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Balancing Innovation in an
Uncertain World

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

JUTHIKA HASAN,
AQSHA ADAM-HAJI

It was a tumultuous year in international and domestic politics. From the rise of populism to the shock of trade disputes, there are many emerging policy problems to assess and solve. As the consequences unfold, reliable evidence and critical-thinking are vital to shaping the course of society for the betterment of everyone.

Change is inevitable. But in the interest of pursuing meaningful progress, there are two main questions we wanted to ask: what are the barriers to an inclusive economy in Canada, and how can we use innovation in such an uncertain world? These papers and articles will help us answer those problems, and provoke more questions for the future.

It is more important than ever to understand the issues, be informed, and stay engaged in the political sphere. As graduate students, we added our voices to the discussion, and provide clear analysis on issues ranging from globalization to security. This year we also encouraged graduate writers to contribute shorter editorials on current policy issues. This short analyses are also published on our WordPress blog.

We hope that the next cohort continues to provoke discussions and share insights through this platform as well.

We hope you enjoy reading this year's edition of Queen's Policy Review.

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EXPERIMENTING WITH THE INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

THE BENEFITS OF BASIC INCOME

BY DAJEAN-MARIE LACASSE

EDITORS NOTE: This article was written before the cancellation of the Basic Income Pilot on August 2018.

After the Liberals won a majority government in October 2015, the CBC reported that Justin Trudeau made a speech preceding the G20 summit, and talked about the importance of inclusive economies. This language was echoed in the March 2016 Budget Speech when the Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau, stated that an inclusive and fair Canada is necessary to help grow the middle class – a favourite mantra of the party. Canadians have been told that an inclusive economy will help first-time home buyers, capture the benefits of free trade agreements and set the stage for Canada internationally.

For a term that is so new, it is certainly responsible for a lot. If inclusive economies have a positive impact on society and the economy, how can policymakers improve inclusivity? Let's briefly explore one current policy issue in Ontario: basic income.



An image from the OBIP's information booklet.

In April 2017, Ontario announced the Ontario Basic Income Pilot (OBIP) that would serve to support, rather than penalize, the working poor. Basic income has been shown to have positive consequences in many areas of society. Despite this, the current social attitude towards the working poor is not dissimilar to those from the late 19th century; the poor are often categorized as morally defective and undeserving.

"With a predictable and consistent income for the working poor, it is anticipated that they will have the opportunity improve their education, find more meaningful employment and make long term plans for their families."

A 2015 report from the Metcalfe Foundation found that around eight per cent of the working age population in Ontario lives below the poverty line, often working more than one job. One major problem Ontario faces with respect to lifting people out of poverty, as outlined in political strategist Hugh Segal's discussion paper on basic income, surrounds the current programs in place, which discourage people from engaging in the workforce. For example, the amount of provincial welfare support received by a recipient is decreased when an individual earns as little as \$200.



Image of the City of Dauphin, MB. Along with Winnipeg and rural Manitoba residents, Dauphin residents were eligible to participate in the Mincome experiment. (Photo: Dauphin Economic Development).

The OBIP will top up people's income to at least 75 per cent of the low income measure. This will give people a guaranteed income with the aim of reducing the level of poverty within Ontario. The project is similar to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) established as part of the first pillar of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) in the late 1960s, which is responsible for dramatically reducing the incidence of elderly poverty in Canada.

Furthermore, the Manitoba Basic Annual Income Experiment (Mincome) conducted in the 1970s was shown to reduce the level of stigma and moral objection that frequently surrounds the use of welfare programs and increase the level of social inclusion within the community. Another important lesson from the Mincome experiment is that, while only 17 per cent of the population needed a top up, research by University of Western Ontario professor David Calnitsky found that there were indirect benefits for the entire community. For example, Segal's discussion paper notes that the experiment is positively associated with a reduction in hospital admissions, a reduction in the number of car accidents, and an improvement in participant's mental health.

The concept of a basic income extends beyond benefits to the individual and reaches the wider society. With a predictable and consistent income for the working poor, it is anticipated that they will have the opportunity improve their education, find more meaningful employment and make long term plans for their families. It is hoped that evidence from the OBIP will make real change for the working poor while going on to inform good public policy and help create an inclusive society and inclusive economy in Canada.

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SIN TAXES NECESSARY EVIL, OR HAS THE NANNY STATE GONE TOO FAR?

BY MOHAMMED ALBAGHDADI

Sin tax is an excise duty on products that are deemed harmful to the individual or others in society. G.M. Anderson (1997) notes that we have been taxing sin as early as the 1700s. By raising the price of a good, you make people less inclined to purchase it. Governments rationalize this by arguing they are controlling for negative externalities.

When someone smokes a cigarette, they are not only harming themselves, but others around them through second-hand smoke or future healthcare premiums. This raises the argument for government intervention to reduce the behavior or help offset medical costs. Moral hazard also plays a role. One negative consequence of public health insurance is that it encourages risky behavior. Since public insurance is funded by the state, the government has a stake in deterring or reducing risky behavior. Given the enormous public policy implications of sin taxes, what are the benefits and problems associated with them?

Benefits

The frequency of the behavior taxed will decrease when the price increases. This is important as evidence from a 2005 Economist article shows that it will reduce problematic behaviors such as bingeing. Some argue that governments are saving money on health care by preventing diseases such as lung cancer or coronary heart disease. Surprisingly, sin taxes even make those it is targeting happier. For example, according to a study published by Abel Brodeur (2012), smokers who are taxed at a higher rate record higher life satisfaction scores, as these taxes give weaker-willed individuals a positive incentive to stop smoking. Finally, as a 2011 Economist article points out, some argue that vice taxes could drive innovation, like creating more fuel-efficient car engines. Joshua Meltzer also argued in 2014 that they could spur ground-breaking innovations in alternative energy.

Problems

Sin taxes are not without their drawbacks. A lot of governments use the hefty revenues from vice taxes to refresh public coffers. This is problematic as the



tax becomes more about revenue and less about eliminating the behavior or dealing with its consequence. But, because the tax successfully reduces the targeted behaviour, the revenue source also declines, which creates enormous strain on government programs that become reliant on this revenue. The government often retaliates by raising taxes on these products to maintain revenue under the name of improving public health. This is counterproductive, as it often leads to tax evasion or seeking these products from the black market. As the Laffer curve predicts, taxes become less efficient the higher the tax.

Sin taxes are often regressive, meaning that the tax falls more heavily on the poor than the rich. Evidence from a 2002 report published in Preventative Medicine and a 2011 report by the National Center for Health Statistics show that this is further compounded by the fact that working class and low-income earners tend to smoke more and consume more sugary drinks than higher income individuals.

However, a 2007 article from the American journal of Preventive Medicine shows that the opposite is observed for alcohol and marijuana. Furthermore, a 2016 paper in Health Economics found that certain vices such as cigarettes tend to have an inelastic demand curve.

The sugar industry has extensively lobbied against a sugar tax, arguing that it will not solve the obesity problem, and that the government is, in fact, playing favouritism. Their claims are not without merit. A study in the 2009 edition of Journal of Adolescent Health found there is a weak or a non-existent relationship between a state's sugar tax and adolescents' body mass index. Furthermore, people substitute consumption with untaxed products, which may be equally unhealthy. Mexico recently implemented a soda tax that reduced soda consumption by 7%, but led to some substitution towards untaxed drinks. Finally, several academics argued in the 2008 issue of Obesity that if the point of taxing sugar is to fight the obesity epidemic, artificially sweetened beverages should be similarly taxed as they are also associated with weight gain.

From a financial sense, if the argument for sin taxes is to help control healthcare costs related to preventable illnesses, there is evidence to suggest

that end of life care is just as expensive for unpreventable illnesses as it is for preventable ones. At the end of the day, if it is not coronary heart disease, then something else will eventually kill the individual, which may not be cheaper. On a more morbid note, macroeconomist N. Gregory Mankiw argues it is cheaper not to prevent diseases such as obesity. Since they die at a younger age, obese individuals would cost the state less in healthcare and social security payments than other individuals who suffer from chronic age-related unpreventable health conditions that live for longer periods of time.

Conclusion

Evidence shows that sin taxes reduce the frequency of the taxed behavior. It reduces the costs associated with preventable diseases, makes the public healthier and may even spur innovation in certain sectors. However, governments increasing reliance on sin tax revenue to fund projects unrelated to treating the behavior, the regressive nature of the tax, and the fact that it may not always solve the underlying issue, make it a poor public policy instrument. The issue could be revisited if governments sets aside these funds to only dealing with the root cause of the problem, to the point that revenue from sin taxes would no longer be needed. Otherwise, this is just another excuse for the government to tax people in the name of public health.

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INNOVATION POLICY AND “CREATIVE INSECURITY”

THE RETURN OF A DANGEROUS IDEA

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This paper focuses on the Creative Insecurity hypothesis from Mark Zachary Taylor’s 2016 book, *The Politics of Innovation*. Taylor’s work contends with the myths of innovation, but in doing so, it too falls victim to these popular but untested hypotheses about the relationship between bellicosity and innovation, demonstrating the real risks of embedding and perpetuating popular assumptions in work that seeks to engage and dispel those very kinds of assumptions. This work closely examines the variables, causal relations and supporting evidence at play in the “Creative Insecurity” hypothesis, testing it against other theories and explanations.

This work concludes that Creative Insecurity lacks significant evidence and may well conflate unrelated trends and phenomena, over-extending the exceptional situation of the United States and glossing-over important details of state-society relations. Of greatest concern is that “Creative Insecurity” may

well lead to the mistaken impression that bellicosity and the instigation of geopolitical tensions may have economic merits, an idea that is unproven at best and dangerous at worst.

The traditional social order is being disrupted by accelerating technological and economic changes. Those bearing the brunt of the disruption are often the same as those who lash-out against a political leadership which they perceive as being ambivalent to their interests. This populist groundswell is affecting the pillars of knowledge production and consumption, ensuring that scholars increasingly face the crucial task of combating the rise of rhetorical conviction over scientific research while attempting to retain the popular relevance of their ideas.

This presents a two sided challenge for research in innovation; that popular interest in innovation is increasing as deference to the traditional intellectual hierarchy fades. Scholarship on innovation thus

must contend with surging populist myths regarding innovation's causes and its potential for creating economic growth. By testing theories and debunking myths through careful analysis, scholars can encourage more informed policy debates and ultimately, improved policy outcomes.

Mark Zachary Taylor's 2016 work *The Politics of Innovation* fits into a crucial place in this tradition. Taylor seeks to debunk popular myths about innovation policy and the relationship between science and the state, specifically when trying to explain variation in countries' innovation rates against the grain of folk recipes for innovation. Taylor goes to great pains to compare and contrast quantitative data sets to help define and measure innovation.

Taylor concludes that there is little by way of common theme that would tie together the world's most innovative countries, applying statistical methods in an effort to systematically debunk the existing body of theories to explain innovation. This clearing of the intellectual underbrush in turn makes way for Taylor's own theory, that of "Creative Insecurity".

Creative Insecurity

Within the parameters set by Taylor's analysis, an underlying pattern emerges (although arguably an exaggerated one) and is identified by Taylor as crucial; many innovative countries face an external threat to their security of some kind. This threat, while often existential, does not overcome the country's internal stability or coherence, rather it is a threat just significant enough to pose a continuous risk to complacency in the backdrop of a country's politics. Taylor leverages this observation of external threats and internal unity to propose his

"Creative Insecurity" thesis. Creative Insecurity posits that countries facing external threats are able to use the external threat environment to produce an internal cohesion and ultimately the creative gumption that underpins innovation (1). Not only does this fit with the broader statistical observations noted in *The Politics of Innovation*, but the Creative Insecurity hypothesis also fits with any casual observation of the literature of best practices in innovation. In that literature, countries facing political circumstances which befit the characterization of Creative Insecurity feature prominently.

The intellectual provenance of Creative Insecurity is clear enough; the idea that competition spurs innovation and efficiency is a popular one in management and business research. Creative Insecurity applies this common theory of competition into international relations and political economy. As a well-organized and effective firm might respond to a competitive environment by innovating, according to Creative Insecurity, capable countries facing external threats respond with innovation in science and technology as well.

While the idea of Creative Insecurity is presented as a unique theory by Taylor, it does share a great deal of commonality with popular and long standing theories regarding the relationship between innovation and war. It was not Taylor in 2016 but in fact Heraclitus in 500BC who first claimed a

1. Taylor defines innovation as 'the discovery, introduction, and/or development of new technology, or the adaptation of established technology to a new use or to a new physical or social environment' (2016: 29). Innovation is then a process of creation, rather than a specific output; a definition which in turn fits with Taylor's proposed causal mechanism, "creative insecurity".

relationship between war and innovation, stating that “war is the father of all things.” Like Heraclitus and other classic philosophies linking conflict and creativity, Taylor too links innovation and conflict, but with the distinction that it is not war that is linked with innovation, but rather other conditions that happen to often be concurrent with war. War, so the argument goes is destructive, but geopolitical tension and hostility that falls short of war can spur countries out of scientific complacency.

As evidence for Creative Insecurity, Taylor points specifically to Taiwan and Israel, two countries which routinely face high geopolitical tensions and have greatly increased their innovation performance in parallel with these external threats. To prove that a lack of external threat should result in a poor innovation performance Taylor points to Mexico, arguing that Mexico’s internal disorder and relative lack of geopolitical threats ensures that the country does not benefit from Creative Insecurity. According to Taylor, Mexico is usually preoccupied with internal problems and not external competitors or threats, and by all measures is a also poor innovator.

Creative Insecurity offers a tidy explanation of some of these readily observable phenomena. Yet The Politics of Innovation selects favourable examples while leaving important counter-examples unexplained. For instance, Turkey, for most of the period in Taylor’s analysis (2) has had a strong external threat environment but overwhelming internal coherence. According to the data collected by Taylor, Turkey is a poor innovator, even though according to the Creative Insecurity hypothesis it should not be. Indeed, while innovative countries balanced on the geopolitical razor’s edge may draw more attention, counter-examples (unremarkably

innovative countries facing external threat) are in fact remarkably common (3).

Golden Ages and American Exceptionalism

No theory of innovation or geopolitics would be complete without addressing the American “hyperpower” which in many ways defines the geopolitical and global economic order. Taylor notes that the United States is a top innovator, but the U.S. may incidentally serve as a counter-example to the Creative Insecurity hypothesis. It hard to imagine that a geographically isolated country with the most powerful military in the world (and perhaps in human history) could be assessed as facing a strong geopolitical threat. But the connection between innovation and conflict operationalized by Creative Insecurity is still there, with Taylor pointing out that the United States has had over 150 militarized international disputes between 1970 and 2012 alone.

A graceful explanation for these opposing tendencies comes from Weiss (2014), who proposes that an American cultural disposition to anti-statism produces a policy environment that is generally not conducive to the public sector interventions necessary to underpin innovation. Yet that the military is largely exempted from this cultural anti-statism, and as a result policies and programs to

2. Although recent events at the time of writing may be challenging this, Turkey can certainly be classed as having internal stability for most of the 20th and 21st centuries, which are the date ranges most relevant for comparison with Taylor’s data and analysis.

3. A few other examples coming to mind include, North Korea, Iraq pre-2003, Iran, Libya, and Zimbabwe.

support innovation tend to accumulate under the umbrella of military and national security departments (Weiss, 2014). Directing innovation policy through the military has the added benefit of exempting industrial subsidies from WTO challenges, military procurement being exempted from violations of free trade provisions by Article 21 of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (Trebilcock, 2011).

A more suitable theory that could account for the American case would be to invert the causal logic of Creative Insecurity. The theory then becomes that countries which have their internal affairs in order, tend to be innovative and vibrant, so they then seek to project power beyond their borders (4). This projection of power produces a more hegemonic interpretation of security and threat, and is thus more akin to military adventurism and empire than a purely passive conceptualization of threat. Wider historical observation would tend to align better with this inverted causality as well. To that point, most classical political philosophers, while using the vocabulary of Golden Ages and the like, would probably adhere to an inverted conceptualization instead than Creative Insecurity.

There is a strong case to be made that Creative Security as a theory has been built upside down and that it is more likely that Golden Ages drive both innovation and military adventurism, than that geopolitical threat drives innovation. Setting aside for a moment this dispute of causality, there is indeed some underlying trend for countries facing external threats to be innovative. Yet where there should be deeper mechanisms of the “Creative Security” hypothesis to address this, there are instead only minor explanations which leaves open questions about how these underlying phenomenon interact.

Operationalizing Conflict and Creativity

Creative Insecurity is at its core a phenomena positing that local interests band together to improve relative competitiveness against foreign rivals that pose a threat to the state. Taylor posits that these mechanisms can be observed by their by-product, which is innovation. In terms of its propositions for observing and operationalising the mechanisms of Creative Security, Taylor's thoughts are much less clear. What Taylor seems to suggest that Creative Insecurity is underpinned by the abolition of a country's patronage networks and vested interests, which produce inefficiencies and stagnation by drawing rents from an otherwise naturally dynamic and innovative economy.

Setting aside a clear overreliance on neoliberal assumptions about the nature of the economy, (which washes over the many examples of market failure that have required state involvement to support economic dynamism) there is evidence to support the existence of a social tendency to band together in support of local interests, especially when actors are in the presence of foreign competition. But is this social preference for supporting local players the same thing as Creative Insecurity? Not exactly. As it were, Creative Insecurity is envisioned as a political phenomena in response to geo-political insecurity that is distinct from the wider social phenomena affecting individuals and firms.

4. This argument aligns with the work of Atul Kohli and Peter Evans, both of whom argue that the levels of institutional capacity and state strength affect a country's level of economic development (Kohli, 2004; Evans, 1995).

This is an intuitive assertion since presumably the state would be in a better position to instigate political change than any disaggregated and unorganized mass public could ever hope to be. Even while Taylor is consistently skeptical of the idea that institutions drive innovation, the idea that the state can lead action proves to be an irresistible one. Creative Insecurity is thus imagined less of a popular collective response to external competitive pressures and more of a state-driven crusade against economic capture and rents. What Creative Insecurity proposes is that the state lays the basis for increased competitiveness by responding to geopolitical tension with reform. On closer inspection however this idea of Creative Insecurity as a political phenomenon may not in fact be intellectually sustainable.

The missing link in the Creative Insecurity hypothesis is any clear evidence of state action in line with the theory. As a political phenomena, presumably the state would have to be the prime mover for Creative Insecurity. In turn, the state's direct involvement in such a huge undertaking as economic reforms in response to a perceived geopolitical threat would inevitably produce some hard evidence of the phenomena. Especially so due to the collection of national statistics, record keeping, program administration and the like that would be accumulate in the reform undertaking. Indeed, coordinated involvement of a singular and coherent organization should leave ample evidence of Creative Insecurity; evidence which The Politics of Innovation does not produce.

This may be because the experience of the Second World War has taught scholars, for better or for worse, that total war is accompanied by a flattening effect on social organizations which often help to dissipate rent-seeking relationships. Indeed,

this may well be the reason why we see bursts of innovation (and new rent-seekers for that matter) immediately following large-scale conflicts and total wars, events which clear-out the underbrush of rent-seeking arrangements and dissipate regulatory sclerosis. Yet while these examples share some common features at a high-level, they are sufficiently decidedly different than Creative Insecurity to lend support to this hypothesis. Indeed, only a tiny fraction of geopolitical tensions result in the conditions of total war.

Furthermore, while revolutionary upheaval in economic relationships does often occur during total war, it is less than clear that the total war itself is the driver of change. From the vantagepoint of an economist, total war may well have more in common revolution than normal wars. Indeed, the vast majority of wars are conducted in the absence any fundamental economic or political reforms. Furthermore, a large majority of those economic reforms which do occur are conducted during peace-time. Some of the most famous of economic reforms to disrupt rent-seeking arrangements actually occurred during peacetime, such as "Trust Busting" of the American Progressive Era.

The conspicuous absence of roadmap that might explain how Creative Insecurity works at a micro level leaves Creative Insecurity as a phenomena for which it is nearly impossible to find evidence. Yet according to the parameters of the theory, this fact alone does not disprove Creative Insecurity.

5. While total wars do seem to produce social flattening- and social flattening may well help to support bursts of innovation- the immense destruction that arises during total war surely negates the value of whatever creativity emerged as a side effect. Too often, these details are glossed over and the simplified summary.

Assuming that Creative Insecurity does exist in one form or another, it would have to be less of a political phenomena than as currently imagined since state action would leave a greater measure of evidence. As Creative Insecurity seems in fact to be conceptualized as a social disruption of rentier arrangements, and one which, on close examination, leaves little role for the state as a driver of constructive economic reorganization.

Society, but not State?

The absence of hard evidence to sketch the causal mechanisms of Creative Insecurity- the finer points of how sentiments of insecurity can come to pervade society and later culminate into action- readers are encouraged to believe that Creative Insecurity it must be driven by unseen and unmeasurable forces from wider society. This is certainly possible, and the idea that Creative Insecurity can be operationalized by social phenomena should not be dismissed outright. Indeed, perhaps the Creative Insecurity core flaw is that it has been claimed as a political phenomena when it is actually a sociological one.

Is Creative Insecurity a social phenomena or a political-economic one? Creative Insecurity posits that rent-seeking behaviors and other forms of economic capture dissipate under conditions of external threat. This does seem to occur often during an existentially significant war, to be sure. The Second World War for example, saw the disruption of existing patronage networks and vested interests through things like rationing and hyperinflation which disproportionately disadvantaged those holding capital. Yet does this observation continue to hold true when the threat falls short of total war?

Creative Insecurity may well be underpinned by the assumption that this constructive disruption of vested interests occurs in all conditions of geopolitical insecurity, just in greater or lesser measure depending on the nature of the threat. Thus a great threat, such as a total war, would result in significant disruption of these non-productive rent-seeking arrangements while a small threat, such as geopolitical tension absence war, would result in a smaller disruption of rent-seeking arrangements, but still along the same scale. Were this the case, it would make sense to argue for the innovation dividend of having geopolitical tensions just short of war, which is itself costly and non-productive.

These are however all significant assumptions about the nature of conflict and competitiveness; assumptions which are untested by The Politics of Innovation which simply presumes Creative Insecurity to be state-driven and political in nature. Whether the dissipation of capture seen in total war would also occur in conditions of Creative Insecurity, is an entirely different matter. The idea that Creative Insecurity could behave similarly in both conditions of war and conditions of peace- making the phenomena essentially linear in nature and simply changing as a matter of degree.

Assumptions along these lines about the relationship between war, hostility and economy are conspicuous in their lack of evidence and the outsized ambition of their hypotheses. Perhaps most troubling however is the lack of any examination of real-world examples where governments have responded to widespread perceptions of geopolitical insecurity among its citizenry. This is not due to an absence of potential cases! There are many real-world examples of popular social sentiments of geopolitical insecurity

forcing an economic reorganization; yet when this does occur, it seldom has the effect of improving innovation outcomes. In fact, the economic impact of insecurity is quite the opposite and usually encourages economically uncompetitive arrangements.

Widely-accepted social perceptions of geopolitical insecurity seldom produce thoughtful economic policy, but in fact generally produce policies that are reactionary, and often anti-liberal and anti-market. One need look no further than the current wave of American populism, which has an abundantly clear emphasis on protectionism, knee-jerk socio-economic redistribution, deficit spending and rampant interference in market competition. Not to mention that the charged rhetoric of populism often hints at an insecurity of property rights, which are a recipe for economic troubles and capital flight. If US President Trump's behaviour is any indication, broad based public engagement stemming from a popular insecurity about one's position in the global pecking order is likely to result in more rent-seeking, not less (Robbins, 2017).

The Death of a Dangerous Idea?

Taylor seeks a grand unifying theory to explain innovation, the starting point of which is the common wisdom about the relationship between war and innovation. Rather than carefully disentangling all the micro-level causal mechanisms that drive high rates of innovation in each specific case, the assumed relationship between war and innovation is embedded throughout Taylor's work as an explanatory variable. Not only is this idea a geopolitically dangerous one but aside from the old adages, there is little concrete proof that war, or other shades of

geopolitical aggression, produces economic growth or innovation. The popular superstition might persist that bellicosity is somehow good for the economy, but the evidence on this point is ambiguous, at best. To be sure, there are many reasons to be skeptical of the origin of Creative Insecurity which, in spite of the author's best intentions, may ultimately stem more from popular wisdom than scientific analysis.

Dangerous ideas cannot emerge in a vacuum and is a byproduct in many ways of the tensions at the heart of knowledge production and consumption. While often framed in opposition to populism and ignorance, there is nothing inherent to academic research that makes it immune to adopting popular assumptions. To bridge the gap between an academy that knows more and more about less and less, and a public that feels increasingly excluded from elite knowledge production and consumption, scholars like Taylor have sought to engage popular explanations in areas habitually reserved for those with highly technical and specialized understanding. That is to say that "common sense" explanations are sometimes entertained as a starting point for theoretical exploration in order to inform public discourse, engage the public in research and test widely accepted premises and relationships.

While a worthwhile effort in principal, in trying to engage, dispel or prove popular superstitions, scholarship must be wary of ingraining these same myths into the academic canon. In seeking popular relevance and a grand unifying theory for innovation, Taylor's work succumbs to a dangerous but persistent error; that war, or shades of war, can somehow be good for the economy. The idea that geopolitical tension and war help to promote innovation is unproven at best, and perilous at worst. In such uncertain times, a dangerous idea like

Creative Insecurity must be kept closely guarded and far from the realm of policy.

Mark Robbins is a PhD student in political science at the University of Toronto where his interests focus on innovation policy and related issues of political economy.

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BROWNING IN SURVEILLANCE PRACTICES

RACIALIZATION OF IDENTITIES UNDER A PANOPTIC STATE

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This article serves as an in-depth examination of the practice of “browning” in the post-9/11 Western security context. In particular, it looks at the associated construction of race as a category of deviance in surveillance practices and methodology. The paper examines the tension created by the practice of browning, examining suspicion, stigma and racialized identity as means for normalizing its impact in society. The paper starts to fill a research gap in surveillance studies by mapping a clearer picture between the concepts of identity, race, surveillance and deviance.

This paper explores the issue of “brown bodies” and the associated surveillance practice of “browning” in the post-9/11 era. This paper specifically focuses on the impact browning has, in the context of national security interest in Western countries, namely the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is concerned with the following question: How is race constructed as a “category of deviance” in society through the surveillance practice of browning?

This paper will argue that the surveillance practice of browning generates powerful and negative identity constructs of the “suspect community” as brown bodies in the imagination of the larger society. This identity tension is evidenced by the presence of suspicion and stigma on the part of non-suspect group members who seek to normalize and justify these constructs in surveillance. At the same time, members of the so-called “suspect group” seek to resist internalization of these constructs, and to challenge race as a core category of deviance in surveillance.

Burman (2010) describes browning as a strategy of identification that employs the practice of “browning of bodies”: sorting the ally from the enemy/suspect/threat in society such that the net of suspicion is wide enough to justify new policy frameworks in areas such as national security, immigration, and law (p. 203).

Others have noted that browning is a practice that is closely associated with the idea of “browning of terror”; such that a brown body (identity) comes to be understood synonymously with the identity of a terrorist (Patel, 2010, p. 218, Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2010, p. 237).

Therefore, in a sense, the term “brown” in browning refers to a process of identity construction, unlike other racialized identity terms like “black” or “white” (Burman, 2010). The term “brown”, is not tied to a specific ethnic or racial group with a shared cultural heritage or history, instead, it becomes performative in nature, and represents the aspect of deviance and danger in society (Silva, 2010, p. 169). In summary, browning is about establishing the possibility of a perceived security threat in the national imagination, which originates from racialized construction of the dangerous “other”, or in this case, the brown body (p. 177). The notion of a brown body starts to be constructed in accordance to racialized interpretation of identity symbols such as skin colour, clothing, name, religious attire, and so on (Silva, p. 169-170; Burman, p. 202).

An example of such a symbol would be the turban, a religious symbol of the Indian Sikh community. However, post 9/11, many images of terrorist group members including Osama Bin Laden showed them wearing a turban (Sidhu and Gohil, 2008, p. 1). The turban came to be associated with the “brown” terrorist

and the brown body; therefore, any individual seen wearing one faces the risk of being associated with the same social meaning in surveillance and in society (p. 1). This is especially evident in the aftermath of 9/11 in the US and UK, when many ethnic Sikhs were observed to have stopped wearing a turban as a result of this mislabeling and social backlash (p. 5).

For the purposes of this paper, browning will be considered in the context of both hard (CCTV, biometric gathering, data mining) and soft (citizen surveillance, enhanced gaze) surveillance measures. The term “surveillance” will be defined as the prolonged discreet or public observation of persons who are considered to be at risk for causing harm, threat, or disruption in society (Patel, 2010, p. 216).

Furthermore, the term “brown” will refer to the racialized identity construct of persons who are actually or perceived to be of South Asian or Middle Eastern background, and/or of Muslim faith (Patel 2010, p. 215).

Methodology

The research for this paper will be drawn from a combination of academic articles, qualitative studies, civil society reports, and official complaint records of discriminatory surveillance practices by law enforcement and government officials in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The scholarship on this topic is still growing, therefore this paper is limited in the number of academic studies to support its arguments. The research in this paper seeks to contribute to this area of surveillance studies, and also to raise further questions for future research on this topic.

The first part of this paper will briefly contextualize the practice of browning by summarizing the literature on race, identity, and deviance from sociology studies. The second part of this paper will examine the concept of “suspicion” by examining the idea of browning of terror, that is, the association between terrorism and being brown. The third part of this paper will talk about the how this suspicion develops into stigma for the brown bodies or members of the suspect community, resulting in hyper visibility of surveillance. The fourth part of this paper will discuss the communal impact of these identity constructs, and how one perceives oneself in relation to the same in their routine experience of surveillance. As a conclusion to this paper, the following questions will be considered: What does this form of discriminatory surveillance practice mean for citizenship? Are Western societies essentially legitimizing a form of state-sponsored racism, and the creation of first and second-class citizens?

Race as a Category of Deviance

Surveillance in society is used as a mechanism to control and discipline bodies (Khoury, 2009, p. 14). Similarly, the use of race as a category of deviance or detection in surveillance is something that has been historically used for several human rights violations, such as those in Nazi Germany and in Japanese internment camps.

Arguably, everyone is under some form of constant state surveillance. It is, however, select population groups that are constructed as deviant and placed under enhanced surveillance. The issue is in how the category of deviance is constructed, and how this construction impacts public perception and bias against these community groups.

Sociologists have noted that “surveillance” is not just a mechanism for crime detection and prevention, but also a method for systematic discrimination in an effort to “sanitize” spaces (Khoury, 2009, p. 6).

Contemporary works using CCTV surveillance and control of spaces have focused on urban regeneration projects, consumerism, and city centre locales, to argue that surveillance can be and is used as a cleansing mechanism for privileging certain groups over others (Khoury, 2009, p. 2).

The remainder of this paper explores the idea of surveillance as a sanitizing mechanism for public spaces. It critiques the larger social ordering agenda in place, insofar as this agenda involves the marking out of “dirty bodies” based on a set of racialized identity markers such as skin tone and dress (Lyon, 2003, p. 399). This form of identification (as briefly mentioned earlier) highlights the social sorting function of surveillance: the creation of categories of people coded for different levels of treatment (p. 399).

Crime in surveillance is similarly racialized when the criminal behavior of an individual is associated to their “racial traits”, “racial motives”, or “racial experiences” (Patel, 2010, p. 216). An example of this would be the use of the slogan the “war against terror” in response to the term Jihad or the Holy War. Here, the criminal act of terrorism is closely associated with the experiences of the devout Muslim who seeks to wage an (un)just war against the West. However, the problem here is that when crimes such as terrorism are racialized, whole communities or categories of phenotypically similar individuals are automatically pronounced as enemies/suspects/threats (p. 216).

Scientifically, “race” refers to a specific category of people who share certain physical characteristics such as eye colour, skin colour, hair texture and so on (Finn, 2011, p. 414). However, over time these markers have gained a significant amount of social currency in terms of meaning making, where physical characteristics that are race-driven continue to serve as a motif for cultural differences, histories, and behaviors (Finn, p. 414).

Suspicion

In Cohen’s classic work on “moral panics” (2002), it is noted that the public panic turns into an ingrained form of psychological suspicion when a suitable enemy group is constructed with some level of consensus in support of targeted surveillance of these groups (p. 1).

Recently, a racialized understanding of deviant groups – essentially through the practice of browning in terrorism – has resulted in the browning of terror. As a result, a new form of moral panic and suspicion has been created in society based on ideas of xenophobia and Islamophobia, where the imagery of a terrorist is closely associated with certain ethnic groups, thus creating them as the “dangerous other”.

The term “suspicion” can be defined as a feeling of mistrust, threat, or bias that results in discriminatory behavior against an individual. Furthermore, construction of the deviant category in surveillance is propagated through media discourses, political speeches, policies, and law. Therefore, it can be argued that this moral suspicion emerges as a form of race-based hostility against members of a suspect community group.

Examples of post-9/11 communal hostility include: the bombing of a mosque in Denton, Texas (Freyd 2002, p. 5); the attacks on numerous Sikhs in the UK and the US (Cohil and Sidhu 2008, p. 2); the Walmart incident involving the assault on a Muslim woman and her children (Freyd, p. 5). The above discussion is further highlighted in the comment below:

“For me the cameras in Birmingham were a real watershed moment, because it was like, wow, they are really, really focusing on us ... and that is their lack of trust in us that they have to do it covertly, and even when it is exposed they first try and deny it; for me that was a big watershed moment, because that really opened my eyes to what was going on and what is going to happen in the future.” (Patel 2010, p. 225)

However, the interesting question to ask here is: Why does this happen? Surely, we know that all Muslims were not responsible or in favour of the events of 9/11; how then can one explain this integration of race-based suspicion in different aspects of society, outside of surveillance?

Freyd (2002) argues that surveillance is intrinsically tied to our understanding of well-being and security (p. 7). When the practice of browning constructs a deviant category of individuals that is then acknowledged through media imagery and political narratives, it acts to justify, promote, and strengthen this mass level of suspicion and resultant hostility. Therefore, it can be argued that the media in particular are crucial for transferring this knowledge of deviance that is conceptualized through abstract notions of browning. Similar to Becker and Rubinstein’s (2004) findings, it can be noted that suspicion against groups is amplified with mainstream reinforcement of ideas relating to racialized identity constructs or deviant identity (p. 9-11).

Stigma

Considering the work on Labeling Theory by Goffman (2009) on stigma, it is noted that in surveillance, the population is divided into two groups: normals and deviants (p. 12). Once a deviant category is established, the normal assigns negative labels and public shaming strategies to the deviants in an effort to create stigma around them. Goffman (2009) defines “stigma” as an attribute or association that is deeply discrediting, shameful, or unwanted in society (p. 6). Stigma results in an enhanced surveillance gaze in both a state (formal) and public (informal) capacity against these stigmatized individuals (p. 35).

The term “surveillance gaze” can be defined as a form of visual sorting in the context of surveillance that identifies and discriminates against those deemed as deviant. Such a gaze can be reproduced by both human and non-human (cameras) actors in public spaces, in both an informal and formal capacity. For example, an examination of airport surveillance of non-humans revealed that objects belonging to, or stereotypically associated with, brown bodies (e.g. headscarf, hijab, and or rucksacks) transform from everyday goods into suspicious items when attached to a brown body (Addey, 2004). An example of this is from the testimony of a British Muslim woman named Naila: *“I recall after the 7/7 bombing and traveling to London, and I did have a rucksack and I was very aware as to how I was traveling ... I did feel very visible as a Muslim at that time, even though I don’t dress in the formal Islamic way, in terms of the Hijab or anything like that ... I just felt more visible but I felt that was more to do with what had happened and the public’s general view of Muslims being quite distorted.”* (Patel, 2010, p. 223)

Other examples are Visionics’ Face It CCTV-facial recognition system at Boston, Infor the body scanners in Manchester airport in England; in all of these instances individuals do not prove their identity, rather the authorities are identifying them (Lyon, 2003, p. 270). As Lyon notes, this is a form of enhanced surveillance gaze towards some, and is a discriminatory form of social sorting based on unrealistic perceptions of threat (p. 270).

Furthermore, brown bodies who are construed as deviant identities are subjected to another level of surveillance in their everyday life in the form of “citizen surveillance practices”, which can be defined as a person-to-person gaze (stares) in public spaces that is perpetrated by ordinary citizens in society. Patel (2010) notes that this gaze goes much beyond the surface level hate-stares that represent a racial sentiment of “you are not welcome here”, or that “you are not one of us”; rather, this form of surveillance is motivated by stigma resulting from the suspicion associated with these deviant individuals (p. 217).

Such citizen surveillance is highly encouraged by surveillance officials as evidenced by the comments of Michael Roach, former Assistant Director of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization. After the London bombings in 2005, he made an appeal to the public to use their cell phone cameras to photograph individuals of Middle Eastern appearance, who appear suspicious in nature (Patel, 2010, p. 220). The strength and success of this form of enhanced surveillance gaze by individuals in public spaces is justified by surveillance practices of browning that identify and construct a specific ethnic group as a “potential” threat.

Patel (2010) further observes that browning as a surveillance practice gives permission to hate in the context of national security interests, where citizen-to-citizen surveillance is promoted as a form of national and civic duty towards one's country (p. 220). This form of identity stigma perpetuates into a deeper understanding of social division based on power in that normals have the power over the deviants to execute this form of enhanced gaze. This is further highlighted in a testimony given by another Muslim individual named Dawood in the UK:

"The surveillance of the general public on me, viewing me with a suspicious eye, because that is profiling, not only by the official body but also by the lay person, fellow shoppers here at the shopping centre. So that's been a bit of a transformation. They just look, and I know that might sound almost ... it's hard to gratify that statement with evidence, unless you were following me for a day or I wore a head camera for a day, but I think it's partly linked into other factors, such as the rise of Islamophobia, so others view me with particular suspicion." (2010, p. 224)

In essence, this form of stigmatization, expulsion, and surveillance always keeps society as a whole in a permanent state of emergency, similar to how colour-based suspicion as conceptualized in browning becomes the norm.

Racialized Identity

The social impact of these racialized identity constructs as a result of discriminatory surveillance practices such as "browning" can be devastating. In this section, the experiences of the brown bodies will be accounted in relation to how they have come to resist, accept, and alter their racialized identities in societies.

Spalek et al. (2010) conducted a research project in Britain, documenting and evaluating the counter-terrorism experiences and surveillance profiling done on British Muslims under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act of 2000 (p. 21).

The study was significant as it highlighted a layered approach to the emotional and psychological effects experienced by the participants. Participants reported encountering an enhanced form of surveillance post-9/11, including being subject to the stop-and-search powers of the police. They were also subject to hard-policing practices such as raids on homes, detention without charge, and being approached by security services to act as informants (Spalek et al., 2010, p. 7). The study gives a detailed overview of the intense nature of the victimization of the individuals as a result of the surveillance practice of browning.

Similarly, Mythen, Walklate, and Khan (2009) reported a high level of fear, anger, and distrust on the part of the study participants towards law enforcement officials (p. 3-4). In general, these individuals felt that there were real consequences to the deviant label of a "suspect community", including a systematic exclusion from the normal workings of society (p. 6).

The social impact of these racialized identity constructs as a result of discriminatory surveillance practices such as "browning" can be devastating. In this section, the experiences of the brown bodies will be accounted in relation to how they have come to resist, accept, and alter their racialized identities in societies.

However, the results on the internalization by the deviant or suspect community members are atypical. Even if these members internalize their

identity constructs, they still reported an interest in challenging the same in both the above studies. This suggests that by no means did the participants think it was an acceptable or normal identity construct for them in society. Specifically, in Mythen, Walklate, and Khan, the respondents expressed a desire to challenge equating “Muslim” with “terrorist” (p. 11).

All of the respondents of the study explicitly recalled being referred to as a “brown body” during this period of time (Spalek et al., 2010, p. 33; Mythen, Walklate, and Khan, 2009, p. 14). Their experiences and levels of resistance to overcoming the identity construct of “brown body” varied: for some this was a momentary label, whereas for others the label had long-term consequences and impact (p. 8-11). The point to be noted here is that participants all recounted experiences that have been used to define “browning” in surveillance by Burman (2010), Silva (2008), and Patel (2010).

It was interesting that the participants commented on their self-perception of this racialized identity construct that was recognized as deviant. It is evident in their responses that although they may not have internalized and accepted their identities completely, they experienced negative internalization surrounding the term “Muslim”. The respondents noted the following:

“Being a terrorist is the worst possible thing you can be.” – Alana (Patel, 2010, p. 233)

“For me when you say you are a Muslim, it’s like a dirty word. You may as well say you are a paedophile.” – Amina (p. 225)

“I think they think it’s ok where ‘cause they’re in a climate now when they can say anything they want about Muslims, they’re in a situation where they can do anything they want to do in terms of surveillance.” – Nadia (p. 224)

In summary, the participants all alluded to feeling discriminated against as a suspect, anti-British, and/or a potential terrorist (Spalek et al. 32; Mythen, Walklate, and Khan 6). These comments also highlight that hyper-visibility or enhanced gaze of these groups, in the context of surveillance, is pervasive in nature. Therefore, the construction of racialized identities as a mechanism for isolating threats in society risks normalizing serious racial issues such as Islamophobia, hate crimes, and discriminatory hard and soft surveillance practices.

Conclusion

This paper illustrated the tension present between the “deviant” and “normal” groups of individuals in the process of “browning”, an effort to establish race as a central element of detection and monitoring of deviance in surveillance.

An argument that has been made for increased surveillance based on ethnic profiling is that it allows for safety, protection, and continued security at the cost of “minor” inconvenience of a few. However, this argument only holds true if surveillance practices are equal and fair in nature.

It is worth contemplating outside the scope of this paper if surveillance practices can ever be fair and equal. Surveillance as a concept thrives on the idea of social sorting and selectivity; opportunities to overcome these ideas seem to be difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, it is worth noting that increased surveillance has the potential of making individuals feel like victims, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. This argument goes back to the idea of a Big Brother; the feeling of being “watched” is uneasy for all regardless of their place in society (Patel 2010, p. 216).

However, surveillance practices create some serious issues and questions in regards to the notion of citizenship. The morality of race-based surveillance practices such as browning alludes to “guilt” on the part of the suspect community. However, in countries such as Canada, individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty. In this context, do such “targeted” surveillance practices infringe on our constitutional right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty?

Terrorism affects everyone. In the 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings, individuals also of South Asian, Arab, and Muslim heritage lost their lives. However, if one begins to construe a racialized understanding of these terrorist events, are we not indirectly stating that terrorism only affects, and most importantly kills individuals from outside these communities? Essentially, is this not a way of making these communities “invisible” in the larger discourse of national security and citizenship?

In Zaal et al. (2007), the issue of the “hyphen” was explored. The authors drew a critique in terms of how racialized identity disempowered individuals from recognizing heritage (p. 175). Acknowledging oneself as Indo-Canadian or British-Muslim is not a symbol of pride, but an offense in these multicultural societies (p. 174). In a sense, allowing oneself to use the hyphen was synonymous to acknowledging oneself as a second-class citizen.

In the course of this paper several important issues and questions have been raised in an effort to examine, critique, and respond to this idea of race as a category of deviance in surveillance. This paper therefore prompts a further exploration of the subject, in order to truly effect change and recognition of the issue in both theory and in praxis.

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THE LIMITS OF POLITICAL IMAGINATION

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Critical security studies is a field that approaches the matter of "security" from a different angle than the international relations theory of realism. It draws on the Marxist intellectual traditions and questions assumptions under realist conceptions of security. If a security regime is the result of a speech act, that act presents the opportunity to "de-securitize" relations between the subject and the securitized object. With enough "political imagination," based on the Marxist assumption that class struggle is the root of human conflict, the causes of insecurity can be neutralized.

Some worldviews present security threats that cannot be defused by "political imagination". This is true of the ideology espoused by the late Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This article argues that since ISIS is motivated by theological concerns, it is impractical to suggest that they can be

neutralized politically through a reordering of political and economic relations between it and the Western states. This is important for Canadian security analysts to understand when formulating policy related to threats to society from ISIS.

The analytical light that schools of critical security studies shed on security ontology is a testament to their intellectual profundity. The Welsh School's interrogation of "security" as it is conceived by the realist school of international relations, explicating its teleological linkage to Enlightenment liberalism, is especially insightful. Moreover, the Copenhagen School's postmodern dissection of "securitization" as a "speech act," a construction of relations between the subject and object on the basis of a "thick signifier," should give the security analyst reason for pause when evaluating the taken-for-granted objectivity of a "threat," and the implications that identifier has for circumscribing their discursive and political maneuverability (Huysmans, 1998).

Critical interventions in security studies have coincided with developments in global politics that, beginning with the sea change initiated by the successful detonation of the first nuclear weapon in 1945, have underscored the inadequacy of traditional realist assumptions about security as an inter-state matter pursued by rational actors. This has engendered the search for alternative approaches to managing the problem of insecurity. Munster and Sylvest (2014) found that a common thread uniting this new paradigm is the call for what the so-called Nuclear Realists first christened “political imagination” – an interrogation of the fundamental assumptions undergirding liberalism and the security regimes derived from them. Those who have adopted this line of argument have drawn varying conclusions about which elements of liberalism must be rethought. Mark Neocleous (n.d.) argues that private property is at the root of modern insecurity and that, by its very existence, it engenders new security threats, together with their attendant securitization. Others, like Chris Rossdale (2015), denounce identity-construction inherent in securitization as the pernicious root of false consciousness. Still others have bemoaned modernity’s relentless search for security from the natural elements and the resultant Industrial Revolution’s exploitation of natural resources, which has led to the advent of the Anthropocene (Dalby, 2017). Although these critical understandings of security are ostensibly antitheses of liberalism, they share the same fundamental axiology of liberal security ontology – the value of human life and the desirability of its prolongation. They seek only to secure this output with more equitable inputs from the political sphere.

As a consequence, these various approaches to security and their attendant de-securitization schemes, while noble and perhaps even workable in a context that presupposes liberal axiology, cannot cope with security ontologies that make death, rather than life, their referent. Such security ontologies are no idle speculation. The ubiquitous jihadist confession, variously paraphrased as, “we love death more than our enemies love life,” is a worldview that has been adopted with all of its terrifying consequences by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Tepper, 2011). Not only does this state provide the routines by which a religious zealot can secure their death on what they consider theologically propitious terms, but these routines necessarily require death – in the body or in identity – for the Other on a universal scale. In the face of such an uncompromising worldview, de-securitization schemes proffered as alternatives to securitization fail to provide a solution. The politicization of the object (ISIS) by the subject presupposes that there is common ground that can be reached between the two on the basis of a common security ontology predicated on a common axiology. In the absence of such common ground, politicization could only mean the suicide of the subject that adopts this position if the object (ISIS) has its own security ontology that considers the mere existence of the subject the cause of its insecurity. In other words, if Western democracies adopt the position of politicizing ISIS – taken to mean ceasing to threaten them by coming to a political arrangement with them – the only means of accomplishing this is by a kind of collective suicide demanded by ISIS’ security ontology. Therefore, this paper argues that certain worldviews present insuperable obstacles to finding a political arrangement that satisfies the requirements of all security ontologies.

There is, in other words, a limit to the power of political imagination.

Case Study: The Islamic State

ISIS furnishes an example of a community, a worldview, and a security ontology that does not comport with any security regime adopted by liberalism or any of its ideological offshoots. This can largely be explained by the incongruence of religious wars with the Westphalian norm of non-interference between sovereign states on the basis of universalist creeds. This is a basic axiom of the modern world (Walker, 2006). Even the Cold War, as Odd Arne Westad (2007) argues, involved a struggle between two powers that took the march of modernity for granted, and that only made competing claims as to how best to allocate its material resource. The first major postwar ideological rejection of modernity itself was sounded by the Iranian Revolution, which adopted the vision of the millenarian mystic, Ruhollah Khomeini (Westad, 2007). ISIS is yet the most recent incarnation of this apocalyptic cultism, manifest in its radical eschewal of the Enlightenment, its subordination of material security to spiritual security, and an axiology that devalues human life relative to the discharge of an alleged divine mission.

Lest this characterization of the movement as a pre-modern death cult be deemed hyperbolic by the incredulous modern reader, or the rhetoric of ISIS be dismissed as propaganda masking ulterior motives grounded in more mundane grievances, it is important to defer to the evidence that elucidates the worldview of those who march beneath the banner of the Islamic State. No other text meets this challenge with more thoroughness and sobriety than, *The Way of the Strangers* (2017), by Graeme

Wood. An itinerant, polyglot journalist, Wood draws on personal interviews with a considerable cross-section of ISIS recruiters, aspiring jihadists, and their fellow travelers, to understand the motives that drive men and women to fill the ranks of the Caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Graham (2017) concludes that the animating force behind ISIS is primarily theological and apocalyptic. He bases this conclusion on the “crushing weight of evidence that religion matters” to those who have elected to join the Islamic State (Wood, 2017). The salient theme running through the minds of Wood’s interviewees is insecurity, not about the imminence of death itself, but what lies beyond it. The partisans of ISIS are desperate not to suffer the fate of the eternally damned described in detail by Islamic scripture, and they seek the most routine schematic by which to end their lives in a manner that can be reasonably assumed to be pleasing to their god and worthy of reward in the afterlife (Wood, 2017). The means of doing so are killing, or at least terrorizing, those whose behaviour leads others to commit shirk – the crime of polytheism – thus threatening the salvation of others, or dying in the attempt (Wood 2017; Qutb, 2002). William McCants (2015) largely seconds Wood’s conclusions in his text, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, in which he documents the calculated nature of ISIS’ appeal to apocalyptic symbolism, drawing on many sources from the early history of Islam and keeping followers agog with hints of eschatological manifestations, especially the advent of the Mahdi, the Islamic messiah (pg. 22-29). But the motives of ISIS are communicated with the most laser-cut perspicuity in their magazine targeted at Western audiences, *Dabiq*. In its fifteenth issue, the editors of the magazine lay their grievances against the West on the table in stark detail, and in a manner that will strike most Westerners as anachronistic. They anathematize the Trinitarian

faith of Christian theology – the alleged coupling of partners with Allah – followed by the practice of separating church and state, man-made laws, evolutionism, and liberal attitudes toward sex (Break the Cross, 2017). These are deemed heresies, the mere presence of which endangers the souls of those exposed to them. It is this spiritual pollution, stemming from unbelief, that most occupies ISIS' concerns and that which they seek to violently expunge (Break the Cross, 2017).

Wood (2017) describes the archetypical ISIS recruit: "his desire, and that of his followers, [is] not for purity but for purification.... If one accepts that they might view themselves as fallen creatures in need of permanent rescue, then the Islamic State looks like a mission of salvation" (p. 187-188). Uncertainty, the same sentiment that underlays most liberal insecurities – insecurity about class enemies, missile gaps, ecological footprints – also under-girds the insecurity of ISIS and similarly prompts its own securitization scheme, but with a radically different referent – the immortal soul (Mitzen, 2006). Liberalism is fundamentally material and based on reason, not faith. Thus, as Huysmans explains with inimitable clarity, death, as an experience impenetrable to experiment, is the ultimate unreason and the target of liberal securitization schemes. These schemes are united in their use of routine to obviate death (Mitzen, 2006; Huysmans 1998). The jihadism of ISIS, by contrast, incorporates death into its routine as a means to an end and searches for certitude about what awaits one after death by an appeal to faith in what the Qur'an guarantees. For this very reason, the theological voices of the Islamic State go to great lengths to cast suspicion on the integrity of rival epistemologies – especially those grounded in Christian theological sources – and loudly tout the distinct fidelity of the Qur'an (Break the Cross, 2017;

Wood 2017). Its trustworthiness thus becomes an anchor of faith and a pillar of certitude permitting those who believe in its contents to act in a manner that secures their eternal existence – and perhaps even that of those whom they have kept from vice through the deterrent effect of terrorism – in paradise, not in hell. Death is a unique subject in which faith carries as much solace and authority as empirical research and experiment: "If faith is lost, there is no security and there is no life for him who does not adhere to religion. He who accepts life without religion, has taken annihilation as his companion for life" (Covenant, 1988). Whereas liberal security ontology concerns itself with the question, "What must I do to survive?", the question posed by ISIS, and indeed many apocalyptic movements, is perhaps more profound – and more ancient: "What must I do to be saved?"

Implications

The existence of such a worldview poses an insuperable obstacle to political imaginations centered on notions of de-securitization, politicization, and emancipation. While these schemes take issue with certain institutions of liberalism, such as private property, they share the same ultimate axiological referent – life and its prolongation. This is only to be expected considering they are all modern approaches to security ontology, stemming from a common Enlightenment heritage. For example, in making a case for an emancipatory approach to security ontology, Ken Booth, a scholar of the Welsh School of security studies, suggests that the liberal understanding of security-as-liberty be altered, but not replaced, from meaning the liberty to enjoy property to meaning the liberty from want (Booth, 1991). This noble example of political imagination traces the elusiveness of security to the enduring presence of threats. Security then, entails

the removal of threats to the wants necessary for the pursuit of life as one sees fit. This amounts to the equitable distribution of resources. Stated differently, it amounts to adoption of the attitude of, "I am not free until everyone is free" (Booth, 1991; Paggi & Pinzautu, 1985).

However, the presupposition in the subtext of Booth's conception of "wants" is that they are universal and material (Booth, 1991). As has been documented, ISIS is decidedly pre-modern. Thus, emancipatory approaches to de-securitization do not stand much hope for success and may amount to what Nuclear Realists considered the 'politics of the impossible,' for they cannot provide ISIS with what it truly wants, especially when its demands are grounded in what it deems immutable holy writ (Sylvest, 2014). The referent at the heart of ISIS' security regime cannot be secured by material appeasement, for it is incorporeal. Moreover, for ISIS, freedom from threats would necessitate the removal of freedom – even life – from all those who reject its imperium. Thus, Booth's suggestion smashes on the hard surface of ISIS' security ontology. The adage invoked by Booth that, "my freedom depends on your freedom" (Booth, 1991) is antithetical to ISIS' security ontology, for it is precisely freedom – the pursuit of life the way one sees fit, outside of the Shari'ah – that it perceives as such a threat. Security, for ISIS, lies in "slavery." (Wood, 2007).

The terrifying axioms and implications of ISIS' worldview can thus be met in one of two ways. They can be accepted as the representation of ISIS' true motives, in which case a political solution between it and those it securitizes – namely, those who lie outside its identity – cannot be found short of the latter's utter capitulation. Conversely, the absolutism of ISIS can be dismissed as a religious

put-on masking more reticent, mundane grievances stemming from the legacy of colonialism and the ongoing hegemonic influence of the United States in particular (Kissinger, 2014). If the latter approach is taken, considerably more room for Western agency and maneuverability is offered by the prospect of politicizing the true roots of ISIS' existence. This position is admittedly appealing, as it suggests that those faced with the threat of ISIS have agency with which to expiate it. At the same time, it is liable to provide its adherent with a false sense of security.

Some academics have been keen to take this approach. In part, it reflects an academic tendency to favour Karl Marx over Max Weber, with the former's relegation of religious ideas to the realm of the "superstructure" hypostatized by the "base" of economic structures and their attendant class dynamics. It may also reflect the anachronistic foreignness of religious conviction to most of academia, a deeply non-religious institution (Prothero, 2010; Dawkins, 2008). In some respects, these approaches are helpful in correcting against monocausal explanations of ISIS. Even if one accepts the ideational explanation of this organization or any other jihadist group (as this author does), it is imperative to acknowledge that none of these movements spawned in a historical vacuum. They are indeed midwived by historical circumstances associated with Western colonial and postcolonial powers, whose level of geopolitical interference is relevant to the critical school's emphasis on politicizing security threats emanating from the postcolonial world.

Thus, for example, in *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (2015), Patrick Cockburn contextualizes ISIS in the Middle Eastern sectarian power struggle between Sunni Islam, represented by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States,

and Shi'ism championed by Iran and the Baghdad government in Iraq. He argues that ISIS would not have obtained a foothold within its erstwhile borders if it had not been for the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in western Syria – a development made possible by Gulf State and Western support for Syrian insurrectionists rebelling against Damascus. Moreover, the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq upset the sectarian balance in favour of Iraq's Shi'ite majority, to the point where the Sunni minority in its northern provinces sought the support of ISIS fighters against what they perceived as their common sectarian nemesis emanating from Baghdad (Cockburn, 2015). The result was a meteoric rise in ISIS' territorial gains and control of resources, rendering its creation as a viable state possible. McCants (2015) too, acknowledges that while End-of-Days theology informs ISIS' actions and is a driving force behind its appeal, it is largely in the wake of the United States invasion of Iraq that the Sunni world – previously, he asserts, largely indifferent to eschatological speculation – has become receptive to an Islamic messianism.

Still, the explanatory power of these rationalizations is limited. For example, while the aphorism 'the-enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-friend' goes far in explaining why ISIS possesses a base of support among common Sunnis in northern Iraq, who may care more about checking Shi'ite expansion or even the economic security offered by the Islamic State than its apocalyptic vision of the End-of-Days, it cannot explain the large numbers of foreign fighters who left generous welfare states in the West for the comparatively austere conditions of the Caliphate (Grinkel & Entenmann). Moreover, Wood (2007) wisely cautions against "fleeing" the analysis of ISIS' religious spirit by emphasizing its Sunni support, especially that of ex-Baathists, noting that the

central leadership core existed long before it was joined by ex-Baathists, and that the correspondence between members of this element of the organization is so littered with religious verbiage that it is clear that newcomers at least understand the power of religious ideas to the base of the organization (Wood, 2007). Moreover, the strictly utilitarian function ISIS provides – basic state infrastructure, security for Sunnis, and the means by which the unemployed can eke out subsistence for their families – does not explain its delegation of substantial resources to more religiously idiosyncratic pursuits – legitimating sex slavery, anathematizing heretics, desecrating historic sites, and policing "vice" – policies that clearly owe their character to ancient texts (Wood, 2007).

The fact remains that the doctrine of jihad preached by ISIS has a long intellectual pedigree predating Western meddling in the Middle East. As Wood (2007) writes, "One of the illusions surrounding the Islamic State is that it arose from nowhere, that it drew itself into being on a blank slate. But it could never have achieved so much, so fast, if there had not been millions of people already hungry for what the Islamic State promised (p. 5). Postcolonial scholars are slow to recognize this, much less place explanatory stock in it, and in their zeal to attribute the existence of groups like ISIS to Western interventionism, they risk reproducing the very Eurocentrism they ostensibly oppose as part of their disciplinary commitment. This comes in the form of robbing the postcolonial of real agency and making their actions reactive to Western action.

In their postcolonial intervention in security studies, Tarak Barkawi and Mark Lafferty admonish scholars to resist privileging Great Powers, i.e. the Western world, in their analyses of security threats (Barkawi & Lafferty, 2006). However, the authors appear

comfortable privileging European empires and their hegemonic American successor when accounting for the constitution of relations between the West and those they deem the “weaker side” (Barkawi & Lafferty, 2006). This is manifest in subtle but freighted ways, such as their jeremiad that Western discourse cease delineating Muslim extremist from Westerner lest it produce a binary of “Westerner” versus “the Other” – a grave Orientalist sin (Barkawi & Lafferty, 2006). What this ignores is that the minds of jihadists are already Manichean in their dualistic bifurcation of the world, irrespective of what language their adversaries use, and that this discrimination can be based on very ancient modes of thought between the saved and the lost. Sayyid Qutb, one of the spiritual inspirations behind modern jihadism, sets this out plainly in his atavistic manifesto, *Milestones* (1964):

There is only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam), and it is that place where the Islamic state is established and the Shari’ah is the authority and God’s limits are observed, and where all the Muslims administer the affairs of the state with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (Dar-ul-Harb) (Qutb, 2002).

Like many postcolonial thinkers, Barkawi and Lafferty (2006) appear to make the mistake of thinking that identity construction through ‘Othering’ has a European patent.

Incidentally, Barkawi and Lafferty (2006) cite Sayyid Qutb as the product of a ‘provincialized’ Europe. Based on the thesis of Dipesh Chakrabarty, “provincializing Europe” is actually the compelling historiographical argument that the idea of Europe and Western Civilization should be reinterpreted as the hybrid offspring of a symbiotic relationship between “the West” and “the Rest.” It is an

amorphous region and social construct that did not develop in a self-contained manner, but constituted the rest of the world centrifugally while being itself hypostasized centripetally through its entanglement with the rest of the globe. Indeed, in this sense, Qutb was truly a man whose career would not have been incarnated the way it was without his exposure to European modernity. Certainly, as Barkawi and Lafferty (2006) note, Leninism informs his call for an Islamist “vanguard.” And yet, this does not nullify Qutb’s appeal to ideals and beliefs that long predate European modernity. Barkawi and Lafferty (2006) note that Qutb’s primary opposition to Western modernity, like that of ISIS today, was to what he perceived to be its spiritual barrenness and vice and its rejection of divine Shari’ah. This alone legitimated jihad against the West in the mind of Qutb, irrespective of any Western interference in Islamic lands that came with the imperial power modernity afforded Europe and the United States. It is the “orientalists” and Muslims influenced by modernity, those “under the pressure of circumstances,” who “distort” the meaning of “jihad” to mean a “defensive war,” Qutb (2002) insists. It is, rather, an aggressive struggle meant to disseminate Shari’ah wherever it does not yet reign supreme. Barkawi and Lafferty (2006) would do well to remember this in characterizing groups like al-Qaeda as “resistance [i.e. defensive] movements.”

Barkawi and Lafferty (2006) are in the unenviable existential bind of condemning Eurocentrism on the basis of a theoretical tradition – postcolonial studies – that is so clearly the product of European thought. This tension is manifest in their attempt to decolonize emancipation. It is European pre-eminence in articulations of emancipation (Barkawi & Lafferty, 2006) that is perniciously Eurocentric. However, it could be argued that the very idea of emancipation itself, at least in its Marxist form, is

drawn from a decidedly European reservoir of ideas, especially humanism (Pinzauti, 1985). Qutb (2002) pointedly eschews the humanistic emancipation proffered by Western modernity in either its capitalist or communist forms. For him, the only desirable emancipation is the emancipation of men from religious ignorance – jahiliyyah – and that can only come with the submission to Qu’anic instruction in laws, customs, and manners – the Shari’ah – on a universal scale:

This religion is really a universal declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men and from servitude to his own desires, which is also a form of human servitude; it is a declaration that sovereignty belongs to God alone and that He is the Lord of all the worlds. It means a challenge to all kinds of forms of systems which are based on the concept of the sovereignty of man; in other words, where man has usurped the Divine attribute (Qutb, 2002, p. 57-58).

Theocracy, in other words. Likewise, ISIS proposes an almost identical form of emancipation:

We fight you, not simply to punish and deter you, but to bring you true freedom in this life and salvation in the Hereafter, freedom from being enslaved to your whims and desires as well as those of your clergy and legislatures, and salvation by worshiping your Creator alone and following His messenger. We fight you in order to bring you out from the darkness of disbelief and into the light of Islam, and to liberate you from the constraints of living for the sake of the worldly life alone so that you may enjoy both the blessings of the worldly life and the bliss of the Hereafter (Break the Cross, 2017, p. 33).

If Western interference has created the largely circumstantial context in which groups like ISIS have taken root, this much should be owned. However, lest the subaltern be reduced to a mere

reactionary to Western agency, his ideas, his will, his civilization and the actions that flow from these sources must be respected as having a design and momentum of their own. The record of Western action is only part of the security problem. Therefore, it logically follows that it can only be part of the solution. At the heart of Anthony Burke’s “security cosmopolitanism” lies a call for political responsibility, the valid point that actions today yield dividends tomorrow; chickens do come home to roost (Burke, 2013). However, even in the implausible event of immaculately judicious and prescient action on the part of politically responsible Western powers, this would not be enough to obviate all threats or avert enemies. As ISIS explains in no uncertain terms:

What’s important to understand here is that although some might argue that your foreign policies are the extent of what drives our hatred, this particular reason for hating you is secondary.... The fact is, even if you were to stop bombing us, imprisoning us, torturing us, vilifying us, and usurping our lands, we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating you will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam. Even if you were to pay jizyah and live under the authority of Islam in humiliation, we would continue to hate you. No doubt, we would stop fighting you then as we would stop fighting any disbelievers who enter into a covenant with us, but we would not stop hating you (Break the cross, 2017, p. 32-33).

Finally, one must take ‘provincializing Europe’ and the teleological arguments drawn from that thesis to their logical conclusion. If Western powers are ultimately, if indirectly, responsible for the rise of “resistance movements,” in Barkawi and Lafferty’s parlance, by exposing them to a modernity against which they had no choice but to react, it must be pointed out that modernity itself did not come about ex nihilo. In recent years, some voices have

ascribed European modernity to the influence of the Muslim world (Diab, 2015). It is true that without the latter's preservation of classical texts and their migration to Western Europe, particularly after the sacking of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, there would have been no Renaissance and Reformation, and consequently, no modernity. Thus, ascribing jihadism to Western modernity would lead, *reductio ad absurdum*, to the argument that the Muslim world was ultimately the author of the Western hegemony it now finds itself "resisting."

Conclusions

In the 1995 film, *Independence Day*, the President of the United States, speaking on behalf of all of humanity, extends the olive branch to a member of an alien race bent on annihilating humans and colonizing their planet. Upon having his offer of peace rebuffed, he asks the alien representative, "What do you want us to do?". The alien's response is as terse as it is brutally logical: "die". Thereafter, the only choice in the arsenal of humanity is between military struggle against the invaders, or acceptance of extermination (Emmerich, 2016).

ISIS promulgates a creed that is just as alien to liberal modernity, and just as uncompromising. This includes its incompatibility with emancipation and other forms of de-securitization proposed by critical theory. This is because its security ontology is diametrically opposed to all those security ontologies that stem from the liberal referent – life and its prolongation. It is predicated on a starkly pre-modern, pre-Enlightenment axiology. Interestingly, this death cultism leaves internationalism and realism similarly at a loss, for realism not only precludes religious wars, but also presupposes rational states pursuing their self-

interests, within the boundaries of mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty, underwritten by deterrence. Moreover, as Walker points out, internationalism presupposes that the universal existence of states established since the demise of European empires means that "modernity" has in some sense been universalized, and therefore the normal realist rules apply to all (Walker, 2006). Such is not the case. Not only does ISIS transgress the sovereignty of other states, instead seeking their absorption into the Caliphate, its security ontology renders traditional methods of deterrence ineffective. How, by threat of force, do you deter someone who wants to die, and who sees security in death?

The inadequacy of both realism and emancipation in the face of a worldview espoused by ISIS suggests that for those with a modern liberal security ontology who are unwilling to capitulate, the only response to a threat like ISIS is to reject relativism and embrace what Walker identifies as the "politics of exception" based on the Schmittean notion that threats that transcend the normal boundaries of law and custom require extraordinary measures, exceptions declared by a hegemonic sovereign or alliance of sovereigns. In the case of ISIS, the temporal boundary separating barbarian from civilized has been crossed (Walker, 2006). Within the boundaries of modernity set by liberalism, certain accommodations can be made, not excluding elements of emancipation, but not those that endanger the system itself (Walker, 2006). In the struggle between modernity and apocalyptic Islamism, there is a clash of two inclusive universalisms. However, their security ontologies simultaneously render them mutually exclusive universalisms (Walker 2006). Therefore, the struggle between modernity and apocalyptic Islamism is a zero-sum game. The former's security ontology

requires the prolongation of life and the elimination of threats to that end. The security ontology of the latter requires the death of the former. Each cannot achieve security in the presence of the Other.

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