes as the Bush administration to date. To justify these practices, the administration has appealed to its War on Terror – most of the strikes have been conducted against al Qaeda assets across the globe – and efforts to counter “threats to global security”⁸⁶. Further, Obama has reasserted that these strikes have been very precise, targeting specific compounds or individuals, and have therefore not caused a huge number of civilian casualties.⁸⁷

Although drone strikes in Pakistan have been the cause of the most heated debates surrounding these new practices of warfare, the use of these unmanned aerial systems during the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya has also caused some tensions in Washington. Over the course of six months, 146 drone strikes were carried out over Libya.⁸⁸ Interestingly enough, the

Obama administration committed to use force without congressional opinion or approval. It was only after the U.S. had begun operations to establish a “no-fly-zone” that the President informed Congress of the military action underway.⁸⁹ But then again, the President tried to avoid that sixty-day clock before termination. He referred to the operation as an assistance to “an international effort authorized by the United Nations Security Council and undertaken with the support of European allies and Arab partners”, he insisted that “the United States [had] not deployed ground forces into Libya”, and that he did not really seek approval but rather that he would “appreciate the support of the Congress in this action”⁹⁰. To him and his administration, the operation did not constitute an introduction of U.S. Armed Forces into hostilities – there were no boots on the ground –, and therefore it did not need Congress approval and did not have to abide by the sixty-day provision. In fact, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton even stated that the administration “would forge ahead with military action in Libya even if Congress passed a resolution constraining the mission”⁹¹.

Does that not make war a bit too easy however? The Obama administration did not put America’s youth in harm’s way in Libya, and as such it did not call it a war, and assumed it could court-circuit the decision-making process and go ahead without congressional approval. Yet it is not because the sons and daughters of American citizens are not in combat gear that it is not a war, or that it is costless.⁹² Operations like the one in Libya carry important material and most importantly reputational costs. These unmanned aerial systems flying over Libya or Pakistan all bear an American flag, and with them they carry the image of the United States abroad. In a 2011 Pew Research Center poll, 97 percent of Pakistani respondents who knew about the American drone strikes said they were a “bad thing.” Seventy-three percent of Pakistanis had as such an unfavorable view of the United States.⁹³ The sentiment is quite the opposite in the United States, as 83 percent of Americans approve of Obama’s use of drones.⁹⁴ Yet these same Americans are largely opposed to the use of drones over U.S. territory for intelligence and law enforcement purposes. How can then they agree for these drones to fly over – and eventually hit – Pakistani

villages and civilians? Americans must understand that drone strikes directly affect America’s image and as such indirectly affect its national security. For instance, when in 2010 the man who had been charged for parking an explosive-laden van near Times Square was asked if he was aware the explosion could have killed hundreds of innocent bystanders, he replied that “the drone hits in Afghanistan and Iraq don’t see children, they don’t see anybody, they kill everybody.”⁹⁵

One final point worth making pertains to the increasing use of private security contractors (PSCs), popularly known as mercenaries, notably in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁹⁶ PSCs are widely used in conflict areas, for a variety of jobs, from training to guard duty. Although the use of PSCs is not unique to America’s wars post-9/11 (mercenaries have been around for centuries), it does seriously undermine the government’s checks and balances in the conduct of warfare.⁹⁷ In fact, private contractors are employed and deployed under the authority of the executive branch, with no consultation or oversight from Congress. Therefore, even if Congress puts a ceiling on the number of troops to be deployed and refuses additional boots on the ground, the White House can simply sign new security contracts with a variety of private security companies, from Academi to Northrop Grumman.⁹⁸ It can also use third-party nationals (licensing a commercial exchange between a foreign country and a private security company) to skirt further congressional barriers.⁹⁹ For instance, in August 2008, contract personnel made up at least half of those deployed to Iraq on behalf of the United States (approximately 190,000).¹⁰⁰ Once on the ground, it becomes difficult for the legislature to observe or assess the performance of PSCs.¹⁰¹ It is also unclear from whom mercenaries get their orders, as the chains of command in PSCs are not as clear as in the conventional U.S. forces.¹⁰² This has led to several scandals, from the 2004 Abu Ghraib Prison Affair to the 2007 Nisour Square Massacre.¹⁰³ This is a serious issue to the conduct of foreign policy and warfare for the United States. Once again, the public is disconnected from its wars; it knows very little about these unconventional forces deployed in America’s war theaters (mercenary deployments and deaths certainly do not make the evening news). Also, the costs of hiring private contractors remain largely

unknown. Finally, the use of PSCs is a threat to the democratic peace theory – administrations that can rely on hired mercenaries might not be as careful when choosing their battles and putting their country's youth in harm's way. One can as such wonder if the United States would have gone to Afghanistan or Iraq if PSCs were not available.

Conclusion

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2011 have triggered a shift in the conduct of modern warfare, putting America's best warriors and its outstanding counterterrorism intelligence and technology on the front line. While the legislation surrounding the conduct of foreign policy has significantly evolved since the time of America's founding fathers to reflect these modern changes, these institutional guidelines remain quite inadequate to Obama's contemporary 'secret wars'. The current administration has been able to circumvent legislative barriers to the use of force and has widely expanded its use of unmanned aerial systems, Special Forces, and mercenaries. This is not entirely negative, as the executive branch must sometimes be granted the flexibility and secrecy required to conduct these sensitive operations. However, this executive monopoly over the conduct of foreign policy could become noxious and detrimental to U.S. interests in the long-run. If America wants to control its wars by national consensus in the future, it should react today by asking itself the right questions and imposing restrictions on the use of force, whether overt, covert, or clandestine. Reforms must be implemented, particularly in the intelligence sector. This would enable the United States to respond to today's threats and fight global terrorism, while ensuring that it is done democratically for the people to remain connected to America's foreign policy and the conduct of its wars.

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Democratic Deficit From Below: Elections and the Electorate

Calin Radu Giosan

Department of Political Science & History



Author

Biography

Calin Radu Giosan is a U3 student at McGill University in his penultimate semester. Radu studies Political Science and History (Joint-honours) with minors in Economics and Italian. Being of Romanian decent he has focused his studies on both the politics and history of Europe, with a specific focus on Eastern Europe. This paper was inspired by Radu's experience as an intern at the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) in Brussels, Belgium. ECAS specializes in facilitating and consulting, individuals and groups, with the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)—an attempt by the European Union (EU) to overcome its democratic deficit. Resultantly, drawing from his personal experience, Radu sets out to explain the EU's democratic deficit from a different perspective.

Abstract

Existing democratic deficit literature focuses on institutions such as the European Parliament (EP), European Commission (EC), the Council of Ministers (CoM), and the European Central Bank (ECB). Yet, this paper attempts to show that the democratic deficit in the European Union (EU) does not permeate from these institutions but rather from a broken electoral mechanism. Indeed, the poor character of contestation in European elections leads to unrepresentative parties and candidates being elected into office which then allows for the circumstances of the ECB, EMU, and institutional and structural democratic deficit problems and arguments to arise.

An examination of second-order election theory, along with a case study of Romania, finds that there are significant problems with voter sincerity and with the individuals that national governments are sending to the EP to be their representatives. Moreover, while the EU is partially to blame for this the electorate themselves have taken little initiative in ameliorating the problem and, in fact, have done the converse by boycotting elections and voting for fringe groups out of spite. Thus, the European democratic deficit is perpetuated from below, by the electorate themselves.

Introduction

It is said that the European Union (EU) suffers from a democratic deficit: a disconnect between the preferences of the electorate—citizens of the twenty-seven EU member-states—and the decisions taken at the supranational European level, in the European Parliament (EP), European Commission (EC), and the Council of Ministers (CoM). A plethora of theories attempt to locate the exact cause of this democratic deficit; some claim that the European Central Bank (ECB) is to blame, others criticize the EP, and contingents dispute the idea that there is a democratic deficit. Although these democratic deficit theories are of value, and they certainly identify problems, they are secondary manifestations of a primary, and more concerning issue: elections. European Parliament elections are the primary source of the democratic deficit; the other arguments are made possible by the flawed elections.

The democratic deficit in the EU is a byproduct of the EP elections, a primary bottom-up process which explains the secondary top-down approaches

to the European democratic deficit that other authors address. The EP elections are second-order elections which primarily act as national midterm elections and a critique of the governing national party—or parties if a coalition government exists—rather than an assessment of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and European policies. Resultantly, the parties and candidates participating in EP elections are chosen through a broken mechanism—low voter turnout, insincere voting, and low visibility—with many of the elected candidates unrepresentative of national and individual preferences.¹

Democratic Deficit Literature

‘Democratic deficit’ refers to the lack of accountability, responsibility, and representativeness of the European institutions; the European Central Bank’s (ECB) unchecked power and independence, and by extension the European Monetary Union (EMU).² The discussion of the European democratic deficit encompasses three topics: The ECB, the EMU, and the various EU governing institutions—European Parliament, European Commission, and Council of Ministers. Additionally, there is the alternative point of view which posits that there is no democratic deficit in the European Union. In this section the three aforementioned topics and the contending view will be summarized.

The European Central Bank

The ECB was created by the European Union to harmonize and control the monetary policies of the twenty-seven member-states thus allowing for the creation of a European currency: the Euro. The ECB has many of the same powers that national central banks have, but with more degrees of freedom and with fewer checks on its power—or as some argue, none.³ The ECB has two main purposes: it dictates the EU’s monetary policy by regulating interest rates and, recently, it has gained the ability to ‘bailout’ countries with severe financial difficulties.⁴

Amy Verdun, a professor at University of Victoria and one of the preeminent scholars of the European Union, claims that the ECB has too much

independence, which leads to very little democratic accountability, responsibility, and responsiveness, thus diminishing its legitimacy.⁵ Moreover, the loss of monetary policy control is perceived by the member-states as an attack upon their sovereignty, and this fact, coupled with the fact that the ECB does not answer to the EP, has led to fears that the ECB could use its unchecked powers to negatively affect member-states.⁶ To date the ECB has been very cautious when using its powers, but questions about its democratic legitimacy have placed unneeded pressure upon both its decision-making and that of the member-states—a lose-lose situation for all. Furthermore, the question of the ECB’s legitimacy calls into question the legitimacy of the EMU.

The European Monetary Union

Discussion of the EMU’s democratic deficit is led by Tal Sadeh, Erik Jones, Amy Verdun, and Randall Henning who argue that the “EMU’s asymmetric institutional design leaves the project’s legitimacy vulnerable to fluctuations in the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the Euro.”⁷ Moreover, their biggest issue with the EMU is that there is no democratic override: “Some democratic override must be built into the EMU, allowing for effective external review of the ECB and of the finance ministers of participating countries, as well as potential sanctions for extreme cases of departing from the preferences of a broad set of societal interests.”⁸ That is to say, the EMU does not have enough checks on its power; it is not institutionally accountable to anyone other than itself, and, much like the case of the ECB, there is a fear that this power could be misused.⁹

Proponents of this school of thought point to the United States as an example of what the EMU should look like: with the Federal Reserve, the nation’s central bank, accountable to Congress.¹⁰ Logically this means that the ECB would have to be accountable to the EP if the American design were to be emulated. Some argue that the “lack of this override is a sign of the political incompleteness of the monetary union and the European Union.”¹¹ Indeed, there are calls for this apparent democratic deficit to be resolved because

the lack of democratic accountability threatens the economic openness and political support for the EMU.¹² Furthermore, studies show that European member-states with weaker economies are more likely to perceive a democratic deficit, thus harking back at the idea of the EMU being the cause of the democratic deficit.¹³

Institutional / Structural Argument

Outside the economic realm of democratic deficit theory exists the political institutional and structural arguments that revolve around the European Parliament, European Commission and Council of Ministers. While, there are arguments that the European Parliament is too weak compared to the European Commission and Council of Ministers, there are questions as to how elections are held in and around the European institutions.¹⁴

Various scholars—notably Lucias Vesnic-Alujevic and Rodrigo Castro—suggest that the EP is too weak and that real power rests with the EC and the Council of Ministers—both of which are not directly elected by European citizens. The Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2009, substantially increased the powers of the European Parliament and therefore this theory has lost some of its clout; however, the EC still sets the political agenda in the EU and until this role is given to the EP questions of democratic deficit will persist.¹⁵

Second, there is the question of elections. The only branch of the European Union that is directly elected is the European Parliament, yet the two most powerful institutions—the EC and the Council of Ministers—are appointed.¹⁶ Moreover, the head of the European Parliament and the head of the European Commission—arguably the two most powerful people in the EU—are similarly not elected by European citizens.¹⁷ Upsettingly, even the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who are directly elected by European citizens, have been found to promote policies and positions which run contrary to the preferences of their constituents.¹⁸

The lack of direct accountability by two-thirds of the most powerful and important European institutions to the European electorate constitutes a massive democratic chasm that has yet to be effectively bridged. There have been calls for expanding European elections to include the head of the European Commission and the European Parliament, but nothing concrete has been done.

Alternative Argument: No Democratic Deficit

Andrew Moravcsik, a professor and director of the European Union Program at Princeton University, claims that there is no democratic deficit in the European Union because the issues that the EU and its institutions deal with are of low electoral salience: central banking, constitutional adjudication, civil prosecution, economic diplomacy, and technical administration.¹⁹ Essentially, the argument is that there is no democratic deficit because the European peoples are not interested in the EU's affairs and institutions, the EU is not meant to be a 'superstate,' and "constitutional checks and balances, indirect democratic control via national governments, and the increasing powers of the European Parliament are sufficient to ensure that EU policy-making is, in nearly all cases, clean, transparent, effective and politically responsive to the demands of European citizens."²⁰ However, Moravcsik is challenged on this front by Andras Follesdal and Simon Hix who argue that "a democratic polity requires contestation for political leadership and argument over the direction of the political agenda," and they go on to state that these two processes are found in every democracy except for the European Union, where they are mysteriously missing.²¹

Yet, most of these arguments are secondary in nature and fail to recognize that they are byproducts of the failure of European-level elections: the poor character of contestation in European elections leads to unrepresentative parties and candidates being elected into office which then allows for the circumstances of the ECB, EMU, and institutional and structural democratic deficit problems and arguments to arise.²²

Second-Order Elections

The literature on European Parliament elections is dominated by Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt's 1980 theory of second-order elections. Reif and Schmitt divided elections into first and second-order elections; first order elections are those which decide who is in power and what policies are pursued, they are generally perceived to be important.²³ Second-order elections, on the other hand, are perceived to be less important because there is less at stake, with examples being sub-national or partial elections, but in this case supranational European Parliament elections.²⁴

European elections are seen by the electorate to be of lower electoral salience because there is much less at stake than in national elections, therefore rendering them to referenda on the competence of the national governing party rather than the European MEPs and parties.²⁵ The European elections are perceived as secondary for a multitude of reasons: the candidates are of low visibility, European policies are not easily noticeable at the national-level, poor publicity for elections, co-opting of the European political message by the domestic media and national groups, and perhaps a genuine lack of interest in European-level politics.²⁶

Schmitt and Reif identify that in second-order European Parliament elections turnout will be lower than in national elections, large national government parties will suffer losses in European Parliament elections, and larger parties will do worse—lose seats—and smaller parties will do better—gain seats—in European Parliament elections.²⁷ This leads to the belief that the European Parliament elections are used as a way to punish the governing national party, rather than acting as a referendum of European level politics.²⁸ Reif and Schmitt show that the European Parliament elections act like US mid-term elections where the electorate have left the 'honeymoon period'—a grace period, generally found after national elections, where support for the newly elected party or candidate is high—of the previous national elections.²⁹ However, the electorate then

becomes disillusioned with the current government and attempts to send a message to the governing party by voting for the opposition and fringe groups.³⁰

Alternatively, some authors believe that European Parliament elections show a divide between sincere and insincere voting.³¹ When an individual votes strategically, say in a national election, for political stability or simply because the hypothetical party has a good reputation, this is seen as insincere voting.³² Thus, discrepancies seen in the results of national and European level elections could be the manifestation of this sincere versus insincere voting process.³³ Hobolt, Spoon and Tilley point out that at the national-level many Europeans may be voting insincerely for the sake of political stability, so that one party has a majority and therefore can pass legislation rather than struggle and feud for a coalition government.³⁴ However, the EP elections are perceived to be of low political salience and therefore people feel that they can vote sincerely rather than strategically because the consequences of doing so are lower at the European-level than at the national-level.³⁵ Resultantly, people may not be punishing their national government but rather voting sincerely at the European level.³⁶ However, statistical regressions done by multiple authors—Hix, Marsh, Ferrara, and Weishaupt—found that the question of whether Europe matters—the aforementioned theory of sincere and insincere voting is called the 'Europe matters approach'—when voting is of little statistical significance and therefore harks back at the idea that people are actively attempting to use the second-order European Parliament elections as mid-term elections to punish their national governments.³⁷

Returning to the second-order theory, one of the key assumptions is that "any defection from governing parties in EP elections is primarily due to an evaluation of parties on the basis of domestic politics, be it general government popularity, economic performance or sincere voting for smaller parties, rather than an evaluation of candidates on the basis of concerns specific to the European Union."³⁸ That is to say, larger parties are expected to lose seats and votes during EP elections, and this is very much supported

by the empirical analyses done by Hix and Marsh.³⁹ This illustrates that the intended purpose of the EP elections is obfuscated by the domestic concerns of the electorate, thus showing that the perceived political importance of the EU—and subsequently the MEPs, the EP, and its policies—is very low because the elections are used to evaluate something other than is intended. Equally concerning is that fact that these trends persist through time and region—though there are some variations when looking at Eastern Europe.⁴⁰

Marsh and Hix, in their statistical regressions, find that European Parliament elections that are held shortly after national elections are seen to be even less electorally salient than any other time, when they are held at roughly the midway point of a national government cycle they are used as domestic mid-term elections and thus are only really politically relevant at the national level; the EP elections were most electorally salient when held on the eve of national elections; however, they are only more significant because of the highly politicized domestic environment with domestic rhetoric still overshadowing European-level rhetoric.⁴¹ Interestingly, although the EP elections are of little electoral salience, Marsh, Hobolt, Spoon, Tilley find that the political parties' stances on Europe and the level of internal cohesion on the question of Europe did, to a small extent, matter to voters.⁴² This was evidenced by fringe groups with a clear messages and strong voices on European issues gaining seats in EP elections and with fragmented political groups, which have internal dissent, losing seats in EP elections.⁴³

The trends and distinctions in East-to-West EP election voting dynamics are more difficult to pin down. This can be attributed to the lack of a democratic tradition in Eastern Europe, struggles to attain a Western European level of democracy, and difficulty adapting to democratic institutions. Nevertheless, the second-order theory's expected results, for the most part, are maintained in Eastern Europe, with the caveat being that Euroskeptic parties are more likely to gain a larger proportion of the vote in the East—this can be attributed to the difficulties

and mistrust surrounding European integration, mainly in 2004 and 2007.⁴⁴

Naturally, when a problem is identified there are proposals for resolving the issues as well. To increase the electoral salience of EP elections it has been shown that countries with smaller-sized constituencies and with more open, openly contested, ballots have higher levels of voter turnout than those with large constituencies.⁴⁵ By decreasing the size of the constituencies this creates a more intimate connection between the voter and the candidate, by nature of the increased probability of being exposed to the candidate's message and the increased probability of having known or heard of the candidate prior, thus increasing the visibility of the candidate and, by extension, the EP elections.⁴⁶ Second, opening up the ballot for open contestation between candidates, and not having a predetermined party list, increases the importance for candidates to promote themselves, their positions, their parties, and therefore the EP elections as well, therefore increasing the visibility of the EP elections and theoretically leading to higher voter turnout.⁴⁷ However, at present many countries choose to use closed ballot systems where the party lists are predetermined and the competence of the candidates is sometimes in question, as can be seen in the following case study of Romanian MEPs.⁴⁸

Members of the European Parliament: Romania as a Case Study

In 1997 Susan Scarrow, a political science professor at the University of Houston, postulated that “future European Parliaments will be filled with careerist MEPs who will view the Parliament as their principal arena, and who will seek to increase the institution's prestige and power relative to other European and domestic institutions.”⁴⁹ Scarrow goes on to suggest that individuals who aspire for long-term service in the EP will be more committed to the institution's autonomy and be more active; moreover, long-term careerists will have less incentive to have ties to party colleagues in other tiers and they will encourage cross-level alliances with likely future colleagues.⁵⁰ On the other hand, MEPs who see their

job as a stepping stone to their domestic parliament may be motivated to cultivate links with national party leaders and therefore less willing to go against their national party by advocating European interests.⁵¹ This is all to say that there are two dominant options here: become a careerist MEP and advocate EU policies and interests, or use the platform of a MEP as a gateway into a national parliament. Indeed, in her analysis of Germany, Italy, France and the UK, Scarrow finds that there were national variations regarding the perceived political role of the MEP's seat, with German and UK MEPs serving longer terms than their Italian and French counterparts.⁵² Additionally, the Italian and French MEPs had far more prior experience in their respective national parliaments before becoming MEPs, than MEPs from Germany and UK—specifically, more than one-third of French and Italian MEPs already had held national elected office.⁵³

Although Scarrow's work only looks at MEPs and elections from 1979 to 1994, it still manages to present a solid theoretical framework and an empirical precedent with which more contemporary elections and MEPs can be compared. For the sake of this essay, present day—2012—Romanian MEPs will be examined and compared to Scarrow's axioms and numbers. Romania vividly exemplifies many of the problems with the closed party-list system in EP elections and various other problems that can be generalized to the EU as a whole and Eastern Europe in particular.

Romanian MEPs

As of December 2012 Romania has thirty-three MEPs in the European Parliament. As per articles 20, 22, and 223 of the Treaty of the European Union, Romania holds EP elections through a proportional representation system and with a list system.⁵⁴ The candidates on the party list are determined by the national parties, made available to the Romanian public, and ultimately if they gain enough votes in elections, they will be sent to Brussels as a MEP. These lists are closed and there is no open contestation amongst candidates. Resulting from

these party lists and the embryonic state of Romania's democratic traditions and institutions there are some easily distinguishable trends amongst the MEPs which illustrate a larger European problem with the nature of EP elections.⁵⁵

The Romanian MEPs can be divided into three categories: Independents, the Old Guard, and the 'New Generation' of Romanian politicians. The independents are generally wealthy businessmen with the necessary economic resources and political connections to sneak onto party lists and into the European Parliament, with the bare minimum required number of votes.⁵⁶ These independents are Adrian Severin and George Becali, who—almost unsurprisingly—have been accused or convicted of corruption for dealing economically and politically in a questionable manner, yet still found a way to be elected to Europe's most democratic institution. The second stratum of Romanian MEPs is the Old Guard: these are individuals who served in political positions during the Ceausescu Communist regime or the early post-Communist governments and have gained their position as a MEP either in return for political support domestically, as a reward for being a prominent party member on the verge of retirement, or sent to Brussels so as not to be a political threat domestically. Notable individuals from this group are Norica Nicolai who was nominated for the position of Justice Minister but ultimately lost due to a dispute between the President and Prime minister; Theodor Stolojan who was the Prime Minister from September 1991 to November 1992 and again in 2008, ran for President in 2000, was the President of the PNL party in 2002, and was the President of the PLD party in 2007; Laszlo Tokes, who is most famous for being the trigger of the 1989 December revolution and is the President of the Uniunea Democrata Maghiara din Romania (roughly translated to the 'Romanian Hungarian Party'); and Corneliu Vadim-Tudor who is the leader of the ultra-nationalistic Great Romania Party, ran for President multiple times and came in second in 2004, and most notably was Ceausescu's poet.⁵⁷ Lastly, the third subsection of Romanian MEPs are the so-called 'New Generation' of Romanian politicians who are distinguishable by their relatively

young age, little-to-no prior political experience, and their unknown status to the Romanian public, with only a few notable exceptions. A few examples for this group are: Elena Basescu, daughter of Romanian President Traian Basescu; Catalin Ivan, and Petru Luhan.

There are some pressing issues with the status of Romanian MEPs. The most visible MEPs in Romania are the outspoken independents, with their radical fringe-group-type messages, and the Old Guard who are known by virtue of their prior domestic political experience and their perceived control of Romania's economic and political spheres. On the other hand, the New Generation of Romanian politicians are, for the most part, unknowns and unidentifiable to the average Romanian and their nominations onto the party lists are dependent upon the Old Guard. Moreover, with a relatively large amount of these MEPs, there are constant questions as to how they were put onto the party lists—with many people alluding to nepotism and corruption.⁵⁸ Indeed, the most notable cases of this are Elena Basescu, the President's daughter, and Adina Ioana Valean whose husband is Crin Antonescu: the head of her national party and the former Interim-President of Romania. This is not to say that they are definitely guilty of devious means, but the general trend of Romanian politics and their respective proximity to influential individuals, naturally rings some alarm bells. At any rate, both independent candidates have been explicitly charged with corruption and George Becali even announced his candidacy for the EP elections from his jail cell.⁵⁹

Questions of corruption, nepotism, and impropriety are almost expected in Romanian domestic politics. They are the sign of a country adapting from a Communist system, where the norm was seen as doing most everyday acts through social linkages and connections—seen not as a form of corruption but rather as necessity—to a democratic Western system where transparency is the norm. Moreover, the fact that these corrupt social tendencies are able to flow into the European Parliament is not just a sign of electoral problems in Romania but the

EU as a whole.⁶⁰ A Romanian MEP, Adrian Severin, was recently found guilty of engaging in corruption in the EP, and if it happened once with one MEP then it is likely to have happened before. At the very least, the conditions are present that could allow future impropriety from MEPs from other member-states.⁶¹

Furthermore, the case study of Romania suggests that there is also a problem of sincerity: member-states are not sending their most respected and qualified politicians to the European Parliament. This problem is evidenced in Romania by the 'New Generation' of Romanian Politicians—the young, unknowns of Romanian politics—being sent to Europe to gain experience before returning to serve in their domestic parliament one day. From a Romanian point of view this is great because the New Generation's peers from more mature democracies in the EP will be able to impute Western democratic tendencies upon them that can then be passed on at the domestic level in Romania. However, this is harmful at the European-level because it is likely that these MEPs are not yet politically strong or skilled enough to contribute to the body. Once again, if this happens in one member-state then it is likely that it is happening in other ones as well, collectively diminishing the talent of MEPs at the European-level and showing the lack of perceived importance of the EU at the national-level, to the point where the EU is seen as a place to send politicians to be punished, schooled, or rewarded.

Analysis

The theories behind democratic deficit, second-order elections, and MEPs in the European Parliament are all essential for understanding why the democratic deficit in the EU is a byproduct of elections, and are a self-perpetuating bottom-up process rather than a top-down one.

The democratic deficit begins with elections. Elections set the stage for choosing who will represent the member-states at the European-level and, by extension, who will control European policy. The problem, however, is that the candidates being

selected do not represent the preferences of the electorate.⁶² The blame for this falls partially on the EU and primarily on the electorate itself; indeed, the EU has done a poor job of promoting itself as an important policy-making supranational body and therefore is viewed with low electoral salience by the European masses. Yet, the electorate themselves have taken little initiative in ameliorating the problem and, in fact, have done the converse by boycotting elections, voting for fringe groups out of spite, and, as the second-order theory states, using the EP elections as a forum for voicing their displeasure towards their national government rather than the European government.⁶³ Resultantly, there are numerous candidates who gained votes and a seat in the EP simply because people placed little importance on the EP elections and threw their vote to someone else. It is not to say that these MEPs are not good politicians, rather, that the views they advocate are not in line with the preferences of the electorate; nevertheless, the onus for this problem falls on the electorate.⁶⁴ Hence, a cyclical process has emerged where the EU is seen as unimportant, unrepresentative and illegitimate in the eyes of the electorate which leads to the electorate viewing the EP elections as inconsequential national mid-term elections, rather than relevant EU ones, thus leading to unrepresentative individuals entering or remaining in the EP as MEPs instead of ones focused on promoting and pushing forward the EU and its policies being elected or retained.⁶⁵ Hence, the electorate is perpetuating the cyclical process of democratic deficit by consistently—knowingly or unknowingly—electing individuals to the EP who are not interested in solving the democratic deficit. They—the European electorate—end up widening the chasm between the EU and themselves by electing unrepresentative MEPs, therefore leading to themselves becoming even more disillusioned towards those meant to represent them and, resultantly, increasingly flawed elections because of the decreasing perceived salience of EP elections.⁶⁶

The second-order nature of the EP elections are tainting the legitimacy of the EU and act as a significant roadblock to the considerable progress that has been made by the EU in recent years—with

deeper integration and the ever increasing power of the EP. However, and it bears constant repetition, the second-order elections phenomenon is only possible because the electorate allows it to persist—they are the ones who choose whether to go vote or not, they punch the ballots, they choose MEPs; not the Eurocrats in Brussels, no one other than themselves. By disregarding the importance of the European elections they are allowing unknown or compromised individuals—as in the Romanian example—to infiltrate the EP and reduce its prestige and perceived importance. Furthermore, they are allowing corrupt individuals to enter the EP and it would be naive to believe that this is only the case in Eastern Europe—if the EU's laws and guidelines allow for this to happen in Eastern Europe then it probably has or will happen in Western and Central Europe as well.

The strength of this theory is validated by the fact that all the other theories of democratic deficit can be shown to be secondary in nature to this one. The problems with the perceived unchecked power of the ECB and EMU are only seen as such because the people who created the system and maintain it are seen as illegitimate and unrepresentative. If the fact that the ECB has so much independence is indeed so troubling to the European electorate, then would it not be the case that candidates advocating more limits on the ECB's powers would gain popularity? It does not seem that they are because the topic of the ECB appears not to be of high electoral salience, along with almost every other topic discussed at the European-level. Political actors at the European level are seen as unrepresentative of the electorate, and this problem is a byproduct of the second-order theory whereby European elections are domesticated and used as *de facto* mid-term elections leading to unrepresentative individuals entering the EP.⁶⁷ Logically, if the people who designed the EMU and the institutional independence of the ECB were seen as legitimate and representative of the views of the electorate, then there would not be a democratic deficit because these people's views of what the EMU and ECB should be like would be in line with their elected politicians.⁶⁸ However, as shown above, this is not the case and the perceived democratic deficit of the ECB and EMU are

byproducts of the democratic deficit created by the elections.

The theory of democratic deficit regarding the institutional and structural makeup of the EU can be similarly explained by the electoral theory. If the MEPs in the EP were representative of the electorate's preferences then they would push for EU-wide elections for the heads of the EP and the EC.⁶⁹ However, the MEPs are unrepresentative of the electorate because the electorate did not place much importance on the EP elections, leading to an unrepresentative EP, and therefore the democratic deficit persists—regarding the lack of elections for the heads of the EP and EC.⁷⁰ This is because the MEPs in the EP were not elected by the European peoples with a mandate to change or fix this problem.⁷¹

Although it may sound simplistic when stacked up beside the complex EMU, ECB, institutional and structural arguments, the electoral theory of democratic deficit works. Quite simply, if the MEPs are elected by individuals who view the EP elections as glorified domestic mid-term elections, and are chosen on the basis of domestic concerns rather than European ones, then they will have been elected for reasons that run contrary to their platform and purpose, and therefore will be unrepresentative of the electorate's true preferences at the EU-level. However this was caused by the electorate not viewing the EP elections as what they should have been viewed as: important EU elections with consequences.⁷² Therefore, at present, and as long as the second-order theory continues to be empirically significant, the current democratic deficit present in the European Union is, ironically, caused by the most democratic instrument available: elections.⁷³

Conclusion

This paper has established that the democratic deficit in the European Union is a byproduct of the electorate poorly signaling and acting upon its preferences during EP elections. This leads to unrepresentative MEPs being elected to the EP, thus giving the perception of a democratic deficit from above, but with the true source of the problem being

the electorate themselves. As long as the second-order theory remains relevant, and it shows few signs of going away, this will remain the root of the democratic deficit problem.⁷⁴ The reasons for why this problem exists and persists are a complex—fortunately conclusions give one license to speculate.

The democratic deficit did not initially begin with the electorate: that is simply the current state of affairs. The initial democratic deficit arose out of poor signaling and planning on the part of the European Union when it was in its infancy. The EU began as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), a peace project, and eventually developed into a monetary union—in more contemporary times it has increasingly gained deeper political and social integration as well.⁷⁵ Yet, at no point has the EU clearly stated what the potential end goal of this, as they call it in Brussels, 'European Project' is. The lack of a clear-cut end goal, compounded with stop-and-go treaties and patchwork policies, have exposed the EU's lack of preparation for the long-term and its unclear vision.⁷⁶ This lack of understanding and perspective emanating from the EU of what it is and where it wants to go initially caused the democratic deficit. Initially the EP had far too few powers, who could join the EU and who could not was unclear, and what exactly the ultimate goal of the EU was to become was very much undefined—and to a large extent remains undefined. Thus, it seems to the author that the lack of a clearly signaled long-term strategy and end goal led to the electorate becoming confused about what exactly the EU is and what it wants to become, and therefore led to the electorate viewing the EU as, initially, unimportant and, ultimately, illegitimate.⁷⁷ To be told that the EU is a coal and steel pact between a select few countries, then to expand it to other countries, every so often add another institution to it, rename it to 'European Union'—when half of Europe is divided from the other half because of the Communist regimes—to create a monetary union, and ultimately to begin—almost forcefully—increasing political and social integration; these forward and backwards lurches were poorly telegraphed by the EU and often times seen as reactionary moves instead of calculated, methodical steps, towards a clear goal. These lurches

did not do much to inspire confidence in the hearts and minds of the electorate and it is this sentiment that persists today and allows for the current form of democratic deficit to exist.

The EU's problems stem from a reluctance to admit what its ultimate goals are. Inevitably, the EU is working towards the goal of a 'United States of Europe,' but this is a term that cannot be thrown around lightly in political or scholarly circles for fear of eliciting animosity and snickering from the other side. Yet, ultimately, what is the end goal of the monetary union, a European parliament, European court, et cetera: these are all institutions regularly found in sovereign states and are the necessary building blocks of a United States of Europe, and they are all already in place.⁷⁸ Therefore, it seems that the elephant in the room is the reality that the union is moving towards the United States of Europe. To announce this to the European masses, to place this burden upon the member-states, to become just that, states—rather than nations—would significantly increase the importance and consequences of the EP elections, EP policies, and MEP's stances, thus resolving the 'second-order' problem that the EP currently faces.⁷⁹ If this is not the case, if this is not the end goal, then why have a *European Central Bank*, *European Parliament*, *European Commission* and *European Court of Justice*? If the goal is just to prevent war and for monetary relations then would a binding peace treaty with demilitarization and armament removal at its core, along with a free trade agreement not suffice?⁸⁰ Ultimately the democratic deficit in the European Union comes from below, as a byproduct of elections. However, this is only possible because the European Union is tip-toeing around the issue of the United States of Europe—which would ultimately make European elections significant, or at the very least initiate an EU-wide discussion about the current state and future of the Union.⁸¹ The poor signaling of intentions at the European-level is negatively affecting the masses' perception of the EU, and subsequently elections, and therefore is causing a democratic deficit to exist from below.

Though, the perspective of the masses must

also be taken into consideration. Perhaps what is actually being seen in the election numbers is the fact that the electorate has had enough with the European project and they have signaled, clearly, to the EU that they do not want more Europe, they do not want more elections, and they have had enough of it.⁸² Indeed, the results of the 2014 election results will be quite telling, especially if the voter turnout continues to drop, or Euroskeptic parties increase in popularity.

In the meantime, to solve the democratic deficit problem there needs to be a concerted effort to make elections more meaningful. This could be done by clearly announcing an end goal for the EU, perhaps introducing compulsory voting, altering the size of constituencies, altering the party-list method, or potentially adopting a multitude of other suggestions proposed by scholars and politicians.⁸³ Nevertheless, for the time being a democratic deficit exists and the electorates only have themselves to blame.

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Author Biography

Karel Layla Asha is a graduating student at McGill where she reads Honours History. The Syrian-Canadian has developed an interest in exploring how notions of resistance, dissent, and solidarity are articulated and shared locally and regionally in the Middle East. Specifically, she is interested in researching the informal political activism of men and women in Ba' thist Syria. During her time at McGill, Karel has been a research assistant and has begun developing software to track Syrian social media. She is also Senior Editor for Historical Discourses and a staff news writer for The McGill Daily. In 2011, she was awarded the Historical Society Prize by the Department of History and History Students' Association. Karel speaks four languages and previously lived in the Middle East for several years. She will study at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut this summer, and plans to begin an MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford in October 2013.

"Mothers at Home and Activists on the Street?"

The Role of Women in the Syrian Revolution of 2011-2012

Karel Layla Asha
Department of History

Abstract

Beginning in December 2010, the Arab Revolutions have swept the Middle East and North Africa with demands for freedom, dignity, and justice. They have highlighted the failure of corrupt and autocratic regimes in establishing legitimacy. Millions of participants have vocalized a renewed demand for political change and have proven wrong academic theories of “authoritarian stability” in the region.

Some regimes responded by acquiescing or promising elections. In Syria, the Ba’th regime has responded with brute force, escalating what began as peaceful demonstrations to a two-year military conflict. In February 2013, the U.N. estimated there were at least 70,000 dead and over 1 million refugees.

When constructing narratives of these revolutions, journalists, historians, and political scientists often marginalize the role of women play in making the social movements successful. This has especially been the case in Syria where the militarization of the conflict has put aside the role of women and children in media activism and non-violent protests which continue to this day. This paper argues that women and gender are central to the Syrian Revolution, drawing on case studies of female activists, particularly Suhair Atassi, and their use of social media as a tool to narrate the revolution on their own terms.

Introduction

Gender is a crucial analytical category when studying the Syrian Revolution, ongoing since the winter of 2011. This is because women have had a distinctive gendered experience as activists in the revolution and as victims of the regime’s repression. Active in organising protests, heading coordinating committees, providing humanitarian aid, going on undercover missions, and supporting male family members when they join armed combatant forces, women have been systematically targeted by pro-government forces for rape and other forms of sexual violence. These are not distinct or mutually exclusive experiences for different women. Rather, the roles of activist and of potential victim of sexual violence coexist as part of a gendered experience of revolution. Furthermore, female activists have to a remarkable extent reconciled tensions between their roles as mothers, wives, daughters and revolutionaries. Most of the female activists discussed in this paper have diligently been reaffirming and renegotiating the roles of women and children in the revolution,

and are consciously attempting to inscribe them as key protagonists in its evolution in their social media posts or interviews with Western and Arab media and institutions. This is clear in the repeated emphasis on these actors, and by their tendency to situate the beginning of the revolution with women's and children's protests. In doing this, they are consciously participating in the discourse and history of the revolution by providing a narrative in which women are complex protagonists rather than caricatured onlookers.

Although this paper relies extensively on the use of social media by these activists, here it is considered a tool of revolution and not a cause. Syrians did not demonstrate en masse because Facebook told them to. The revolution would have happened without social media. Pamphlets, word of mouth, and radio broadcasts, among other tools, have helped spread revolution in the region in the past and have also been used in the Syrian Revolution of 2011-2012. One would not argue that the ability to produce pamphlets causes revolution, and one ought not argue that the ability to tweet does either. Revolutions have spread rapidly before the advent of social media in the Middle East and elsewhere. Examples include the First Intifada in Palestine and the revolutions of 1989 in East-Central Europe. One should also not overestimate the percentage of the Syrian population that has regular access to the internet outside of middle and upper class urban neighbourhoods. Given that this has been a "revolution of the peripheries," popular mainly among those who were disadvantaged economically by the Bashar al-Assad reforms, this is an important point to make. Facebook was banned in Syria until the winter of 2011, but many young people had previously accessed it through a Virtual Private Network (VPN). I do not argue that there is a difference between "cyber" activism and activism on the ground in Syria. Publishing dissenting material on Facebook could be as dangerous for the activist as demonstrating in the street. Social media was sometimes used because it facilitated the organisation of protests, but mainly it was used as a media platform that bypassed official media networks. Notably, it allowed Syrians to share what was happening inside the country with the Syrian diaspora and the rest of the world without an intermediary filter. This is where the importance of social media lies, rather than

in causing the revolution.

I will begin by contextualising the role of women in the Syrian Revolution and providing a short history of Syrian women's activism in the twentieth century. Then, I will discuss the state of civil society and dissidence under the Ba' th between 1972 and 2012. The next section of the paper outlines the structure of the Ba' th Party, followed by a discussion of the Party's role in education. The main focus of the paper begins with a discussion of women's rights under the Ba' th Party and the Emergency Law, in place from 1963 to 2011. I argue that the Ba' th Party used the term "revolution" to legitimise its rule and that this made it crucial for activists to re-appropriate it. Following this, I will present the main opposition groups in the Syrian Revolution and their operational methods. I will then recount the perspectives of a few expatriate and local Syrian female activists on the role of women in the Syrian Revolution. Central to this paper is my analysis of Suhair Atassi's experience. She is an eminent Syrian human rights activist who was briefly imprisoned by the regime in March 2011, and later became coordinator for the Syrian Revolution General Commission and vice-president of the Syrian National Coalition. My analysis is based on interviews she gave to Western and Arab media, and on her social media contributions. In this paper, the voices of Syrians revolutionaries are represented in order to provide an *emic* perspective on the role of gender in the revolution, rather than impose external interpretations.

Female Activism in Syria

To contextualise their role as dissidents in the Syrian Revolution, I will briefly discuss the women's suffrage movement, the participation of women in civil society, and the role of women in the Syrian quest for independence in the twentieth century. From 1900 onwards, urban women in Syria were active in establishing literary salons and charities addressing reform, education and poverty. This marked the start of women's involvement in Syrian civil society. These institutions acted as a space for dialogue among women and were also a vehicle for them to participate in an era of burgeoning civil discourse. Dozens of women's societies were established with varied objectives,

including: advancing the cause of the Arab women by encouraging them to participate in intellectual and public life, helping the poor, promoting the education of women, and inspiring artistic development.¹ The Society of Graduates of Teachers Colleges embarked upon its project of providing women with both traditional and vocational education in 1928. The Society of Arab Women, founded in 1955, had chapters providing women with healthcare and education located in all the Syrian governorates. Multiple women's organisations provided humanitarian aid during the Second World War.²

Importantly, Syrian women were crucial participants in the struggle for independence from French colonialism. They smuggled weapons and supplies, led demonstrations and even fought on the battlefield. One even consolidated a leadership position: Nazek al-Abed, a combatant in the Maysaloon battle of 1920 between Syrian and French forces near Damascus, was awarded the rank of military captain.³

Although other women's societies organised demonstrations advocating women's suffrage in 1929 and 1942, it was not until 1953 that women finally obtained the right to vote. The United Arab Republic (1958-1961) saw the first female member of parliament. However the two women who sat in parliament during the UAR period, Jihan Al Mosli and Widad Haroun, were appointed by higher authority rather than elected by the people.⁴

The Ba' th Party

The Ba' th regime maintains its hold on power in Syria via three main structures: the Party, the military-police, and the bureaucracy.⁵ The Ba' th Party operates by means of a hierarchy of cells that serves to limit the number of people with access to information. As such, members of one cell of the Ba' th Party do not necessarily know the members of another and communication between cells is vertical rather than lateral.⁶ These cells are integrated into schools, workplaces, public institutions, villages and neighbourhoods. Within the party apparatus, the Regional Command is the committee with the most power. Its members are top-ranking military commanders, leading cabinet ministers and

the most important members of the bureaucracy. They are elected at general assemblies of all voting members of the Party. Those elected then appoint the leaders for the lower branches of the Party.⁷ The Party is, in theory, responsible for approving policies that bring together elite objectives and the public will. In that sense, it must create popular support for these policies.⁸ To maintain its grasp on power and some degree of legitimacy, which has allowed it to survive until quite recently, the regime uses the Party apparatus to "recruit 'popular' elements from society to replenish the government elite."⁹

The cells are integrated into all spheres of public life. They reflect the means by which the Party recruits future leaders from rural areas to replenish the ranks of its elite. Until now, the army has been the most important arbiter in establishing the succession to the national elite. However, they have always chosen among active members of the Party. They select among those who have military, bureaucratic, academic and even professional careers.¹⁰

Two years after the Ba' th Revolution in 1963, the Revolutionary National Assembly held its first parliamentary meeting in which it appointed eight women and eighty-seven men to the National Assembly. This was later expanded to twelve women out of 134 members. However, when the February 23 movement seized power during a period of internal instability in Ba' th Party, the Assembly was prorogued. Finally, when Hafez al-Assad took power in 1970, he instituted the Correctional Movement and established a new permanent Constitution, which he enacted three years later.¹¹

Emergency Law

Under the Emergency Law, which had been in effect since 1963 and was only nominally lifted to appease protestors on April 21, 2011, most constitutional rights were suspended. The Emergency Law was justified by the regime on the basis of the conflict with Israel over the Golan Heights and threats of related "terrorism." While the Law was nominally lifted in April 2011, the regime continued to use force against civilians and imprison citizens without charge.¹² The Syrian security apparatus has four main branches: Air Force Intelligence, Military

Intelligence, the Political Security Directorate (PSD)—which operates under the Ministry of the Interior (MOI)—and the General Security Directorate (GSD)—which operates autonomously. The four organisations act independently of each other and largely outside of the rule of law, targeting internal dissent and monitoring individual citizens, while the Ministry of the Interior remains in charge of the four police branches (emergency police, traffic police, neighbourhood police, and riot police).¹³ They effectively enjoy legal impunity: the General Command of the Army and Armed Forces—in this case, the President—is the only person who can have a military officer, member of the internal security forces, or customs police officer arrested. President Bashar al-Assad enacted this law himself in 2008.¹⁴

Even prior to the 2011-2012 uprisings, political prisoners were regularly held without trial and without informing their relatives.¹⁵ Although the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and the press, under the Emergency Law these were severely restricted. An example of this is the case of a 19-year-old female blogger from Homs, Tal al-Mallouhi, who was arrested and detained incommunicado and charged with espionage in 2009. The Emergency law also forbids distributing “false information that opposes the goals of the revolution.”¹⁶ In this light, the Syrian Revolution of 2011-2012 is perceived by the regime as counterrevolutionary. This is why it is so important for activists to re-appropriate the term “revolution” in their discourse.¹⁷

Freedom of assembly is also restricted by the Emergency Law, which considers any assembly of more than seven people protesting a decision taken by public authorities, or of more than twenty people if they “appear in a way that can threaten general quiet,” to be a riot. Article 288 also establishes that any assembly of a “political or organisation or international group without the permission of government” constitutes a riot.¹⁸

Civil Society and Resistance under the Ba’ th

Under the Ba’ th, civil society could be described as a “wasteland.” An exception is the Damascus Spring, which took place when President Bashar al-Assad came

to power replacing his father Hafez. Bashar al-Assad briefly allowed for looser application of the censorship and freedom of assembly regulations. The Damascus Spring was the name given by Western observers. The movement, which “started hours after [Hafez al-Assad’s] death”¹⁹ in June 2000 and ended in the autumn of 2001, was described at the time by local participants as the Civil Society Movement (*harakat al-mujtama’ al-madani*). One of the most influential dissident manifestos released by the movement was the *Statement of 99* published in September 2000 in the London-based Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat*. The main demand was that political reforms should accompany Bashar al-Assad’s economic reforms, which had offered a greater role to the private sector. The statement called for “an end to the State of Emergency and martial law in effect since 1963,” the release of political prisoners, and the “establishment of a state of law; the granting of public freedom; the recognition of political and intellectual pluralism, freedom of assembly, the press and expression,” and the end of censorship.²⁰ The authors, who were mostly well-known writers, intellectuals, and professionals with no particular history of resistance against the regime, carefully avoided making any clear demand for a multiparty political system or for the Ba’ th party to lose its special position in Syrian politics.²¹ It also forbore from attacking the Assad family or questioning Bashar al-Assad’s effective inheritance of power. *Statement 99* can thus be described as a self-limiting manifesto. Bashar al-Assad even met some of the intellectuals’ demands, for example by releasing 600 political prisoners on November 15, 2000.

Hundreds of informal discussion groups and organisations formed during these months in Damascus, several under the banner of “Committees for the Revival of Civil Society in Syria” (*al-mujtama’ al-madani fi Suriya*). The meetings usually took place in private homes.²² During these months, the government refused to officially recognise those forums which were overtly dissident and instead turned a blind eye to their existence. More radical groups, who did not believe in the model of gradual reform, had begun speaking up in 2000. One thousand Syrian intellectuals signed the *Statement of 1000*, published in January 2001 as a response to the unambitious *Statement of 99*. This manifesto explicitly

asked for the end of one-party rule, the reintroduction of multiparty democracy and an independent judiciary, the end of legal discrimination against women, and the lifting of censorship laws and restrictions on the freedom of association. The intellectuals argued that “civil society constitutes the very substance of the modern state, while the state is civil society’s political expression.” The statement made a direct parallel to the end of Soviet Communism, which had been a model for Ba’ thist Syria, as proof of the “consequences of coups against political democracy in the name of socialism.”²³ Regime hardliners, with Bashar’s support, used the *Statement of 1,000* as a justification to crack down on the Civil Society Movement as a whole. Discussion forums and meetings were shut down by the regime, and independent newspapers that had emerged in the previous year were closed.²⁴ By the autumn, the regime had moved to arrest prominent figures in the various organisations.²⁵

In this historical context of near total repression of civil society — here defined as engagement in public affairs independently of the state and the party²⁶ — civil society ought to be studied through the lens of *dissent*. Dissent is a specific form of resistance. Resistance, as a broader political category, can include missing work, avoiding Party-sponsored events, or visiting a banned website, whereas dissent and specifically open dissent, on the other hand, is a more direct or active form of resistance.²⁷ Dissent under the Ba’ th encompasses, among other examples, the production and distribution of visual and written materials, public protests and the generation of movements and actions. Participating in civil society, defined as groups outside the control of the party-state,²⁸ is thus itself an act of resistance in the form of dissent. Dissent is what the female activists I discuss later are engaging in.

Women’s Rights Under the Ba’ th

External observers sometimes raise the issue of women potentially losing rights they have enjoyed under the Ba’ th regime if the regime falls. In this context, it is important to clarify that although the Constitution guarantees equality between men and women, in practice there is systematic discrimination

towards women entrenched in family, criminal and citizenship law. Article 45 of the Syrian Constitution²⁹ does indeed state that:

The state guarantees women all opportunities enabling them to fully and effectively participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic life. The state removes the restrictions that prevent women’s development and participation in building the socialist Arab society.³⁰

However, Syrian citizenship is only passed on by the father to his offspring. Thus, a Syrian woman married to a non-citizen cannot give her children citizenship. The Penal Code furthermore allows for less harsh jail sentences for murders that qualify as ‘honour killings’. Finally, family law privileges male guardianship. A woman must have the permission of a male guardian to be married, or to travel (unless the marriage contract eliminates this requirement), and if she becomes a widow the father’s family obtains financial rights over the children, though not necessarily guardianship.³¹

These are discriminatory practices entrenched in the law that reveal women’s equality in Syria to be myth rather than reality. The Syrian Penal Code even states that:

Rape is considered to occur when a man forces a woman who is not his wife to have intercourse. If there is a contracted marriage between the man who commits rape, sexual abuse, kidnapping, [or] sexual harassment and the victim, then there is no charge and the punishment is stopped. If the individual who commits the crime agrees to marry the victim, he faces no punishment.³²

There is extremely strong social stigmatisation for rape victims. The 2010 Human Rights Report on Syria states that: “the majority of domestic violence and sexual assault cases went unreported; victims have traditionally been reluctant to seek assistance outside the family.” They report that “when some abused women tried to file a police report, the police did not respond to their claims” and that there were even incidents at

police stations of “sexual harassment, verbal abuse, hair pulling, and slapping by police officers when attempting to file police reports.”³³

A telling example of this stigma was the experience of a young Syrian female activist arrested during a demonstration in March 2012. She was beaten, interrogated and raped in prison. She describes being raped as “the worst nightmare a young girl can undergo.”³⁴ When she was released, she experienced the harsh judgement of fellow protestors who had assumed she had been raped and inspected her for signs of assault: they had “completely forgotten that she was arrested for the same noble cause.”³⁵ To preserve her anonymity, the city and name of the activist are not provided by the Al-Jazeera article.

Revolution as a Trope in Modern Syria

For activists, the term *thawra* (revolution) has served a legitimising function as a linguistic trope. The first Syrian revolt against the French mandate in 1919 was considered as a revolution, and the Great Syrian Revolt against the French in 1925-1927 was also named a revolution. Using the word again in 2011 allows the activists to borrow some of the legitimacy of past revolutionaries. They are re-appropriating the term that the Ba‘ th used in order to gain legitimacy of their own in the 1960s and 1970s. What is labelled the 1963 Coup d’État in most English language scholarship is known as the “8th of March Revolution” (*thawrat al-thāmin min Azār*), even though, as Raymond Hinnebusch argues, this took on the character of a “revolution from above” through land reform and nationalisations.³⁶ The anniversary of the 1963 Ba‘ thist takeover is celebrated on March 8 every year as the “Festival of Revolution and Independence.” The regime would usually announce improvements to workers’ labour conditions or wage increases on this day, in an attempt to associate the anniversary of the revolution with increased standards of living in the popular consciousness.³⁷ Furthermore, the 1970-1971 Hafez al-Assad takeover is called the corrective revolution (*al-thawrat al-tashīhiyya*). The “correction” from the Ba‘ thist perspective was to “realise for our people the most marvellous patriotic unity, the most solid internal front and the greatest victories.”³⁸ The

Ba‘ thist regime under Hafez al-Assad also emphasised the expressions “our masses” (*jamāhīrunā*) and “the masses our people” (*jamāhīrunā sha‘ banā*) in its official communications, state television, and newspapers. A typical phrase used in the context of the March 8 Festival was: “Our masses continue their celebrations marking the anniversary of the sublime March Revolution.” The use of the words “our” and “masses” was intended to convey the notion that the revolution was popular and that the Ba‘ th leadership represented the mass of the people, although it in fact emerged from the minority Alawite community.³⁹

The significance of the re-appropriation of the term revolution was recognised by the government when the recent uprisings first broke out. The government banned certain keywords such as “demonstration” and “revolution” from state television, which shows that the regime had lost ownership of the term “revolution.” “When we used the word ‘conspiracy,’ we were referring to the conspiracy against the regime and against Syria; we used to refer to demonstrators as terrorists or armed gangs or insurgents,” says Ola Abbas, a defecting TV host who told CNN about the rules she had to follow as a presenter on state television.⁴⁰

Organising the Revolution

The structure of the opposition inside Syria during the Revolution of 2011-2012 (so far) is complex. Among the different organisations, two of the most important national ones are the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC) and the Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU). The SRCU has activities on the ground in Syria, and in London with the Syrian Network for Human Rights.⁴¹ The SRGC was established in August 2011 as a coalition of forty opposition groups in Syria. Its headquarters are in Istanbul, Turkey. They mainly monitor and report the uprisings, defend human rights, and publish press statements.⁴² Both groups are very active on Facebook and Twitter, rather than on traditional media networks or via official websites.

There are also local coordination committees which principally report to the Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union. The local coordination

committees emerged slowly and organically from local needs. Organisers of early demonstrations in Damascus in March 2011 moved their meetings into mosques in response to rapid repression from the regime. The mosques protected the protestors from the regime's security forces. By early May 2011 the growing numbers of people coming out to demonstrate transformed the informal protests into more organised coordination committees. Each committee would receive a task, for example: media, organisation, medicine or politics. On Fridays, demonstrations would follow the prayers and meetings at the mosque. Each Friday would be given a different rallying name and the demonstrations would occur every week, at least during the early stages of the revolution.⁴³

This stage of early violent repression by the regime is important because it created a revolutionary coalition, bridging the goals of the urban intellectuals and the rural masses.⁴⁴ The people who joined the revolution at its beginning were for the most part middle-class intellectuals who had suffered from political repression and those who had suffered economically under Bashar al-Assad's neoliberal reforms. They essentially reactivated the networks they had built during the Damascus Spring of 2000-2001. Through crony capitalism and neoliberal reforms starting in 2000, the regime had abandoned the rural and suburban masses who had formed the basis of its support. It had also gone back on its attempt to combine economic reforms with political reforms in the repression of the Damascus Spring and subsequent normalisation policies.⁴⁵ The crony capitalists of Aleppo and Damascus remained among the regime's strongest supporters when the revolution broke out. Much of the middle class of these cities initially preferred to see reform—which they still believed Bashar al-Assad could carry out—rather than a revolution, fearing the loss of their “secular modern lifestyle.” Those who had benefited from the increase in investment and tourism of the past decade, which were concentrated in those cities, were less likely to oppose the regime. Urban government employees and minorities were also less likely to oppose the government. Nor was there any concern about Alawites and Christians: their religious rights were left intact under Bashar al-Assad, who had also curtailed the role of Islam in the

public sphere. These minorities could be rallied by the government by harnessing their apprehension towards Salafi Islam. The suburbs of Aleppo and Damascus and rural regions however did erupt. This is why the uprising has been described as the “revolution of the countryside and the peripheries.”⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the regime presented itself as the “protector of order” and exploited citizens' fear of civil war in order to defend their repression of protestors.⁴⁷

The Syrian National Council (SNC) was formed as an attempt to unify opposition groups and serve as a “political umbrella for the Syrian Revolution in the international arena.”⁴⁸ The group was founded in August 2011 as the “National Transition Council,” but was renamed the following month. For most of 2011, the SNC did not seek to be recognised as a government in exile as its members were not elected by the people, but instead aimed to “deliver the message of the Syrian people in the field of international diplomacy, with the aim of overthrowing the regime, its figureheads, and the pillars upon which it stands to establish a democratic, multi-party, and civil state.”⁴⁹ The council initially opposed foreign military intervention, and advocated the overthrow of the regime, national independence and sovereignty, and national unity among minority groups. It initially favoured non-violent tactics. This paper does not focus on the SNC because it is a diplomatic initiative rather than an organiser on the ground.

An interview that aired on National Public Radio (NPR) in the U.S., featuring a Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union leader in Qabon, gives valuable insight into their operations. The interview, which took place on July 7, 2011, was held in Qabon, Syria, a suburb five kilometres from the centre of Damascus. The activist interviewed, a twenty-nine-year-old male with a university degree in English literature, was the leader of the SRCU in Qabon. His parents were bureaucrats and he had spent his entire life in Qabon. He argues in the interview that the revolution started in Qabon, and in the rest of Syria, on March 18, 2012. He explains that the SRCU is organised around Facebook groups. Tasks are divided among individuals who sort videos, news, technical help, and who coordinate protests. At the time of the interview, five people managed the Facebook page

and other online activities, while 150 were organising protests in the city. Facebook and other social media websites are crucial to his work because activists “can’t move around at all in the streets, as the security forces are everywhere.” “It is very difficult to trust anyone,” he says. He explains that the “internet allows us contact with all the other coordinators around Syria, like in Hamah and Homs for example.” He also clarifies that:

No one from the SRCU is going to be a political leader after this. We are organising protests, and are trying to make them understand what might happen next, but no one from the union wants to work in politics. The average person here, to be honest, has no idea what will happen after a regime change. They hope things will be easier for them but they don’t really know how. So that is our job in the SRCU, to educate people about what might happen, and warn them against violence. Maybe there could be violence; there could be sectarian war. But we are working everyday to make sure these things don’t happen.

He makes it clear that his group’s claim to legitimacy is neither religious; rather it is based on a claim to the power of the people.⁵⁰

Women in the Syrian Revolution: an Expatriate Perspective

Farah al-Atassi, who is a writer and commentator based in Washington, has been involved in the revolution mostly through media activism as an expatriate. Previously, she had established the American Arab Communication & Translation Centre, the Arab Information and Resource Centre and Zenobia Lounge, a multicultural Middle Eastern café and bookshop in Washington D.C. She states that, based on her experience with the SRCU as an expatriate abroad, women are “at the forefront of the Syrian revolution” and that they are “paying the highest price in this revolution.” She confirmed that more than 120 anti-government demonstrations in Syria have been led by women. Rather than asking their spouses and sons to stay home for safety reasons, they are encouraging them to go out and protest, which she sees as a significant and

transformative form of support. She however is worried about the aftermath of the revolutions in other countries of the Arab Spring, where the transitional governments did not “adequately reward women for their efforts in the revolution.” Farah argues that “this revolution is not about man and woman, not about Christian and Muslim, it’s about regaining our citizenship” but that it would however “be useful to create ‘a roadmap’ for women’s issues in a future Syrian constitution.”⁵¹

Rasha Alahab, who was a founding member of both the Syrian Women for Syria and Syrian Expatriates for Democracy, and an attorney for the Syrian National Council, contends that “Syrian women are equal to their male counterparts in the Syrian revolution in every way.” She however fears that she may lose some of this equality when the revolution is completed, although she doesn’t “have many rights to lose” in the first place. She says women make a distinction between their roles in the home and outside the home and that there is little tension between activism and the gendered expectations of womanhood. “We are mothers at home and activists on the street,” she explains.⁵²

Rafif Jouejati is the U.S.-based English-language spokesperson for the Local Coordination Committees in Syria, the National Consensus Movement, and Activists for a Free Syria. She also writes, translates and edits press releases for the SNC. She explains that women actively participate in managing revolutionary coordinating committees and disseminating information on the internet and offline. An example of offline dissidence women that organise consists in leaving “gift-wrapped revolutionary slogans” on people’s doorsteps at night. Jouejati emphasises that, although “women have faced the same tanks and live ammunition as the men,” post-Assad Syria will have a different gender demographic because “the male population has experienced a higher death toll and disproportionate level of incarceration.” And so she predicts “women will need to fill a larger share of the workforce and be the breadwinners of family unit environments” and that they will be “the leaders in rebuilding Syria.” However, she explains that “rape has been used as a tool against our people” and suggests “more training and women’s empowerment programs be made available.”⁵³

Female activists in Syria, according to Rajaa Altalli, a political activist for Syrian Christians for Democracy, have been able to benefit from less stringent searches at regime checkpoints. They have thus been able to conceal cameras in their clothing and upload videos that provide evidence for the regime's crimes. Altalli echoes Alalhab in stating that "throughout the revolution, women have been standing equally next to men asking for freedom." They have been "providing humanitarian aid, collecting medical and technical supplies, providing care to the wounded, building support for the cause and handling media and information needs." Contrary to the anxieties some other women have voiced, Altalli believes that "in our new, free and democratic Syria discrimination against women would not be a problem."⁵⁴

Suhair Atassi: An Imprisoned and Exiled Activist

Suhair Atassi is a Syrian human rights activist, born in Damascus in 1971. She participated in founding the Jamal al-Atassi Forum for Democratic Dialogue, the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC), and the Syrian Revolutionary Coordinators Union (SRCU).⁵⁵ She was also a member of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change in 2005. Suhair founded the Jamal al-Atassi Forum, named in memory of her father, during the Damascus Spring.⁵⁶ The Jamal al-Atassi Forum and the Damascus Declaration of October 2005 were initiatives demanding reform rather than revolution in Syria. The main demand in both projects was the lifting of the Emergency Law.⁵⁷

Suhair Atassi is a divorced and single mother. She organised sit-ins and small demonstrations in Damascus in January, February and March 2011, before the nationwide uprising took off.⁵⁸ At one silent protest on March 16, 2011, she raised a poster depicting a political prisoner and the secret police dragged her away, pulling on her hair, and charged her with "sowing division" among the people. In an interview given in April 2011, she recounted:

It was surreal. I was dragged for what felt like the

length of two streets. The apparatchiks looked at me as if I was not their compatriot. They kept shouting that I was an Israeli spy. [...] As I stood bruised in front of the judge at the Palace of Justice, I thought that the only progress the Syrian regime was making was in making up absurd charges.⁵⁹

She was not the only woman arrested that day: among the forty activists arrested, nine were female and they were sent to a women's prison. Suhair explains that the day before her release on April 3, 2011, she was transferred to a security branch where she was "held incommunicado to exert psychological pressure."⁶⁰ She went on a hunger strike as a form of protest until her release.

Suhair Atassi then went into hiding for seven months. She coordinated revolutionary opposition groups during this time, uploading and classifying videos that demonstrators had filmed on the streets, for example. For her, the media played an important role in protecting civilians because sometimes security forces would stop firing on protestors when she and other activists reported on it.⁶¹ On July 16, 2011, she spoke to *Asharq al-Awsat* newspaper about the nature of the uprising:

It's a revolution... triggered by the Syrian people seeking to stand up and say that they are citizens and not subjects, and that Syria belongs to all its citizens and not just the Assad family. This is a revolution of the youth who are demanding freedom and are being confronted with violence and murder... Today Syria is witnessing a battle for freedom by unarmed civilians urging the ouster of a regime that has utilised methods of brutal and inhumane suppression. They have brutally attacked and killed the protesters whilst the demonstrators have nothing but their words to defend them.⁶²

She also explained to the newspaper that it was not the early dissenters such as herself, or formal political opposition groups, who had created the revolution. Rather, it was the youth:

We have been subjected to suppression and murder for merely calling for freedom, democracy, general freedoms, the release of all prisoners of conscience, an end to the state of emergency, and the return of all political exiles. At the time, we said that any suppression would cause the volcano to erupt... we knew that we were working slowly but surely toward freedom, but we didn't dream of a revolution like this breaking out. It was the Syrian youth who made this dream a reality[...]The revolution will produce a viable alternative capable of governing Syria in the future, and everybody must realise that the Syrian revolution has come out of nowhere to quickly become a substantive movement thanks to the awareness of our youth. Syria has been transformed from "the kingdom of silence" to a living country.[...]The revolutionaries alone represent the Syrian street.⁶³

In November 2011, she left Syria "in secret, at the request of the revolutionaries." She specifies that she "didn't leave because of danger," but rather to bring the opposition "to a new stage, at a critical time." In Paris, she was very active in diffusing the message of Syrian revolutionaries on the ground via social and traditional media networks.⁶⁴

As an activist, Suhair only employs social media to communicate news about developments in Syria, but also to express her personal anxieties and concerns. Suhair expresses the difficulties she is enduring in exile. Some selected updates from her Facebook account provide evidence for this. On January 26, 2012, Suhair published this Facebook status update in Arabic:

Why attack those who left Syria!? Do you think those who left did so of their own will? #Syria
There are those who left to preserve their lives. And that is understood. And there are others who left to preserve their families and this is legitimate. And there are those who left despite themselves, because they have been asked to carry out a specific role for the revolution. The

latter's departure is considered a sacrifice because being an expatriate is one thousand times harder than disappearance. They took a risk in leaving and we have betrayed and ridiculed them for it enough.⁶⁵

This status conveys her distress in reaction to the attacks she suffered for leaving Syria. She speaks for those, who, like herself, did not leave the country of their own free will. She sees this action as a sacrifice and wants to let her readership know that, for her, being in exile is much more difficult than hiding in Syria ever was.

Two weeks later, on January 30, 2012, Suhair wrote of the role that the youth of Syria are playing in the revolution. "Syria is being liberated by its young men and women, and her Free Army," she writes. She again speaks of her loneliness in exile: she was with the youth two months ago, but is now in distress being so far from them.⁶⁶ On February 3, she published a poem on Facebook about her suffering from afar in seeing what was happening to her home city, Homs.

Homs...Al-Khaledīya⁶⁷...my parents there...my father's spirit and all my being,
Homs cries out all the consciousness left of the whole world #Syria
So do al-Zabadānī⁶⁸, Hamāh, Idlib, Dar' ā, Al-Ghūa al-Sharkīya⁶⁹
Rīf Dimashq⁷⁰, all of Syria cries out for you.
Where is humanity?
Did it fall apart because of the Russian arms embargo?⁷¹

On April 10, 2012, she once more evoked her suffering in exile, stating that she used to communicate with soldiers, such as fighters, activists, and protestors, by Skype when she was in Syria. "I collaborated with them, the revolutionaries of the inside, in founding the Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union and the Syrian Revolution General Commission," she says. Suhair confirms in this update that she still communicated with soldiers and revolutionaries from abroad at that time. She claims that even those outside the country are real revolutionaries, and are paying a price for being abroad. "These soldiers may be anonymous, but they

are known to the free people inside Syria, they also are true revolutionaries,” she writes. She concludes with “regards to you, who are free behind bars,” evoking an immense Syrian prison in which the people themselves are fundamentally free.⁷²

A few days later, on April 14, she wrote that “in documenting the revolution we will write a history, one written by free Syrians.” This is an example of the importance that Syrian revolutionaries place on recording and sharing the revolution online. For them, by becoming journalists, they are being revolutionary because they are writing the history of the revolution. They are reinterpreting and revising the history imposed by the Ba’ th Party. Suhair writes that she has had enough of United Nations observers, and that she is only waiting for Assad to breach the United Nations mandated cease-fire. Contradictorily, she claims that the nature of the revolution will remain peaceful, but asks the “free world” to provide arms to the Free Syrian Army.⁷³ This places her in a different position from other opposition groups that only were asking for humanitarian help as opposed to arms. In the week of November 26, 2012, Suhair Atassi’s Facebook profile had 11,000 “likes.” Her number of “likes” peaked in the week of November 18, 2012, just after she became vice-president of the Syrian National Coalition.⁷⁴ According to public Facebook data, most of her readers are located in Damascus and are between twenty-five and thirty-four years old.

On November 15, 2012, *Al-Arabiya* aired an interview with Suhair Atassi for the political talk-show, “Studio Beirut.” The presenter argued that “everyone considers that the Syrian revolution began with children in Dar’ ā,⁷⁵ but it really started with women in Damascus.” The interviewer, Giselle Khoury,⁷⁶ suggested that the “women in Damascus” applied to Suhair. Suhair countered that it was both women and youth who were the primary motors of the revolution, but lamented the fact that “so far they have not been considered as real partners and participants” by the formal opposition. She also mentioned that no women were elected to the Syrian National Council in November 2012. According to her, it is not necessarily the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists that hold this attitude towards women. Rather, it is “the classical mentality of the opposition” to

see “women and youth as decorations only.” In Suhair’s experience, the liberals sometimes exclude women as well.⁷⁷

Suhair cites the newly elected leader of the Syrian National Coalition, Sheikh Moaz al-Khatib, as an example of an Islamist who recognises the role of women in the revolution.

In his acceptance speech, al-Khatib systematically referred to “our young men and women” as the actors in the revolution, and said “I want to specifically salute the Syrian woman, the greatest woman on this earth, who made the human beings who have conquered iron and blood.”⁷⁸ He also saluted the participation of children in the revolution. According to Suhair Atassi and Rima Fleihan, the official spokesperson for the Local Coordination Committees of Syria (LCCSyria), al-Khatib also called for a seventy percent representation of women in coalition initiatives.⁷⁹

Suhair Atassi returned to Syria in October 2012. There, she was welcomed by members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Tal Abyad, Ar-Raqqah.⁸⁰ She told Khoury that she went to Tal Abyad of her own initiative. She met with the Salafis and with the Al-Nusra Front (*Jabhat al-Nusrah li-ahl ash-Shām*).⁸¹ “I never felt that I was a stranger to them when we were approaching them and not isolating them, we cannot isolate them; you see that these are the Syrians, these are our people,” Suhair told the journalist. According to Suhair’s personal observations, the percentage of foreign jihadis remains very small. The foreign jihadis told her and other Syrians that they would leave after the regime had been toppled. For Suhair, it was necessary to meet with these groups as a female spokesperson in the revolution:

Our role as women, when we talk about women, our primary role is very much to get inside, not only to sit with the civilians and with the local councils and we must be with the brigades as well. We will not bear arms, but we will sit with them and be there with them.⁸²

“The role of women in the revolution was major,” Suhair clarified in her Studio Beirut interview.⁸³ “We must not

forget the spark that started the revolution only fifteen months ago, we must not forget the women of Baniyas who blocked the Baniyas highway to force the release of their men there.”⁸⁴

Suhair posted an apology about her statements in the interview on her Facebook page on November 18, 2012. She explains that she did not mean to undermine the importance of the children’s protests in Dar’ ā in the interview. She writes that “no individual or group or council or alliance can rewrite the alphabet of the revolution, [the alphabet] that the rebels have written themselves in each region of Syria.”⁸⁵ This re-emphasises her view that the history of the revolution is being written by the Syrian revolutionaries, including the women and children, on the ground.

Women and the Free Syrian Army

The FSA was created by a group of defectors from the Syrian Army on July 29, 2011. In a YouTube video, these defectors, under the leadership of Colonel Riyad al Asād, declared in Arabic:

Given our patriotic sense and our belonging to this people; because what this stage requires of decisive actions to stop this regime’s massacres which cannot be bore anymore; and given that the army’s mission is to protect this free unarmed people, we declared the formation of the Free Syrian Army.⁸⁶

They also asked Syrian Army soldiers in this video to defect to form a national army “able to protect the revolution and all the components of the Syrian society with all its sects.” By October 2011, 10,000 to 15,000 defectors would join the FSA.⁸⁷ This development was separate from the objectives of the initial dissenters, such as Suhair Atassi, and the peaceful demonstrations, and from diplomatic initiatives such as the SNC. While SNC initially wanted to preserve the peaceful character of the revolution, it agreed to back the FSA and attempted to coordinate actions with the FSA in November 2011.⁸⁸

Zubaida al-Meeki was an Alawite general in the Syrian Army, who became the first female general to

defect from the Syrian Army in October 2012.⁸⁹ She then became a coordinator in the FSA’s *Jond Allah* battalion. “While al-Meeki did not participate in the fighting itself, she was very close to the frontline: her courageousness and dedication to the group were very positive for the morale of the soldiers,” according to Abo Adnan, a Syrian filmmaker who is producing a documentary on the revolution. He says that he observed men in the FSA treat al-Meeki “like an older sister” and that they “respected her and obeyed her orders.” Al-Meeki, however, is an exception. She told Al-Jazeera that it was “unusual for females to train males in Syria,” and that there are “hundreds of females in the country’s military but they mostly had administrative positions with little pay or benefits.” In the Free Syrian Army, women generally only carry guns as a purely symbolic sign of support and solidarity, Omar, an activist in Homs, told Al-Jazeera. “Videos of women battalions or women fighters are sometimes meant to embarrass men who are sitting on their bums and not participating in the struggle,” he continued.⁹⁰

Raghda, a female activist from Deraa, told Al-Jazeera:

We need to shake people, to show them that women can participate in the armed struggle that emerged in Syria. While I’m only a civilian activist, I’m still stigmatised as a loose woman because I travel a lot from one place to the other to deliver food and medicine. [...] Bashar al-Assad is giving me a hard time, but so are my parents and the whole neighbourhood.⁹¹

These statements demonstrate that women participating in the armed revolution are exceptional, and that even women who participate in non-violent protest do struggle with gendered norms of expectations of their behaviour. However, from the examples discussed in this paper, it appears that in revolutionary times these norms become less rigid.

Conclusion

In closing, women’s role in the Syrian revolution cannot be compartmentalised into that of either “victim” or “agent.” Rather, women have been

بجداً أختلقت الآن.. شهيرين منذ معهم كنتُ.. ولهم لنا المواطنة حتى يسترجعون هم.. يسفر وتلك يدون وهناك
.. عنهم

Source:
Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>

Appendix C

February 3, 2012

خمسائر من بقيت ما تستمرخ حمص.. كياني وكل.. أبي روح.. هناك أهلي.. الخالدية.. حمص #Syria
سوريا كل.. دمشق ريف.. الشرقية الغوطة.. درعا.. إبلب.. حماء.. الزبداني كذلك.. أجمع العالم
!!!.. سلاح لتجارة فيتو.. روسي فيتو أجل من تمطلت هل!!!!!! الإنسانية؟؟؟ أين.. تستمرخكم

Source:
Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>

Appendix D

April 10, 2012

توار وإياهم تاركك.. سوريا في كنت عندما السكايب غير معهم اتواصل كنت.. مجهولين ربما جنود
عندما قرب عن هو عرفت.. السورية للتورة العامة والهيئة التتسبقيات اتحاد تأسيس في الداخل
كانت مهما تملق لا التي التورة روح فيهم عرفت.. مما عملنا.. دمشق التي الحرية أرض غادرت
ربما جنود.. بلادهم خارج وهم حتى التمن لأجلها يدفعون التي التضحية روح.. قاسية الغربة ظروف
خلف حر وأنت لك تحبة.. قبح توار أيضاً هم هؤلاء.. الداخل لأحرار معلومون لكنهم.. مجهولين
...القضبان

Source:
Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>

Appendix E

April 14, 2012

الدول من أحد أن أصق لا.. ولكن.. رياسو أحرار سطره تاريخاً نكتب سيجلنا التورة في التوتريق
ما إلى الذهاب أجل من عنان لمبادرة الأسدى الاحتلال انتهاكات أخباراً فعلياً ينتظر "القرار صاحبة"
إتمامها عن السفاخ يتوانى لن وإبداء قتل لعمليات الانتظار حالة على يواظبون متى فإلى!!.. بعدها
.. مستمر السلمى حراكنا!!!!.. مراقبكم سلطنا!!!!.. والمهل المراقبة من المزيد إلى منها لينتظون
.. الحرة المنشقة كالبنا لتسليح مخازنكم أبواب افتحوا.. كذلك اللاعنسى تورتننا وطابع

Source:
Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>

Appendix F

November 18, 2012

والثغريونية الصحفية اللغاءات كل وفي أنني تعلمون أتم: التورة مهد درعا وأحرار توار إلى
في الحرية تورة أتمت من هي درعا أطفال أتمل أن وأكرز أقول وأنا التورة بداية ومنذ السابقة
درعا توار أفضال ينكر أن بشر لأي يحق لا أساساً... شرارة سوى يكن لم أدار 15 أن وأزيد.. سوريا
خوري جيزيل الصديقة مع لقائي في... وتبقيهم تضحياتهم ولا.. التورة استمرار على وأطفالها
مسا خصوصية عن الحديث بعض كان المربية على

dissidents alongside men from the start. Furthermore, they are often leaders of the coordinating revolutionary committees. However, women hold a distinctive gendered experience of the revolution. Women are more often raped, are more afraid of rape, and have different anxieties surrounding honour, motherhood, and family responsibility. Rather than join armed militias, for the most part, they coordinate committees, demonstrate peacefully in the street, and perform undercover missions, benefitting from their looser clothing. They are both more vulnerable because their gender is more often targeted by government forces for sexual violence, and sometimes enjoy an advantage because they do not join militias who are faced with government tanks and open gunfire on a more regular basis. The individual women activists discussed all emphasise the role of women in the revolution in the form of social media posts or interviews with Western and Arab media and institutions. In doing this, they are consciously participating in the discourse and history of the revolution by providing a narrative in which women are complex protagonists rather than caricatured onlookers. Nevertheless, although gender certainly has shaped the experience of dissidents, the overarching narrative of the Syrian Revolution, at least from the *emic* perspective of its supporters, is one of women and men fighting towards the same goal of overthrowing the Ba' th regime.

Appendix A

January 26, 2012

خرجوا خرجوا الذين أن تمتدودون هل؟؟!!.. سوريا من خرج من على والتهمم الهجوم لماذا #Syria
أمر وهو عالته على حفاظاً خرج من وهناك مفهوم أمر وهو حياته على حفاظاً خرج من هناك؟؟!! "مزاجهم" ب
الأخير القسم!!!.. التورة لأجل معين دورب يقوم أن منه طلب من هناك لأن عنه رغباً خرج من وهناك.. مشروع
واستتار تخوين يكفى... الثواري ظروف من مرة بألف أفسى العربة لأن.. تضحية خروجه يعتبر
.. للمخاطرة تمرحنا.. خرج من وسخرية

Source:
Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>

Appendix B

January 30, 2012

هذا وأنا.. تتحرر أسدي احتلال من.. الحر وجيشها.. شبابها بأيدي تتحرر سوريا #Syria

الأمعة انتخابات إعلان عقب تسجيلها كم قد الحلفة وأن خصوصاً.. الثورة في السورية المرأة ركة منذ المرأة مشاركة عن تحدثنا لذلك.. العامة أمته في للمرأة المجلس واقتار الوطني للمجلس العامة الجلب هذا على لإنشاء دفكتا للحديث مجلة خلفية هناك كان إذأ.. بقياس نساء وعن آذار 15 يذكرون ولعهم...أحد من ولا مني شهادة ينتظرون لا درعا أهالي أن يقين على لنا..أمر لا لنا...بالذات...السفاح محاكمة يوم الأول الصف في هم يكونوا أن في الحق كل لهم درعا أطفال أن قلت طالما أنني من الرغم على..حقهم في أخطأت أنني اعتقدوا إن درعا في وأخواتي وإخوتي أهلي من اعتذر لنا..ذلك ومع الأرض فيه أبوس الذي اليوم أنتظر بلأني لحظة يشك أن يمكن لا جيداً يعرفني من أن أعلم أنني...درعا أطفال نعال تحت وبالأخص..أمر كل نعال تحت يملك، كان من كذاً..أحد ولا..يشطيره بدغم من أتم الثورة تاريخ أن..بالبدء درعا أحرار إلى وأوجه لن الثورة قـ...أمر..أحد من بيانات تطلبوا لا لذلك..للجميع علومهم بآت حقائق يغير أن كنها التي الأولى لجديته كذاً يجد أن التلاف أو هيئة أو مجلس أو مجموعة أو فرد يستطيع...الحرية سوريا بقاع من بقعة كل في أنفسهم التوار

Source:

Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>

ENDNOTES

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- 55 The SRCU has activities on the ground in Syria, and in London with the Syrian Network for Human Rights. The SRGC was established in August 2011 as a coalition of forty opposition groups in Syria. Its headquarters are in Istanbul, Turkey. They mainly monitor and report the uprisings, defend human rights, and publish press statements. Both groups are very active on Facebook and Twitter, rather than on traditional media networks or via official websites. See Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union's Facebook Page, accessed March 30, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/monasiqoon>, and the Syrian Revolution General Commission's Facebook Page, accessed March 30, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/SyrianRevolutionGeneralCommission>, and the section "Organising the Revolution" in this paper.
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65 Suhair Atassi's Facebook page, accessed March 30, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>. My translation, please see Appendix A for full original Arabic text.

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67 Al-Khaleidiya is a neighbourhood in Homs.

68 Al-Zabadani is a village near the Lebanese border and a popular summer resort.

69 Al-Ghūta al-Sharqiya refers to the eastern suburbs of Damascus.

70 Rif Dimashq refers to the governorate of Damascus.

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72 Suhair Atassi's Facebook page, accessed April 15, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>. My translation, please see Appendix D for full original Arabic text.

73 Suhair Atassi's Facebook page, accessed April 15, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>. My translation, please see Appendix E for full original Arabic text.

74 Suhair resigned from the SRGC on November 10, 2012, before being elected vice-president of the SNC (also known as the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces) the following day. See "Syria's opposition chooses president, formally signs coalition deal," *Al Arabiya*, November 12, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/12/249032.html>, and Carnegie Middle East Centre, "Suhair al-Atassi," [n.d.], <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48619>.

75 The consensus in the Western media is that the Syrian revolution began in Dar'ā in March 2011, when the regime massacred schoolchildren who had graffitied "the people want the regime to fall" on a wall of the city. The people of Dar'ā demonstrated and other cities demonstrated in solidarity for the children, and the regime cracked down on these protestors by opening fire. See Rania Abouzeid, "Syria's Revolt: How Graffiti Stirred an Uprising," *Time*, March 22, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2060788,00.html>.

76 Giselle Khoury is the widow of Samir Kassir, the Lebanese historian and journalist assassinated in 2005 in a car bomb in Beirut. He vocally opposed the Syrian presence in Lebanon and supported democracy in Syria.

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79 Giselle Khoury also interviewed Rima Fleihan, the LCC spokesperson, who confirmed Suhair Atassi's statements about the Syrian National Coalition and its leader. Fleihan said she too had been personally reassured by Sheikh Moaz al-Khatib's influential words about the participation and representation of women. Fleihan said the local committees were still active despite the militarisation of the conflict. "We as a coordination committee represent one of the faces of the greater peaceful civilian movement in Syria," she explained. She claimed that demonstrations continued each Friday, each often composed of 500 or 600 people. For Fleihan, this was an exceptional achievement, considering the level of violence and the attacks carried out by the regime. Other forms of civil action, such as media work, human rights activism and humanitarian work also continue. As spokesperson for the local coordination committees, she works directly with Syrian refugees in Jordan, but also coordinates the work of the committees inside Syria from Jordan. She told Khoury that women in the revolution provide support to each other, explaining that there was a special bond between women in the revolution because men cannot relate to them as easily. Unsurprisingly, Fleihan personally knows Suhair Atassi.

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83 Atassi also discussed the impact of the militarisation of the conflict on women's participation. Because the media focuses on battles and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), it fails to notice the participation of women. Women work in refugee camps, revolutionary media, and are problem-solvers on the ground, according to the activist. They also participate in medical care, and not only as aides. Suhair witnessed a young woman from Homs perform surgical operations to remove bullets from victims' craniums. For Suhair "the revolution was a dream," and the participation of the FSA has not changed that. She said the "mistakes" made by some members of the FSA in killing military prisoners, as shown on some YouTube videos were individual and inevitable acts.

84 Women organised a demonstration demanding the release of protestors recently arrested in Baniyas, and the regime's response was to send in tanks and open fire on the demonstrators, killing at least four women in May 2011. See "Syrian tanks and troops 'enter flashpoint Baniyas city,'" *BBC*, 7 May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13320326>.

85 Suhair Atassi's Facebook Page, accessed November 18, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/Suhair.Alatassi>. My translation, please see Appendix F for full original Arabic text.

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Investigating Social Exclusion for Overcoming It

Melisa Yorgancioglu

Department of Political Science & Anthropology

Author

Biography



Melisa Yorgancioglu is a U3 Joint Honours student in Political Science and Anthropology, with a minor in International Development Studies. Her interest in social inclusion and passion for social justice were deepened following an internship in 2012 for the “Social Inclusion and Youth” Section in the “Social and Human Sciences” Sector of UNESCO. She has been accepted into the MSc in Development Management Programme at LSE for the upcoming school year, which she hopes to use as a launching pad for her ultimate goal of working in international development.

Abstract

The notion of social exclusion has become increasingly prominent in the development discourse of national, regional and international bodies. This paper will explore the roots of social exclusion and examine its characteristics as defined in the contemporary literature on the concept. While the prevailing trend in the study of social exclusion is rooted in a rights-based approach, the paper will also explore some alternative views to universal and citizenship rights that have emerged in the literature of political thought. Though initially appearing to contradict the rights-based discourse, this paper argues that these alternative approaches are instead compatible with, and strengthen the claim of, the dominant paradigm of social exclusion. Finally, the paper explores the desirability of social inclusion and the most effective means for achieving it. In order to move from the rhetoric of social inclusion and social equality to their genuine actualization, approaches to tackling social exclusion should be rooted in the prevailing capabilities- and rights-based perspective and adopt holistic, multi-dimensional measures through targeted policy interventions.

Originating in European political philosophy and later making its transition to the arena of social policy, the notion of social exclusion has become increasingly prominent in the discourse on development regarding national, regional, and international bodies.¹ Its rising popularity began in the 1990s and is partially the result of the deepening social inequalities and the altered nature of deprivation caused by the profound changes in economic and social organization among wealthy industrial countries, as well as nations undergoing economic transitions.² Across diverse settings, increasing marginalization and differences in the degree of participation in civil and political society have prompted an international spotlight on the concept of social exclusion.³

Social exclusion has been incorporated in many initiatives of multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, European Union (EU), International Labour Organization (ILO) and various United Nations Development Agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Addressing the causes and consequences of social exclusion has also been made

a policy priority for many nation-states, including Australia, Brazil, and Ireland, while some countries have even developed social exclusion units, such as the United Kingdom.⁴ Various social science research bodies have also incorporated social exclusion as one of their thematic priorities, such as the Chronic Poverty Research Centre. The concept has thus penetrated the agenda of nearly all those engaged in public policy and development programming.

Before social exclusion can be effectively tackled, however, the concept itself must first be defined and examined with a sensitivity to the historical context within which it emerged, and to its evolution over the decades. This paper will explore the roots of social exclusion and examine its characteristics as defined in the contemporary literature on the concept. It will then investigate the dominant capabilities- and rights-based approaches to social exclusion, as exemplified by the efforts of Amartya Sen and the UNDP. While the prevailing contemporary trend in the study of social exclusion is rooted in a rights-based approach, the paper will also explore alternative views to universal and citizenship rights that have emerged in the literature on political thought. Some of these critics have instead proposed differentiated citizenship through group rights or deliberative models of decision-making as being more effective means for promoting social inclusion and just societies. Though initially appearing to contradict the rights-based discourse, this paper argues that these alternative approaches are instead compatible with, and strengthen the claim of, the dominant paradigm of social exclusion.

Finally, the paper explores the desirability of social inclusion and the most effective means for achieving it. While recognizing the importance of the ethical debate in which some support active political efforts for overcoming social exclusion from the standpoint of social justice, the very real material and disempowering consequences of exclusion deserve equally substantial recognition and should not be sidelined. In order to move from the rhetoric of social inclusion and social equality to their genuine actualization, approaches to tackling social exclusion

should be rooted in the prevailing capabilities- and rights-based perspective and adopt holistic, multidimensional measures through targeted policy interventions.

Defining Social Exclusion

The origins of the term social exclusion can be traced back to the political writings of René Lenoir from the 1970s and its subsequent use in French socialist politics,⁵ where it referred to those beyond the protection of social security.⁶ From the 1980s to 1990s, the term expanded in French political discourse to incorporate other social groups, such as youth, unemployed, homeless, immigrants, and suburbanites.⁷ Shortly after, the notion gained momentum in the wider European context⁸ with the European Commission's adoption of social exclusion to its mandate of reporting on national levels of unemployment and poverty.⁹ The term has since been widely adopted by a plethora of governments, regional bodies, international organizations, and research institutes to expand knowledge on the subject and develop appropriate policies for effectively addressing it.

The defining feature of social exclusion as a concept is its multidimensionality. Embedded in economic, political, social, and cultural structures that interact in complex relationships, social exclusion draws attention to the dynamic process of disadvantage and its multifaceted character more adequately than the concept of poverty.¹⁰ While the notion of poverty tends to involve a narrow analysis on the issues of welfare as simply being individuals falling below a particular income level, social exclusion instead emphasizes the marginalization that individuals may experience through economic deprivation, and the consequent social or cultural isolation, and disenfranchisement involved in this complex process.¹¹

The process of social exclusion is one that restricts or denies individuals resources, rights, services, and the ability to participate in relationships available to the majority of society in

economic, political, social, and cultural arenas.¹² Deprivations in one dimension of the concept may reinforce deprivations in another—a process whereby reducing capabilities in a single field can fuel the entire process of social exclusion.¹³ Policy intervention in any one dimension will therefore be insufficient if the wider context is discounted.¹⁴

Social exclusion provides a useful analytical framework for understanding a range of notions of deprivation, poverty, and social disadvantage.¹⁵ The concept can help elucidate the lived experiences of people arising from the mutually reinforcing effects of inequalities and deprivations, such as limited consumption, mobility, access, integration, influence, and recognition.¹⁶ Excluded persons are prevented from participating in mainstream activities and attaining the living standards that are enjoyed by the rest of society.¹⁷ By drawing focus on the role of the social processes and the institutional structures responsible for generating these deprivations, social exclusion is particularly useful for analyzing and addressing root causes, rather than merely identifying the symptoms.¹⁸

Social exclusion can be examined from an individual, community, or societal-level of analysis.¹⁹ The process of social exclusion rejects, marginalizes, isolates, silences, and disenfranchises individuals through government policies, official procedures, and outspoken interest groups that formally designate and maintain the excluded, or through informal and less explicit social forces.²⁰ At the level of government, policies and procedures may formally denote who is excluded by establishing explicit criteria based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, religion, or political views.²¹ For example, a legal restriction that prevents a migrant from obtaining employment in the host country is an explicit form of rejection and discrimination that results in the social exclusion of the individual based on nationality.²² Policies can also, however, indirectly and unintentionally drive social exclusion if the potential impact of policy choices are not thoroughly considered. Such has been the experience of some former Soviet states where social policies aimed at extending social protection to

particular groups - such as war veterans and police officers - have been made at the expense of funneling resources to the protection of less well-organized groups - such as children or ethnic minorities; consequently, these groups experience isolation from the privileges offered by social protection.²³

Social exclusion not only impacts the individual's quality of life, but also negatively affects social equality and cohesion.²⁴ While denoting a situation or process experienced by marginalized individuals, social exclusion affects the whole of society through the fragmentation of social relations, breakdown of social cohesion, and emergence of new dualisms (Gore v). At the community-level, stigmatization of an entire group of people may hinder their members' prospects for employment or participation in opportunities available to other groups.²⁵ Exclusion experienced by different groups can also have symbolic or psychological elements by feeling designated as the "other."²⁶ At the societal-level, excluding entire populations - such as the indigenous peoples of Australia and Canada - can be maintained through official discourses, policies, programmes, laws, and the media.²⁷

While the notion of social exclusion arose within the context of the European political landscape, it has since been developed for use in other parts of the world—illustrating that the human values, norms, and Enlightenment traditions from which the concept emerged are not exclusively European.²⁸ Despite their French origins, underlying values of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" are also rooted in Asian pre-Enlightenment literature, signifying their universal importance.²⁹ Furthermore, social exclusion has been widely adopted by non-European scholars to address a variety of deprivations in countries such as Argentina, Mexico, India, Thailand, and Malaysia.³⁰ The notion has thus been relevant in contexts beyond Europe and particularly useful in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, where the expanding literature focused on the exclusionary processes through which deprivation occurs signifies that many problems of deprivation are universally shared.³¹

The UNDP and Amartya Sen

The UNDP has been a major actor involved in reporting on issues surrounding social exclusion and providing policy prescriptions for tackling it. The UNDP has aligned itself with contemporary literature on social exclusion, while also contributing its own perspective on the concept as both a process and an outcome. As a process, social exclusion pushes certain individuals to the fringes of society by preventing their full participation in economic, political, social, and cultural processes.³² As an outcome, the UNDP highlights how social exclusion designates the status of the excluded individual in relation to mainstream society.³³ Social exclusion is therefore not only distinguished by material deprivation, but also by subjective experiences of alienation, isolation, inferiority, and shame.³⁴ The UNDP is recognized as the institution most enthusiastic to integrate Amartya Sen's ideas into its discourse.³⁵ Given Sen's heavy influence on its work, the UNDP explores social exclusion through a human development lens.³⁶

Sen adopts an Aristotelian perspective that views poverty in terms of functionings and capabilities.³⁷ He regards a poor individual as someone "without the freedom to undertake important activities that a person has reason to choose" and deprived of the capability to lead a minimally decent life.³⁸ Given the diverse range of capabilities and functionings reasonably valued by individuals, the capabilities-based approach is a multidimensional one.³⁹ In adopting this approach for investigating the concept of social exclusion, Sen illustrates how individuals have good reason to value inclusion in social relations, community life, and free interactions with others.⁴⁰ Exclusion from these social relations can lead to other deprivations that further limit "living opportunities."⁴¹ For example, exclusion from employment opportunities may cause economic disadvantage that can lead to other deprivations, such as homelessness.⁴² Social exclusion can therefore be both the consequence and cause of capability deprivation.⁴³

Sen praises the practical influence social exclusion has had on drawing focus to the role of "relational features" in capability deprivation, or the experience of poverty.⁴⁴ The relation between two capabilities, such as securing control over a commodity required for participating in the life of the community, links the concept of capability failure to that of social exclusion.⁴⁵ Thus, the real merit of exclusion-language for Sen is its focus on the relational features of deprivation.⁴⁶ Furthermore, his approach highlights the restrictions of freedoms and contributing factors that lead to exclusion, such as unequal power relations, discriminatory practices, institutional barriers, and cultural norms.⁴⁷ A conception of poverty will therefore be unsatisfactory if it fails to acknowledge the disadvantages that arise when an individual is excluded from opportunities enjoyed by others.⁴⁸

According to Sen, being excluded- such as being unable to participate in the community - can be in itself a deprivation of intrinsic importance aside from the further deprivations that it indirectly produces.⁴⁹ In other cases, while exclusion, or relational deprivation, may not itself be "terrible" - such as the inability to acquire credit - it can lead to potentially disastrous consequences for the individual, such as the denial of beneficial economic opportunities.⁵⁰

Sen also differentiates between active and passive forms of exclusion. While the refusal of political status to immigrants or restriction of women from education through a gender-based policy represent active exclusion, passive exclusion can occur through the systemic factors of a slow-moving economy that do not intentionally exclude, but generate poverty and isolation.⁵¹ Whether the result of a deliberate policy, social practice, or complex web of social processes, excluded individuals are unable to participate in areas of social life that they value and to which they are entitled, such as education, labour markets, health systems, political processes, and cultural activities.⁵² Sen cautions that it is the nature of the process leading to deprivation that determines the relevance of adopting a social exclusion lens.⁵³ For example, while the removal of food subsidies from a

particular group may result in hunger through active exclusion, other circumstances not applicable to the language of exclusion may also have an outcome of hunger, such as crop failure.⁵⁴

Rights-Based Approaches

Much of the social exclusion discourse espoused by institutions such as the UNDP has highlighted the basic rights that citizens must have in order to enjoy a decent standard of living and to participate in various spheres of society. The UNDP addresses the relationship between human development and human rights and the advantages of promoting rights in development.⁵⁵ Similarly, the EU conceptualizes exclusion in terms of the inability to exercise basic social rights.⁵⁶ These rights-based understandings complement Sen's capabilities-based approach to development as the expansion of human freedoms embodied in civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.⁵⁷ While the capabilities-based approach places an emphasis on an individual's access to basic capabilities and functionings, such as the ability to be well-nourished and sheltered, the human rights-based approach offers a different language that conceives deprivation in terms of violating basic rights that can be rectified through claims.⁵⁸ As they are often overlapping, both approaches offer similar advantages for tackling social exclusion.⁵⁹

Sen's approach focuses on bundles of goods that individuals can acquire using the legal rights, rules, and social norms that govern their circumstances.⁶⁰ His emphasis on the interplay between livelihood and citizenship rights illustrates how individuals can be excluded from commodity markets and other social spheres.⁶¹ In addition to his reflection on citizenship rights, Sen examines the contribution of the capability perspective to a theory of human rights by illustrating how capabilities must be supplemented by "considerations of fair processes and the lack of violation of the individual's right to invoke and utilize them."⁶² This rights-based approach demonstrates how an individual's inability to be respected by, and participate in, mainstream society is

a violation of a basic right as a citizen.⁶³ Sen illustrates, for example, how deprivation caused by exclusion from political participation represents a denial of basic political freedom and civil rights, which directly impoverishes the individual.⁶⁴ Rights-based language thus highlights the political, economic, and social factors that maintain exclusion and offers support for the claim of integrating all members of a society.⁶⁵

Rooted in both claims and processes – or ends and means – the rights-based approach is useful for promoting a "root cause" approach to focus on issues of state policy and discrimination.⁶⁶ Moving from needs and charities to rights and duties, this approach preserves the meaning of claims by focusing on accountability mechanisms for those who violate entitlements.⁶⁷ It emphasizes the relationship between the state and its citizens and the importance of respecting the dignity and autonomy of individuals.⁶⁸ Means and objectives of social inclusion are thus redefined as "claims, duties and mechanisms that can promote respect and adjudicate the violation of rights."⁶⁹ The approach highlights how opportunities for the participation of excluded, vulnerable, and discriminated individuals should be based on procedures and institutions, rather than arbitrary acts of external benevolence.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the UNDP emphasizes how the rights-based approach requires the process of development itself to respect and uphold human rights.⁷¹

The language of rights can strengthen the case for the participation and inclusion of all individuals more convincingly than the language of welfare, given that it draws attention to the role of the complex factors behind exclusion and highlights the consequences of denying rights and citizenship.⁷² It calls for equal capabilities for exercising "social citizenship" rights and recognizes the diverse abilities of individuals in making use of these opportunities.⁷³ Viewed as a subset of general citizenship in the work of T.H. Marshall, social citizenship denotes the national laws and social provisions necessary to override *de facto* disadvantage arising from designated differences and to enable citizens to participate in society to their fullest.⁷⁴ Benefits of social citizenship can therefore

mediate social exclusion.⁷⁵ Marshall's philosophical contribution to the field of social policy was made through defining the progressively acquired judicial, political, and social rights of individuals.⁷⁶ It is these rights that inevitably involve individual claims made through political mechanisms.⁷⁷

Critical Perspectives

In the context of social exclusion, approaches based on human rights and citizenship rights reflect the notion that all individuals are entitled to citizenship, and all citizens are entitled to equal rights. Political theorist Iris Young presents an interesting critique of the ideal of inclusion through "universal citizenship" by arguing that this universality conceptualizes equality as sameness, and thus formally disregards individual differences and group particularities.⁷⁸ The principle of equal treatment therefore perpetuates oppression and disadvantage.⁷⁹ She presents the ideal of universal citizenship as having emerged within a particular historical moment in the 19th and 20th centuries, when excluded and marginalized groups engaged in social movements to attain equal political and civil rights.⁸⁰ Rather than being inclusive, however, she argues that the "common will" embodied by universal citizenship merely enforces homogeneity and excludes those who are deemed unable to adopt the general will or transcend group differences, even when they formally have equal status.⁸¹ For Young, an understanding of citizenship as universal, rather than particular, does not imply full citizenship status for all groups.⁸²

Furthermore, Young argues that different social groups have various needs, cultures, histories, experiences, and perceptions that influence their interpretation of policy proposals.⁸³ If citizens must leave behind their unique affiliations to adopt a common view, then the advantage of some groups is reinforced at the cost of others, given that the interests of the privileged tend to dominate the unified public and silence all other views.⁸⁴ She argues instead for a "differentiated citizenship" to achieve inclusion and participation of all individuals in citizenship,

as it acknowledges group specificity and rejects assimilation.⁸⁵ For Young, inclusion and participation of all in decision-making, public discussions, and social processes necessitates group representation procedures and special rights to attend to group differences and undermine disadvantage.⁸⁶ She argues, therefore, that group representation is the best means to promote just outcomes in decision-making processes, to institutionalize fairness in contexts of social oppression, and to maximize knowledge expressed in open discussion.⁸⁷

On the other hand, Seyla Benhabib argues that too great an emphasis on collective identity may impinge on the civil and political rights of minorities and dissidents.⁸⁸ She argues instead for a "deliberative model" of democracy, which insists upon an open agenda in public debate so that individuals considered as moral and political equals can engage in free and reasoned deliberation on decisions affecting their well-being.⁸⁹ She claims that this model privileges a "plurality of modes of association" to enable all individuals affected to have the right to articulate their views.⁹⁰ She maintains that a constructive, anonymous public dialogue results from the interactions of these associations, networks and organizations.⁹¹

Benhabib recognizes that feminists such as Young will critique her model for not being truly inclusive by privileging a hegemonic discourse at the cost of silencing a multiplicity of voices and differences within the public.⁹² She argues, however, that Young's model of differentiated citizenship through "communicative democracy" - whereby individuals acknowledge differences such as gender, class, and religion while also transforming their "initial situated knowledges" through communication - is distinct to or incompatible with the model of deliberative democracy.⁹³ The standards of fairness and impartiality applied to the deliberative process to reach mutual agreement must also be applied to the communicative process to reach Young's transcendence of initial partial perspectives.⁹⁴

While Young's argument is particularly relevant for drawing attention to the potential

of oppression through inclusive citizenship, her proposals for a better conception of citizenship are in fact not in direct contradiction to the universal human rights discourse of the UNDP or the social citizenship discourse of Marshall. Rather than implying a uniformity of treatment outcomes, the rights-based approach to social exclusion instead calls for universal equal freedoms so that individuals are given the choice to participate in mainstream society.⁹⁵ Thus, citizens are not required to abandon their unique affiliations in order to assimilate to the general will of the public, but rather are guaranteed equal opportunities to exercise their rights given their particular values and diverse abilities. If the rights-based approach conceives equality as substantive instead of formal, then universal rights recognize the obstacles that impede equal access to opportunity and admit positive discrimination, or differential treatment, in order to obtain genuine equality.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the context within which Marshall's notion of citizenship was rooted was a collective one; while citizenship is conceived of in terms of rights possessed by individuals, it also implies that certain institutions exist in the interest of collectivities and overall social harmony.⁹⁷ In addition to acknowledging exclusion through a narrow individual level of analysis whereby personal characteristics or situations interact with social factors to produce exclusion, the rights-based approach to social exclusion also stresses the importance of group-level analysis, whereby groups that collectively experience exclusion in particular ways are identified.⁹⁸ Moreover, the human rights-based approach not only identifies groups subject to exclusion, but also insists upon their participation in all stages of the social inclusion programming process, just as Young stresses the importance of including groups in public discussions and decision-making procedures.⁹⁹

Similarly, rather than conflicting with the rights-based perspective on social exclusion, Benhabib's model of deliberative democracy is compatible with the approach. Sen demonstrates how the capability- and rights-based approaches insist on

the need for open, transparent "valuational scrutiny for making social judgments," which corresponds well with the importance Benhabib places on public reasoning and free deliberation.¹⁰⁰ The assessment of ethical claims to human rights must be tested through open and informed scrutiny and discussion whereby all actors are viewed as equals, just as Benhabib's process of deliberative democracy insists upon the equal opportunity for all to freely engage in dialogue on questions concerning their well-being.¹⁰¹ Thus, rather than contradicting with the rights-based approach to social exclusion, Young and Benhabib's arguments harmonize well with its core tenants and merely provide additional support for the dominant paradigm.

The Desirability of Inclusivity

An underlying assumption of this discussion has been that a society inclusive of all individuals in every realm is inherently more desirable than one which is exclusive of certain individuals or communities. Why, then, has the importance and value of inclusive societies become increasingly highlighted in the literature and public discourse on social development? Apart from the important moral debate emphasizing the socially unjust nature of excluding certain individuals or groups from wider society, the very real material, political, and psychological implications for those directly affected, and for society as a whole, cannot be overstated.

Stewart MacPherson's review of ILO case studies of social exclusion points to common themes of poverty, disempowerment, lack of productive employment, and the collapse of social cohesion.¹⁰² The studies illustrate how exclusion from labour markets not only affects livelihoods, but also make other processes of exclusion worse, such as those concerning social security and identity.¹⁰³ The cases demonstrate how responses to social exclusion are rooted in everyday experiences and expressed through passivity, shame, despair, resistance, or group action to reverse processes and transform the political landscape.¹⁰⁴ He notes that passivity emerges as one of the most common reactions across the cases, whereby

feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, and uselessness render the experience of social exclusion even worse by serving to thwart action.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, long-term unemployment tends to be associated with these feelings of isolation and separation from wider society.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, Anne Gray's review of a collection of case studies highlights the trends in unemployment and poverty associated with exclusion from labour markets.¹⁰⁷ Examining social exclusion from a relational view, the cases reveal how the way in which outsiders perceive and identify those who are excluded can serve to create additional barriers against them.¹⁰⁸ Processes of exclusion can be perpetuated if exclusion itself is then internalized as a "series of disempowering psychological barriers."¹⁰⁹ The studies also illustrate how the poverty and exclusion experienced by some can become exacerbated through certain urban planning measures, leading to further segregation and disintegration of social cohesion.¹¹⁰

An individual level of analysis can reveal how excluded individuals undergo stigmatization and even blame for their situations if perceived as engaging in deviant behaviour.¹¹¹ Social housing tenants and homeless individuals in Britain, for example, are associated with behaviours such as crime and substance use, which can thus cause them to be viewed as "problems" rather than victims of structural inequality.¹¹² These labels placed on individuals impact their access to housing by guaranteeing exclusion from affordable and quality accommodation.¹¹³ As highlighted by Sen, the daily lives of some individuals are impoverished through severe handicaps that exclude them from the benefits and common facilities enjoyed by others.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, both real and perceived risks of exclusion can lead to negative coping mechanisms, such as migration for menial jobs, violence, alcoholism, and participation in illegal activities.¹¹⁵

Another illustration of the material consequences of social exclusion is provided by Sen's examination of the simultaneous threat and opportunity of globalization. He demonstrates how

the ability of individuals to benefit from the process of globalization depends on whether or not they are excluded from the beneficial opportunities it offers, such as new skills, goods, patterns of exchange, and "ways of being prosperous."¹¹⁶ Exclusion from these opportunities, due to international restrictions or national neglect, may in turn result in exclusion from both newer ways of earning a living, as well as previous means of economic survival in the context of globalization.¹¹⁷ The implications of social exclusion thus permeate the material, social, and political realms by impacting opportunities for employment, the production of and access to goods and services, social participation, empowerment, and the exercising of rights and citizenship.¹¹⁸

Towards Social Inclusion

While social exclusion is a relative concept, as it is reflected by an individual's status in relation to mainstream society, this does not impede the possibility of measuring it in both relative and absolute terms.¹¹⁹ Given that the excluded are a heterogeneous group consisting of various beliefs, political affiliations, and socio-cultural backgrounds, their identification is particularly difficult.¹²⁰ Furthermore, as individuals can be excluded in some dimensions of society while being included in others, exclusion should be viewed as a fluid continuum along which individuals are placed so that any particular position is characterized by a combination of both inclusion and exclusion.¹²¹

Sen draws attention to particular policy implications that should be considered when formulating interventions on social exclusion.¹²² He demonstrates how inclusion and participation, if promoted in an "unfavorable" way, can, in fact, have an adverse effect on individuals, such as being included in employment under exploitative conditions.¹²³ He illustrates that those concerned with diagnosis, practical measurement, and public policy have reason to attend to these nuances and subtle distinctions in the issues highlighted by the concept of social exclusion in order to appropriately target policies.¹²⁴ In the Asian context, for example, Sen narrows the

scope of policy intervention to issues of protective security, political participation, democratic processes, and labour markets.¹²⁵ A focus on social exclusion should thus facilitate the analysis and understanding of causal mechanisms of poverty and deprivation.¹²⁶

While the opposite of social exclusion as an outcome is social equality, as a process it implies an expansion of opportunities for participation and inclusion in economic, political, social, and cultural processes.¹²⁷ The European Commission defines social inclusion as a process that ensures that those at risk of exclusion gain the opportunities and resources needed for full participation in economic, social, and cultural life; greater involvement in decision-making processes that affect their lives; and complete access to fundamental rights.¹²⁸ Following this approach, social exclusion can only be truly overcome if the desired objectives of social equality and inclusion are achieved through a process in which opportunities for participation are expanded.¹²⁹ A simple reversal of the social exclusion status does not by itself affirm social inclusion if achieved through a process that precludes participation and involvement.¹³⁰ In other words, individuals who have achieved an adequate standard of living are not necessarily socially included if this outcome was attained by means that restricted their participation and integration into institutions and networks—highlighting the multidimensional nature of genuine social inclusion.¹³¹

An initial step in overcoming social exclusion in any given context is through a policy application of the concept of social inclusion. Policies and regulatory frameworks at all levels should be assessed to determine where barriers to participation and access to resources and opportunities exist, and for which particular identifiable groups. Furthermore, a holistic approach needs to be applied to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of social exclusion through addressing policies, laws, and legislation that may contribute to the economic, political, social, and cultural exclusion of certain social groups—in other words, social inclusion objectives must be mainstreamed into every ministry and all areas of national policy.¹³² It should be recognized

that intervention on any single policy driver of social exclusion will be insufficient in addressing the complex interactions between causes.¹³³ Thus, a mix of social inclusion interventions must be formulated through collaboration with the lowest level of government administration to ensure effective outreach.¹³⁴ Partnerships, collaborations, and consultation with civil society actors, as well as the involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and reporting on social inclusion intervention outcomes, are also crucial for representing the interests of those affected and harnessing the potential of all actors in the social inclusion process.¹³⁵

Secondly, a human rights-based approach should be applied as a complementary framework to the capabilities-based approach for analyzing, assessing, and addressing various forms of inequality and rights violations in any given setting.¹³⁶ Normatively based on international human rights standards, this approach can be operationalized to protect and maximize human rights so that social inclusion is promoted within the mandatory realm of law.¹³⁷ In this manner, individuals are no longer considered as passive beneficiaries of policies, but rather as rights-holders and active agents in their own processes of inclusion.¹³⁸ This notion is echoed in both Young's argument for the active participation of groups in all decision-making processes and public discussions, as well as Benhabib's insistence on open and accessible public debates for individuals to deliberate on decisions affecting their well-being. The rights-based approach identifies the groups subject to discrimination, inequality, disadvantage, and exclusion, while emphasising their participation at every stage of the inclusion process.¹³⁹ Additionally, the approach necessitates redress by holding the state and its institutions legally accountable for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights obligations within its jurisdiction.¹⁴⁰

Lastly, it should be recognized that a removal of legal barriers alone does not affirm social inclusion and equality. Young, for example, stresses that despite formal inclusion in discussion fora or legal access to decision-making procedures, individuals may lack

the ability to influence decisions if the dominant and powerful voices dismiss their views as unworthy of consideration.¹⁴¹ Thus, institutional and systemic barriers, such as social prejudices, beliefs, and stereotypes need to be addressed and counteracted in order to attend to deeply entrenched societal values and practices that inhibit social inclusion.¹⁴² Policies and programmes that cultivate solidarity and promote changes in attitudes and social norms can help address some of the root causes of discrimination and exclusion, as well as encourage the social participation of individuals facing these prejudices.¹⁴³

Given the real material, social and political implications of social exclusion, the task of overcoming it in any given society is not one to be taken lightly. The increasing importance of social exclusion on the agenda of highly developed OECD member states is merely a single testament to exclusion as a development issue not at all confined to the developing country context. Social exclusion is similarly not limited to any distinct group, but rather is a process that can be experienced by anyone. The disenfranchisement of the individual and the rupture of social cohesion in the society are only a few of the many consequences of social exclusion that merit significant policy attention. Deliberate, systematic, and tailored efforts are required for promoting social inclusion in any given context. The complex multidimensional character of social exclusion, and its consequent deprivation, can only be effectively addressed through comprehensive measures targeting all legal, structural, and institutional barriers to inclusion. A holistic approach that adopts a capabilities- and rights- based perspective to analyze the nature of the exclusion—and to develop programmes and policies to directly address it—will prove to offer the most effective means for overcoming social exclusion.

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Seeking Relevance in the Twenty-First Century Global Architecture: The Case of the OECD

William Debost
Department of Political Science



Author **Biography**

Born and raised in Paris, William is a dual citizen of France and Canada, graduating this year with a major in Economics and minors in History and International Relations. His academic areas of interest include global economic governance, central banking and European politics. Soccer and cycling are among his favourite hobbies. He interned at the OECD in the summer of 2012.

Abstract

Within the network of global governance institutions, the OECD's relevance is often misunderstood or underestimated. Created in 1961, it serves as a forum for countries to discuss, compare and coordinate their economic and social policies. The specificity of the OECD lies not only in its essentially normative role, but also in its values-based membership: it is restricted to democratic, market-economy countries. Accordingly, during the first three decades of its existence, the Organisation's role was defined by Cold War politics. Since the 1990's, however, faced with the fading of this ideological conflict and the declining economic weight of its Members, the OECD has had to redefine itself through a wave of reform. Drawing from international relations theory, with a particular emphasis on constructivism, this paper argues that the OECD has positively redefined itself but has failed to resolve the central dilemma of inclusiveness and flexibility or preserved identity. In the context of intense competition for influence in the global governance system, the Organization is more likely to become an important component in the chain of global architecture through cutting-edge research and effective debate, rather than a truly global player. The case of the OECD is a powerful illustration of the shifting nature of global governance, and leads to the inevitable conclusion that international organizations will have to evolve significantly as they compete for relevance in a world that is very much one of their own making: an interconnected, multipolar system.

Often dismissed as a think tank or an exclusive club for wealthy nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) plays a unique role in global governance. The OECD is a leading organ of today's global system. Yet, it is easy to misunderstand and under-estimate its importance, largely because, unlike the IMF or the World Bank, it lacks any form of binding authority. As a consequence, it relies instead on informal mechanisms such as deliberation, persuasion, surveillance and peer review - conferring an essentially normative role for itself.¹ Unlike other international Organisations, the OECD's membership is relatively small, composed of thirty-four democratic, market-economy countries. Although limited and homogeneous membership facilitates consensus, it is also largely responsible for the OECD's ongoing identity crisis, which arose in the 1990s.

Indeed, the end of the Cold War and the accelerated decline of its Members' economic

weight prompted significant reform over the past two decades, touching the Organisation's structure, budget, and more significantly, enlarging membership and enhancing relations with non-Members. The Organisation is striving to move from multinational to global status, as a "hub of permanent dialogue on globalization issues".⁴ This has led to claims that the end of the Cold War was in fact the beginning of the OECD's "true opening".⁵

Although the reforms have positively re-defined the Organisation, they fail to resolve the Organisation's central dilemma between inclusiveness and preservation of the OECD's identity, - largely attributed to its values-based membership principle. The Organisation is more likely to be an important piece in the chain of global governance architecture rather than a truly global player. This paper strives to explore such dynamics; after a brief overview of the OECD's history, the theoretical framework is first will be established to understand the OECD's context, drawing from institutionalist and constructivist theories. Subsequently, the wave of the Organisation's reforms over the past two decades is outlined and evaluated, emphasizing issues pertaining to its membership; and following, the limits of the Organisation's global reach are elaborated upon. The paper concludes with and a critical assessment of the Organisation's aspirations to become a global player.

The OECD was formed in 1961 to replace the Organization Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), an American-initiated postwar institution that oversaw the Marshall Plan and later European economic integration. Western leaders at the time, traumatized by the experience of World War Two and well aware of the mistakes made during the interwar period, sought to promote peace through cooperation and economic reconstruction. Based in Paris, the OECD was designed as a forum for policy discussion between like-minded countries, with an objective of achieving higher sustainable growth and employment and the expansion of world trade. The original Members consisted of seventeen European countries, Turkey, Canada and the United States. They were joined by Japan shortly after, in

1964.

During the next three decades, the OECD's role was unambiguous: it advocated market-based economic policies and acted as what some have labeled an "economic NATO". The OECD was therefore built on political lines of Cold War diplomacy. Yet in 1989, when the Berlin Wall collapsed, it took away much of the Organization Organisation's *raison d'être* with it.⁶ Although this was an ideological victory, the OECD's relevance was questioned. Since then, it has further been exposed to the declining economic weight of its members, with the BRICs and other developing countries tilting the balance of economic power.⁷ Financial constraints and the increasing overlap with other international institutions only added to the OECD's need for reform. The following section establishes a theoretical framework to understand the Organization Organisation's role and the challenges it faces.

I. Theoretical Framework

i. Institutional Theory

International relations theory is critical to understanding the nature of the OECD. Institutional theory is an appropriate, and obvious, starting point. Institutionalism emerged in the early 1980's, inspired by studies of international regimes. Recognizing that world politics increasingly involved a diverse range of actors such as multinational corporations, transnational social movements and international Organisations, Keohane and Nye observed that the international system was characterized by interdependencies between different parts of the system. The paradigm of complex interdependence suggests that multiple channels (interstate, trans-governmental, transnational) connect societies, states are not always the most important actors, and that they value other goals besides power. Moreover, interdependence implies vulnerabilities and can lead to conflict. Failure to cooperate can have significant costs, as is arguably the case today with energy and climate policy. As a result of complex interdependence, states have an increasing need for coordination and cooperation. It should come to no surprise that

interdependence is particularly dense among OECD members.

Governments, Keohane and Nye further explain, manage these complex interdependencies by establishing international regimes, defined by Krasner as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations”.⁸ International Organisations are the institutional pillars of international regimes. Their “potential role [...] in political bargaining is greatly increased” in a world of multiple issues, with overlapping transnational and trans-governmental coalitions.⁹ International Organisations are “institutionalized policy networks,” -[can]¹⁰ as the OECD clearly illustrates: it serves as a network of knowledge, shaped by cross-national comparisons, country reports and various publications.

Complex interdependence suggests that other actors besides states, such as international Organisations, have an important role to play in international relations. But what incentives do states have for creating and preserving international regimes? What do they gain from their membership at the OECD? Institutional theory provides critical insight on the nature and purpose of international Organisations. In the 1980s, observing that the United States’ economic weight and political strength was in relative decline, Keohane sought to explain how cooperation could take place in the absence of hegemony, thereby challenging the realist hegemonic stability theory.

Keohane’s central argument is that non-hegemonic cooperation is possible, and is facilitated by international regimes.¹¹ That international regimes established under American leadership, such as the WTO and the UN, have survived its relative decline supports his theory. Institutionalists still view states as rational, self-interested actors, and in fact, international regimes should be seen as motivated by countries’ self-interest. Furthermore, Keohane argues, they may even be necessary to the pursuit of their self-interest.

Like domestic institutions, international institutions reflect the shared interests of their shareholders and foster the convergence of expectations.

Central to the institutionalist argument is the information role of institutions: an, inginginformation-rich environment changes the behavior of states by reducing transactions costs, making commitments more credible, and facilitating reciprocity. In the context of interdependence, states are eager to “solve common problems and pursue complementary purposes without subordinating themselves to hierarchical systems of control”.¹² This is precisely what Members expect from the OECD: forward-looking solutions to common economic and social problems, and policy dialogue within a community of shared values, without any encroachment on their sovereignty.

The OECD embraces the institutionalist idea that it is possible for states with different levels of power to cooperate in an anarchic system. In the words of the Council, the highest body at the Organisation, “one of the positive influences of the OECD in the world is its ability to shape international rules and conventions, thus helping to ensure a level playing field in international relations. [...] this builds trust between countries and reduces international tensions”.¹³

Institutionalism nonetheless acknowledges that institutions are unlikely to enforce rules on governments. Keohane explains “regimes are less important as centralized enforcers of rules than as facilitators of agreement among governments”.¹⁴ The lack of enforcement power of international institutions does not undermine their importance in world politics. Rather, the authority of the OECD, which lacks any significant form of enforcement power, lies in its ability to set standards and guidelines for its Members. States are very much concerned about their reputation and weary of finger-pointing, which influences international standing. And as recent events in Europe have shown, states’ treatment by global financial markets depend upon it.

These explanations provide an effective background for understanding both the creation of the OECD, and the incentive states have in participating in such arrangements. However, the OECD remains a particular case in today's global governance system. Its role cannot be fully understood without a greater emphasis on ideas and identity. As such, the OECD plays a unique role in global governance, which is best understood through constructivist theory.

ii. Constructivism

Constructivism, like institutionalism, emerged as a reaction to the over-simplifications of realism. Constructivism emphasizes the importance of ideas and identity in world politics. Among their core assumptions, constructivists believe that interests, preferences and identities are socially constructed (through social interactions), and hold the view that ideas can shape identities, preferences and interests. They therefore stress the potential for change and the role of ideas. Wendt argues that self-help and power politics, taken as exogenous by realists, are the result of process, not structure: they are institutions, and therefore subject to change. Cooperation is another form of institution created by rational, utility-maximizing states. Constructivists analyze cooperative institutions by looking at their effects on member states' identities, interests, and understandings of self and others.¹⁵

From its inception, the OECD was designed to be a meeting place, a forum for national civil servants and their foreign counterparts. Compared to many other international Organisations, the OECD does not produce any significant hard law. It monitors compliance to its recommendations, but has no *de jure* sanctioning power. This leads Marcussen to claim that the OECD is the "archetypical example of an international Organisation that governs through deliberation, persuasion, surveillance and self-regulation". In short, the OECD has developed mechanisms of soft-law governance.¹⁶

This soft-law governance often takes the form of peer pressure or multilateral surveillance.

Marcussen further distinguishes between the OECD's regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions. The former is weak: the OECD produces very few legal acts compared to other international Organisations. The OECD Council and the OECD Council of Ministers draft conventions that are legally binding for Member States who vote in favor of them, while others can abstain in order to avoid implementing the recommendations. Even when participants sign a legally binding act, compliance is not enforced, but monitored by the Organisation. The most important contribution of the OECD to international legislation, rather, lies in the influence of its recommendations and decisions in spurring agreements in other international forums. This was the case with the Organisation's Decision-Recommendation on Movements of Hazardous Waste in 1984, which provided a template for the United Nations Environment Program's Cairo Guidelines. In turn, such recommendations led to the Basel Convention of 1989.¹⁷

In any case, the direct legislative power of the Organisation is weak. Marcussen argues that the OECD plays more of an "ideas game": it employs normative and cognitive governance as a substitute for binding "hard" law. Normative governance "can take the form of theoretical statements (such as economic ideas), or guidelines for "good" behavior.¹⁸ Non-compliance to these standards is considered inappropriate and can lead to reputation and credibility loss. Monitoring and surveillance procedures take place under the review of other Member States and the OECD Secretariat. The Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC), one of the most prestigious committees, is at the heart of the Organisation's peer pressure and information-sharing mechanism.¹⁹ It is responsible for drafting the *Economic Surveys*, which review a specific country's economy and include cross country-analyses conducted by the Organisation's various directorates and approved by all the members. Thus, peer review and peer pressure are some of the major attributes of the Organisation. Information-sharing, the expertise of OECD personnel, personal visits to the capitals, and regular contacts with the media also enable the OECD to set issues on the policy agenda.

The cognitive role of the OECD, on the other hand, is based on the Organisation's discourse about present and future challenges, visions, values, and the role that the OECD and its Members are playing in the world economy. By this process, the OECD provides Member States with a "vocabulary with which to describe themselves, thereby socially constructing an imagined community".²⁰ Vehicles for cognitive governance are usually publications that deal with horizontal problem areas. For example, in its 1996 *Science, Technology and Industry Outlook*, the Organisation emphasized the term "knowledge-based economy",²¹ which became a popular term in domestic political discourse thereafter. Administrative values, such as transparency and efficiency, are further examples of key words that define OECD Members and set the criteria to be met by aspiring Members. The Organisation, as constructivists would argue, can exercise power by acting as a force for cohesiveness, shaping the social identities and behaviors of both Member States and prospective Member States.

It is also pertinent to introduce the notion of an epistemic community, another term associated with constructivist theory. An epistemic community is defined as "a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area".²² The epistemic community approach suggests "a non-systemic origin for state interests and identifies a dynamic cooperation independent of the distribution of international power," although distribution of power can determine the extent to which states adapt their behavior to the preferences of such networks.²³

The OECD is seen by many to be essentially epistemic; it is a network of experts and civil servants, a source of policy ideas as well as a framework of values and norms that guides both national policies of Members and the global governance system at large. It is much more than a think tank: it is by definition an intergovernmental Organisation, with Members collaborating to the statistics collection and peer reviews.²⁴ Combined with the expertise of its personnel, this cooperative environment

produces authoritative work and effective "soft law" instruments. The "like-mindedness" of its Members is an essential characteristic of the Organisation, facilitating consensus and debates that are not possible within other institutions.

All these observations support the view that the OECD plays a unique - and often underestimated - role in world politics. It is an identity-defining international Organisation; more precisely, it contributes to shaping the identity of the "ideal modern state".²⁵ With this framework in mind, one can evaluate the major challenge faced by the OECD: establishing its relevance as a global actor.

II. Wave of Reform: Adapting to Twenty-First Century Realities

Since the 1990s, OECD reform has been channeled towards enhancing its relevance in a globalized economy. Indeed, throughout that period and still to this day, the OECD and its Members have been "acclimatiz[ing] to a world of their own making".²⁶

In 2003, the Ambassador from Finland to the OECD, Jorma Julin, prepared a report on the future direction of the Organisation. According to Julin, only a reformed OECD could truly tackle issues arising from globalization and deliver what Members expect from it. While working methods and products represented the first set of challenges to be addressed, the second was the "broader strategic questions concerning the OECD's membership and role in the global architecture". Broader involvement with, and eventually inclusion of, emerging global players was essential, Julin argued, if the OECD was to be seen as a partner rather than an adversary by non-OECD countries and civil society Organisations.²⁷ The Council embraced this concern, and expansion of membership has accelerated: between 1994 and 2010, ten - albeit relatively small - countries have joined the Organisation. More broadly, a reform agenda has been introduced to address the fundamental issue of the Organisation's ongoing relevance to its Members and to the global economic governance system as a whole.

The agenda of modernizing and repositioning of the OECD can be traced back to the leadership of Donald Johnston, a Canadian academic, legal professional and politician who was the first non-European Secretary-General, from 1996 to 2006. His task was to address a perceived lack of direction and to re-establish a sense of identity for the Organisation. The concept of “economic NATO” was fading, and the APEC and NAFTA emerged as alternative forums for non-European members. Moreover, as part of a general trend in international Organisations, the OECD was pressured to address budgetary reforms and “live within its means”.²⁸

The first cycle of reform addressed internal mechanisms. It resulted in a greater involvement of member countries in setting priorities and allocating resources, greater efficiency, improved management practices and the introduction of results-based management systems. By 2003, operating costs were reduced by 20 percent.²⁹ The Organisation engaged in emerging agendas, such as sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and corruption. The Directorate for Public Affairs, created in 1997, was designed to improve the Organisation’s visibility and reputation. The most significant governance reform was the introduction of Qualitative Majority Voting (QMV) at the level of the Council and the standing committees, in 2004. This allowed for greater flexibility in setting priorities in the absence of mutual agreement.³⁰

A second cycle of reform was launched to improve cooperation with non-Members, in the context of increasingly integrated economies and rising actors. The issues that the OECD were actively involved in, such as trade and investment, were “stretching way beyond the reach and scale of existing members”. Members themselves feared for the future of the Organisation’s influence, unless it could bring a larger proportion of the world economy around the table.³¹ Johnston himself had an evolutionist view of international Organisations, warning that “those who do not adapt to [globalization] will find it hard to survive”.³²

An initial step was taken in 1997 with the creation of a Centre for Co-operation with non-Members, designed to coordinate relations with non-Members as well as other regional or international Organisations. Bourgon, former Ambassador from Canada to the OECD, further notes three phases that reflect the OECD’s attempt at deepening relations with non-Member countries. The first was the launch of Global Forums, which gather participants (government officials, business leaders, researchers etc.) from countries including non-Members. The Global Forums now cover thirteen different issue areas in which the OECD is involved, such as Education, Biotechnology, and Public Governance. Although they have no formal decision-making powers, they serve as “platforms for evidence-based policy exchange”. This enables the Organisation to enhance its understanding (“thinking outside the box”) and to extend its influence. In addition to bringing “multidisciplinary and horizontal approaches”, the Global Forums are a “recognition that it is possible to bring together those who share a common interest without traditional membership”.³³ The Global Forums are a key component of the Organisation’s strategy for global outreach, and they are further evidence of the Organisation’s epistemic nature.

A second phase identified by Bourgon is the participation of non-Members in the work of OECD committees - forums addressing specific issue areas - which allow countries that do not seek membership to contribute to the work of committees. The committees were instructed to invite non-Members to their discussions if such a move was beneficial to the their mandate and that of the Organisation as a whole. Here again, the process involves cooperation in an area of mutual interests, and the dissemination of common standards.

Finally, a strategic framework for the Organisation’s relations with non-Members was established in 2005. It acknowledged that “an overall OECD global relations strategy should enhance the capacity of the OECD” to project its methods and ideas in a multi-polar world. This strategic framework, provided by the Council, called for “enhanced

engagement” with major global economies and other actors outside OECD Membership, facilitating the integration of states outside the OECD Membership in the global economy, and drawing experiences from these actors to enhance the Organisation’s thinking and products.³⁴ According to Bourgon, the framework, the result of years of reflection, represented a milestone in signaling the Organisation’s acceptance that innovations in its approach to Membership and dealings with non-Members was essential “to transform the OECD from an international to a truly global Organisation”.³⁵

The nomination of Angel Gurría as Secretary-General in 2006 was very much reflective of the Organisation’s strategic shift. A former minister of foreign affairs and then finance in Mexico, Gurría was the first Secretary-General hailing from a developing country. With a dynamic personality and entrepreneurial skill, Gurría has dedicated his mandate to making the Organisation more relevant and inclusive, accelerating the momentum of reform initiated by his predecessor. In addition to internal reforms, in 2007 the Council approved the launching of accession discussions with Chile, Estonia, Israel, the Russian Federation and Slovenia, all of which (except the Russian Federation) joined the Organisation in 2010. The Council also pushed for strengthening cooperation with emerging economies through enhanced engagement programs.³⁶

After years of serving as a *de facto* secretariat for the G7, the OECD was invited by the G8 in 2007 to act as the platform for a dialogue with the five leading emerging economies - also known as the G8+5. The Heiligendamm round’s Support Unit was hosted by the Organisation in Paris, under direct supervision of the Secretary-General. The latter is currently seeking to strengthen relationships with the G20, which lacks the knowledge and expertise to deal with the complex economic and financial issues that have emerged in the recent years.³⁷ The recent financial crisis has also underlined interdependencies and calls for active engagement on behalf of the OECD. Extensive work has been published on related topics such as financial regulation, taxation, and budget austerity in Europe.

Looking back on two decades of significant reform, it appears that the OECD has adapted its outlook to the realities and urgencies of the twenty-first century. By innovating its internal mechanisms and involving a diverse range of actors from around the world, it is positioning itself as an incubator of new ideas, even in unaddressed issue areas. Green growth, narrowing the gender gap, and the establishment of a new international tax framework are examples of issues the Organisation has captured. Moreover, it has enhanced its relationship with civil society (or “new social movements”) - which had accused *en masse* the OECD of secrecy when it drafted the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in the 1990s³⁸ - through the Global Forums as well as public consultations and workshops. Overall, the OECD’s general understanding of growth is more nuanced than the liberalizing “one-fits-all” approach it advocated for decades.³⁹

The OECD’s Fiftieth Anniversary, in 2011, was an opportunity to celebrate its past achievements, reflect on its recent re-orientation, and consider challenges for the future of the Organisation. The presence of Hillary Rodham Clinton, US Secretary of State, was a testimony of the Organisation’s preserved relevance, including in the eyes of its largest shareholder. While praising the OECD as a “community of shared values” that provided “smart economic policies” that upheld those values for half a century, Clinton encouraged the Organisation to “continue to build varied, flexible partnerships in service of the standards we have worked to achieve”.⁴⁰

Thus, in the wake of sweeping reforms, and in an age of economic uncertainty, the OECD appears destined to play a major role in multilateral talks. Some observers have come to view the OECD as a powerful player, currently enjoying a “resurgence” as a global actor.⁴¹ Although the Organisation is undoubtedly a respected authority in policy matters, its importance in the future architecture of global governance remains uncertain.

III. Limits of the Organisation’s Global Reach

For all this apparent success, the OECD is still

subject to criticism and disregard. Indeed, in some regions of the world, the voice of the OECD remains to be heard. Recently, Kishore Mahbubani, from the National University of Singapore, wrote that the OECD, by failing to reinvent itself in the twenty years since the end of the Cold War, was destined to be a “sunset Organisation”. He could not recall meeting any Asian policymaker who claimed that the OECD had made “any kind of contribution to the greatest success story in economic cooperation and development:” East Asia.⁴² Although these comments are themselves slightly conceited, they point not only to the limits of the OECD’s reach, but also to an obvious identity gap that recent reforms have been unable to bridge.

The academic’s comments were a response to a more balanced study by Clifton and Díaz-Fuentes, who sought to critically evaluate the OECD’s “cautious” expansion, using the concepts of public and club goods, and their associated models of multilateralism. While global models of multilateralism are inclusive and representative, in club models of multilateralism, a small number of rich countries make up the rules and exclude poor and non-governmental actors. Clifton and Díaz-Fuentes argue that the OECD “historically constituted a club model of multilateralism *par excellence*,” providing club goods to its restricted membership.⁴³ They claim that the significant reform efforts at the Organisation have been driven by an “Organisational survival” instinct - as Donald Johnston seems to have advocated during his mandate as Secretary General. Recent reforms, Clifton and Díaz-Fuentes state, have attempted to transform the OECD from a club to a global Organisation.

The basis for claiming the OECD as a club model *par excellence* is that the Organisation had for decades a very selective logic of membership. In the context of the Cold War, members were predominantly transatlantic, or at least held “western” economic beliefs. For decades, moreover, French, British and American citizens were significantly over-represented in OECD staff.⁴⁴ Finally, the public goods produced by the Organisation (the “soft governance” mechanisms discussed above) were tailored to

respond to the demands of Members, whereas services to non-Members were considered secondary and often produced with an underlying assumption of superior “know-how”.⁴⁵

Thus the wave of reform in the past two decades should be understood as an attempt to “transcend” this club identity. Has it been successful in this regard? The programs of enhanced membership have had mixed results: Brazil and India are much more involved than China. India often participates in the agricultural committees with full member rights. On the other hand, China’s participation is much more limited, and tensions have emerged over this partnership. While some Member-States voice concerns about China’s human rights record, China has complained about the over-representation of European countries - many of them holding a fraction of China’s economic weight. There is a general suspicion within the Organisation that China might get a free ride by benefiting from the Organisation’s services without intending to commit itself.⁴⁶

More generally, the accession of new members is constrained by practical and political considerations. Enlarging membership confronts the OECD with a tradeoff between inclusiveness and efficacy: while it seems unavoidable if it is to have a truly global relevance, there is a risk of diluting the cohesiveness of the current membership. From a practical point of view, committees may become overcrowded and attenuate the frequency and quality of peer reviews; consensus will be rendered more difficult and QMV extended. As a result, it is the normative power and overall legitimacy of the Organisation that might suffer from the influx of new members.⁴⁷

Internal disagreements also potentially inhibit the extension of the membership base: every member can veto accessions. The process would not be immune to historical animosities (e.g. Japan towards China, Turkey towards Cyprus), and existing members might clash over regional priorities (e.g. enlargement focused on Europe or Asia). Smaller countries are faced with a particular dilemma of their own: they enjoy considerable influence within

the exclusive membership system of the OECD compared to other international Organisations, and this might be threatened by the inclusion of much larger members.

The most explicit barrier to entry for emerging countries is that they might not meet the required political criteria of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.⁴⁸ The OECD's current response to this dilemma is enhanced engagement. But by essentially providing a free ride to emerging countries that are reluctant to pursue membership, it is hard to believe that the Organisation will be able to have any significant impact in those countries.

The supply of membership, then, even from an Organisation seeking to increase its relevance, is not so straightforward. The identity factors, discussed by constructivist theory, come into play: as Marcussen explains, cognitive governance implies a degree of identity politics which seek to improve the cohesiveness of Members.

The demand for membership is no more obvious. The Heiligendamm process has established a dialogue between the G8 and the Outreach Five (O5) of emerging economies, thereby engaging another dynamic in global governance reform that might relegate the OECD to the sideline. The O5 countries (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa), despite having strong linkages to the United States and the international regimes established under its leadership, are likely to expand and influence the mechanisms of global governance through "soft" balancing. India, Brazil and South Africa, for example, have established a Dialogue Forum which serves as a vehicle for triangular cooperation. The IBSA (India-Brazil-South-Africa) can be seen as "indicative of a new post-Cold-War order" that is becoming multipolar.⁴⁹ As emerging economies increasingly value South-South relationships over North-South ones, it is hard to imagine them voluntarily accepting restrictions and standards within Western frameworks of multilateralism, such as the OECD. This also applies to smaller states in the Global South. For example, even though Singapore has reached developed status,

geopolitical considerations about its role in the South-East Asian region have prevented and will most likely keep preventing it from seeking membership at the Organisation.⁵⁰

IV. A Choice Between Flexibility and Identity?

In the face of these dilemmas and the difficulties of attracting emerging powers, Angel Gurría has relied on the concept of enhanced engagement. The hope is that by repeatedly collaborating with non-Members, the values and norms of the Organisation will take root in those countries, and create *de facto* membership. In the context of intense competition for influence in the global governance system - between international Organisations as well as private think-tanks - this does not seem sufficient.

The challenges faced by the OECD are different from any other existing international institution. As argued in this paper, its soft governance mechanisms and epistemic nature distinguish it from typical financial assistance institutions or hard law institutions. What reforms are needed to reach out to global actors that do not have the *identity* credentials for membership?

The membership question is rendered politically sensitive because the OECD is a values-based Organisation. John West, of the Asian Development Bank Institute, argues that the Organisation's values are "extremely laudable" but "pose several problems for the well-functioning of the Organisation". Firstly, they have not been rigorously and consistently applied in the past (e.g. the state of Mexico's democracy upon its accession in 1994 is debatable). Moreover, he argues, those values are not relevant to some of the critical challenges such as climate change and financial stability. It has a discriminating effect on the OECD, which becomes excluded from global talks, held instead at the G20, IMF or U.N. where there is no values-based membership. It will be impossible, West continues, for the OECD to cast off the impression that it is a Western-biased Organisation without rethinking its values-based approach.⁵¹

The OECD membership application process, according to West, has become “increasingly complex”. Having potential members pressured into conceding to all the rules of the Organisation is counter-productive. As is the case with the WTO’s settlement phase,⁵² it is precisely during the accession (settlement) process that Members can extract optimal concessions, rather than when countries actually join. Large Asian countries may therefore be discouraged by such a process, which is characterized by “less than compelling” benefits.⁵³ Moreover, the OECD’s mechanism is skewed toward small countries, demonstrated by its membership, which includes more than almost two-dozen systematically unimportant economies but nearly no systematically important economies from developing areas.⁵⁴ A functioning OECD should have a more flexible membership process (under the “shadow of law”). This would be more compelling to potential Members and would extract greater concessions from them. Asia’s emerging economies, West concludes, have a responsibility to adopt more of the Organisation’s norms and standards (such as good governance and transparency), but on the other hand, the OECD must introduce flexibility in its membership approach and evolve its Organisational structure if it is to become a more important player in global governance.⁵⁵

At this point, it is appropriate to recall that, as professor of law and former OECD employee James Salzman argues, the Organisation’s importance in influencing international law-making lies in its “conditional agenda-setting” power. Through its activities, which gather thousands of government officials and experts annually, the OECD can guide decision-makers’ “attitudes and activities”. The Organisation can effectively “lay the groundwork and identify whose influential voices in the policy debate shall be.”⁵⁶ Here we can recall the influence that epistemic communities have on collective policymaking, especially under conditions of uncertainty.⁵⁷

Salzman further notes that in the context of significant overlap among international Organisations, there is an inevitable dynamic of

forum shopping: parties seek jurisdictions that are most favorable to them. The OECD, Salzman argues, provides the information, includes some (although not all) key players, and the Organisational structure that are required to develop substantial agreements. Here, the like-mindedness of Members is clearly an asset: countries may turn to the OECD “as a *competing* forum to other institutions working on the same issue area”. The OECD’s homogeneous membership allows for a greater chance of reaching agreements that further conform to the Members’ beliefs.⁵⁸

These observations call into question the supposed need for enlarged membership. If Member countries seek a forum for deliberation and value the OECD highly for its restricted, values-based membership, then enlarging membership might undermine the Organisation’s strength as an agenda-setting actor.⁵⁹ This argument is compelling, but the extent to which the Organisation will be capable of setting the agenda of larger institutions if it does not provide a platform for emerging actors is uncertain. As the Heiligendamm process has demonstrated, institutions will find it hard to achieve global relevance if they do not reach out and accommodate to multipolarisation. In the divergence between Salzman and West’s arguments appears the central tradeoff that the Organisation is faced with: between flexibility and preserved identity. Put in another way, it is a tradeoff between global legitimacy and effectiveness. As constructivist theory would underline, greater inclusiveness would be inconsistent with the Organisation’s ideas and values, thus disturbing its normative and cognitive purpose. Perhaps the OECD’s future lies instead in sustaining this normative and cognitive governance through cutting-edge research and knowledge networking, while providing intellectual and operational support to larger, more inclusive institutions such as the G20. In terms of legitimacy, it is possible to imagine that expertise could make up for the institution’s lack of representativeness. Such expertise will be in high demand, moreover, as most Members grapple with an era of relative decline and uncertainty. Internal reforms therefore seem just as important to ensure the Organisation’s future legitimacy and authority.

V. Conclusion

Composed of 34 members, including 22 European states and only 2 from Asia, the OECD falls short of a “global hub.” It continues to struggle in achieving global relevance despite significant reforms over the past twenty years. The increasing overlap with other international Organisations is strongly attributed to the Organisation’s club-model and values-based heritage. The Institutionalist approach is pertinent in explaining the existence of cooperation in an anarchic system and the function of international regimes. However, this paper has outlined the unique nature of the OECD, both in its structure and membership. As such, the Organisation’s existence is best understood through a constructivist perspective: the OECD is rooted in the values and norms of its Members, which in turn, shape its interests and identity. The OECD is essentially epistemic - a network of experts seeking consensus within a framework of shared values and norms.

The challenge it faces is therefore more complex than that for other international institutions, which have been able to enlarge their membership to accommodate power shifts - as demonstrated by the establishment of the G20. Although the OECD is undoubtedly a valuable and respected authority on economic matters, it is doubtful that it will achieve a truly global influence. Clearly, expansion poses both political and practical challenges. Flexibility (an essential feature of successful international regimes, such as the WTO) conflicts with the Organisation’s values-based membership, and might undermine what forum-shopping Members value at the OECD: the ability to reach agreements through consensus.

The OECD, like global governance, is at a crossroads. In an interdependent system, the Organisation can play a valuable role as a provider of information and a forum for diverse actors to interact. Angel Gurría has clearly committed his mandate to opening the Organisation and creating a “hub” for all the stakeholders of globalization. Recently, the Secretary-General has also called for international Organisations to “come together in a

fully fledged network that would identify synergies and scope for improved coordination”.⁶⁰ It appears Mr Gurría acknowledges the limits of the OECD’s global outreach, promoting the Organisation as an important component in the chain of global networks as a means to fulfill his mandate. Perhaps, then, the OECD’s global relevance should not be judged by the list of members in the conventional sense, but rather according to its influence in the broader network of international Organisations.

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