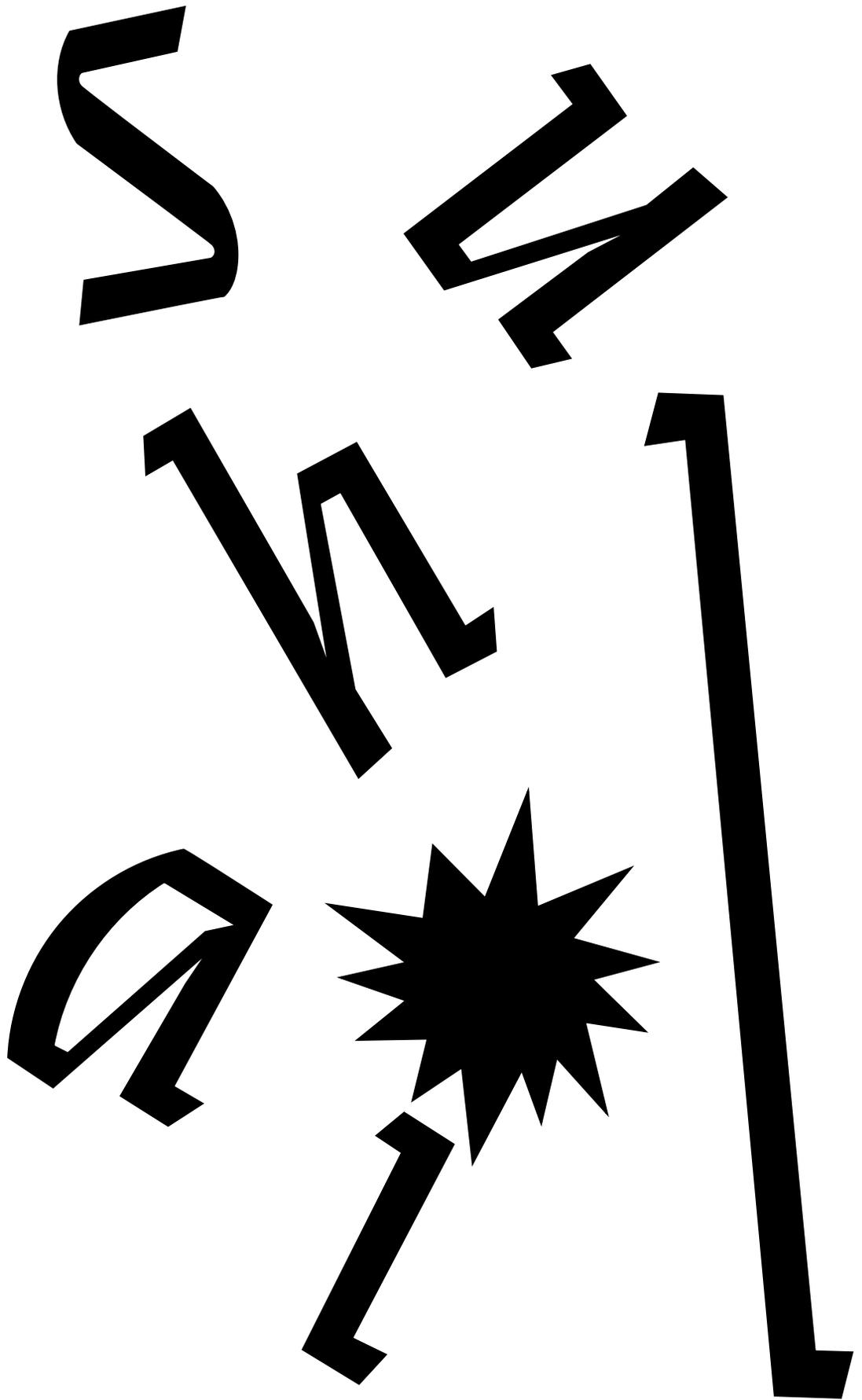
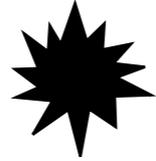


ISSUE #1  
August 2023

SUHAIL | A Multidisciplinary Journal for a Multidisciplinary World

*Mixed-form  
journal for  
the Faculty of  
Arts & Social  
Sciences*





We would like to begin this first edition of *Suhail* by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands upon which it was conceived, its contributions written and edited, and upon which it has been printed. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded, it always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

## *acknowledgement of country*

# *foreword*

[ *from Senior Editors* **AMELIE ROEDIGER & PADRAIC DALY** ]

It is with a certain pride that we can present the inaugural edition of *Suhail*, a student run and student edited journal for all things global. This project began with a desire to open an internationally focused multidisciplinary space in which students could write about the world in ways they were proud of and passionate about. The complete work comprises eleven articles written and edited by University of Sydney students traversing the fields of politics, international studies, history, international relations, sociology, linguistics and political economy.

*Suhail* has been made possible by the University of Sydney Student Life Grants, we would like to thank them for believing in this project as much as we do. With them too we would like to thank the members of the faculty who have assisted us in this process, notably the director of International and Global Studies, Dr David Brophy. As well as our Academic Partners, who have held oversight of the editing process, have similarly been invaluable in providing advice to our contributors and maintaining academic standards. A special thanks goes out to our fantastic team of student editors, for their hard work over months of editing rounds and revisions. And of course, we thank our amazing writers for their contributions, their perspective and for trusting us with their work, each of whom we feel proud to publish.

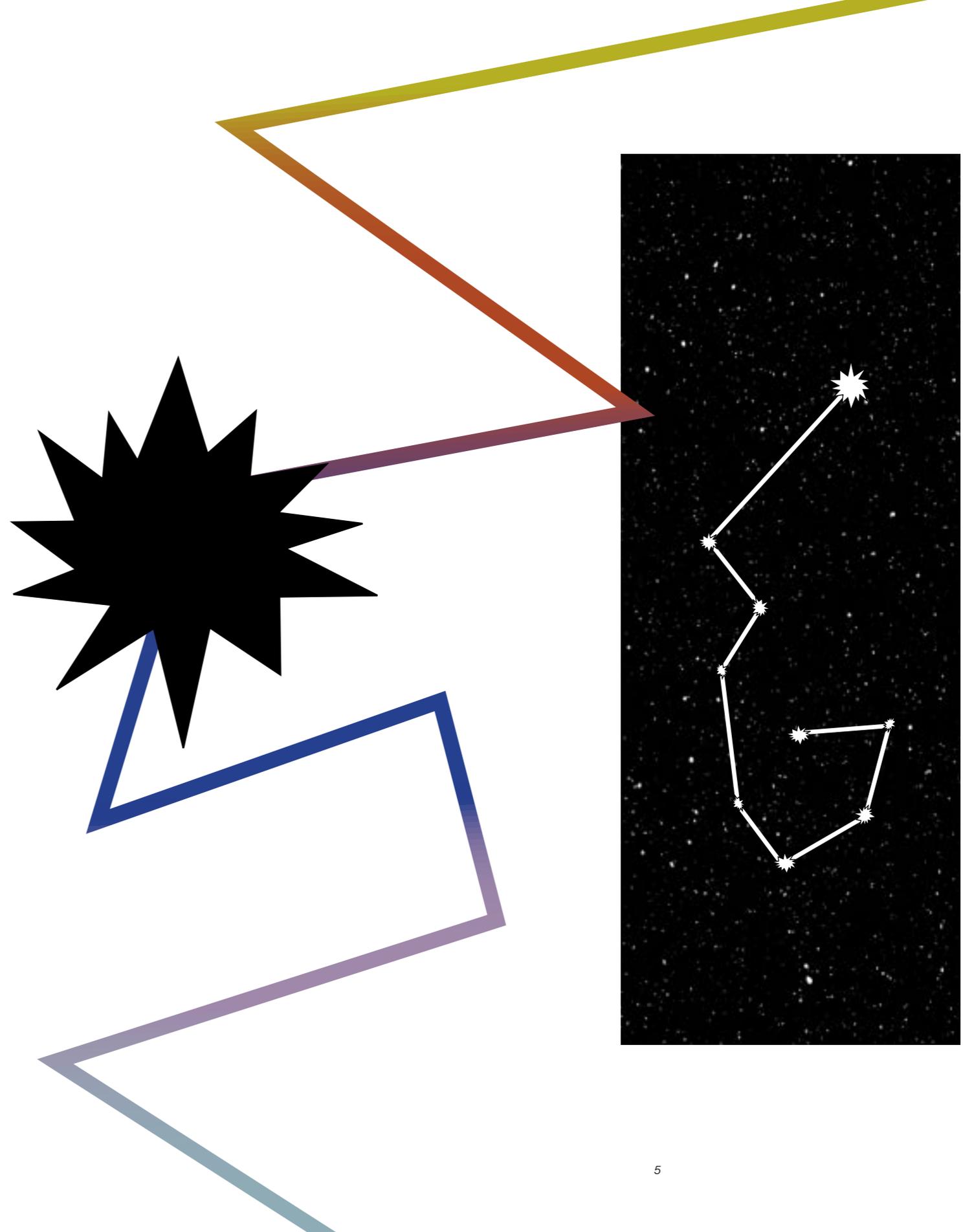
## Why "suhail" ?

The star for which this journal was named has shone over these lands and its peoples since time immemorial, the second brightest in the southern sky and one of many names. In the stories of the Boorong people of northern Victoria, this ancestor star named War brought fire down from the heavens and gave it to humanity - though here we would ask for pause before the name Prometheus or any excitable anecdotes about war and fire jump into mind.

In this pause we may recognise that to do either of these things would be to hellenise the non-hellenic and to anglicise the non-english. Fire has descended into the hands of humanity so many times in so many stories around the world. Just as the same star seen by countless millions around the globe can be experienced and recounted in such local and diverse ways.

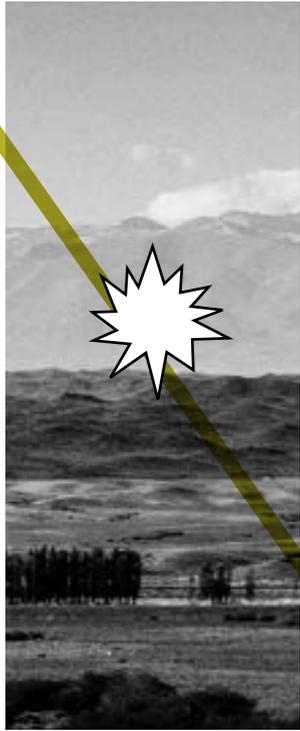
The common name for Suhail is Canopus, after the navigator of the Spartan king Menelaus' ship in Greek mythology, however the star itself is not visible from Greece, nor Europe, nor most of North America; shining unseen just past the horizon yet present every night in the southern sky. Just as we ask you to choose not to describe the story of War as promethetan, we choose to use this star's historical Arabic name, if only to recognise the erasure of meaning and of perspective that would have occurred had we not.

At Suhail, we believe that understanding the world we share requires the broadening of perspectives and the mingling of disciplines. We believe that knowledge and meaning are found and made in all places all at once, large and small. We have worked to provide a space for young people in all fields to contribute and provide their insights into a diverse range of areas. Organised along an overlapping central conceptual guideline rather than chapters or sections, we hope this collection challenges something previously accepted, uncovers something previously unseen or provokes an interest previously unfollowed.

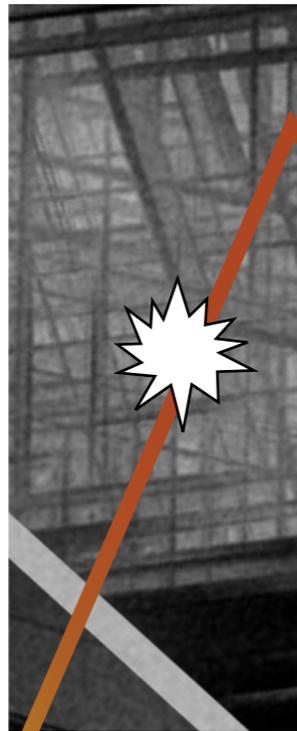


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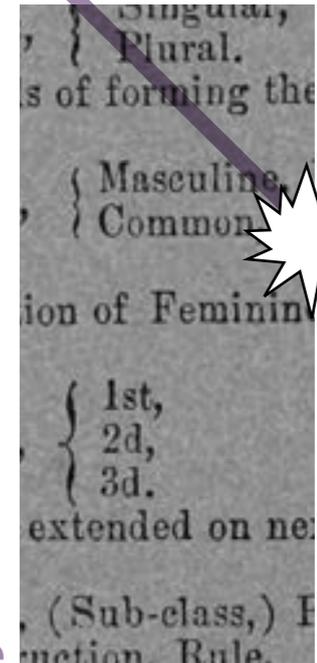
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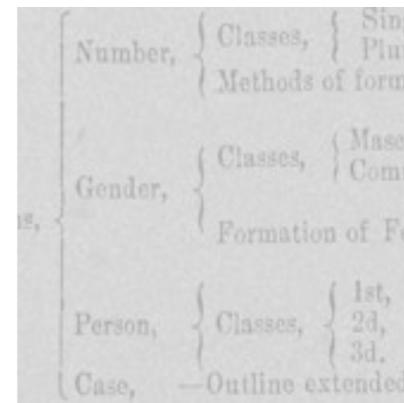


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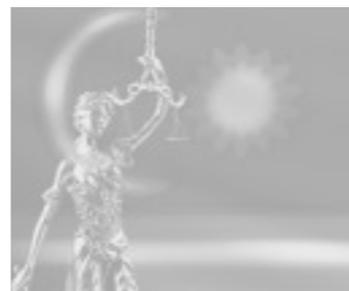
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the

*GLOBAL*



# MONGOLIA: ONE STEPPE AWAY FROM THE GLOBAL WORLD

[ words **FRANCES SMITH** ]

Despite the cultural homogenisation and abandonment of tradition that typically lies in the wake of globalisation, Mongolia has managed to blend its traditional culture with the globalising world.

[ editors **MADELEINE  
REYNOLDS & JASPAR  
MCCAHERN-BOERSMA  
& DR DAVID BROPHY** ]

While today Mongolia's Ulaanbaatar is a thriving globalised capital, rural Mongolia maintains a unique blend of tradition and technology. Nomadic Mongolians live in *Gers* - portable tent-like structures with traditional rugs and Western furniture. Outside, solar panels supply electricity to home appliances and provide internet access, connecting the steppe to the wider world. Livestock are herded with traditional practices, in traditional clothes while carrying swords; yet instead of horses, many Mongolians ride motorbikes, zipping through the idyllic countryside, dotted now with small petrol stations.<sup>[1]</sup> Children attend boarding school in the urban world, returning every summer to live on the Steppe with their families and work the land.<sup>[2]</sup> Traditional sporting competitions, stemming from the ancient time of Genghis Khan, are increasingly celebrated national events and holidays, maintaining tradition whilst allowing the modern, global influence to creep in.<sup>[3]</sup>

The annual *Naadam Games* are a vivid snapshot into this world. Mongolians flock from the cities to watch their families' villages participate in the three 'manly sports': wrestling, horse riding, and archery. While traditionally these games were used to train young male warriors, today women are among the top competitors, with one of the leading archers a female athlete.<sup>[3]</sup> Furthering its evolution, international companies now sponsor the *Naadam Games*, the arena becoming more akin to a fairground, and camera crews broadcast the revelry across the nation.<sup>[3]</sup>

Despite the cultural homogenisation and abandonment of tradition that typically follows in the wake of globalisation, Mongolia has managed to blend its traditional culture with the globalising world. This has not only preserved Mongolian culture, but enabled the country to continue to evolve in partnership with the world around them. Historically, Mongolia has been an extraordinarily successful empire, achieving magnificent feats of engi-

[1] Reyes, Hannah. 2014. "Mongolia: Nomads In Transition". Blog. *The Diplomat Media Inc.*. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/10/mongolia-nomads-in-transition/>.

[2] Black, Cyril Edwin, Louis Dupree, and Elizabeth Endicott-West. 1991. *The Modernisation Of Inner Asia*. M.E. Sharpe.

[3] The World - global public radio, PRX and GBH. 2012. Podcast. *Mongolia Merges Modern Life With Tradition With Annual Naadam Games*. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-07-16/mongolia-merges-modern-life-tradition-annual-naadam-games>.

neering, as well as social, and political unity. This cohesion empowered the Mongol Empire to stretch across the continent all the way to the Caspian Sea. Largely due to their singular and uniting cultural ethnicity, Mongolia has maintained its identity as a single country, withstanding encroaching empires from China, the West, and outlasting the USSR.

Despite the Soviet Union's meddling track record, its interest and investment in Mongolian was largely beneficial.<sup>[4]</sup> Soviet support of Mongolia manifested in a series of nine Five Year Plans, which, with vast amounts of Soviet funding, encouraged the globalisation of Mongolian society from 1948 to 1990.<sup>[5]</sup> Soviet presence, however, filtered Mongolian access to globalisation, protecting Mongolia from the defensive globalisation sweeping Asia. And so instead of industrialising the country completely to fend off the West, Mongolia was able to select elements of globalisation that suited it the most in different areas of society, and culture, economics, and politics.<sup>[6]</sup> Thanks to the Soviet Union, Mongolia was allowed the space to evolve at its own pace. Nomadic pastoral traditions have been preserved, successfully promoting sustainable land management and effective agricultural techniques. Ultimately this has aided in the conservation of the cultural identity of Mongolian people.

After the collapse of the USSR, Mongolia lost 3 billion dollars' worth of annual income, falling to the mercy of aid organisations and international governments. Aid enabled Mongolia to continue to function as a country. However, it also saw a dramatic rise in reliance on independent stakeholders, which each held varying notions on how their money ought to be spent. Under pressure from stakeholders to perform 'well', Mongolian politicians succumbed to change for the sake of progress, resulting in extremely detrimental impacts on the nomadic agriculture and lifestyle.<sup>[7]</sup>

[4] Black, Cyril Edwin, Louis Dupree, and Elizabeth Endicott-West. 1991. *The Modernisation Of Inner Asia*. M.E. Sharpe.

[5] Badarch, Dendeviin, Raymond A Zilinskis, and Peter J Balint. 2003. *Mongolia Today*. Routledge-Curzon.

[6] Black, Cyril Edwin, Louis Dupree, and Elizabeth Endicott-West. 1991. *The Modernisation Of Inner Asia*. M.E. Sharpe.

[7] Marin, Andrei. 2008. "Between Cash Cows And Golden Calves: Adaptations Of Mongolian Pastoralism In The 'Age Of The Market'". *Nomadic Peoples* 12 (2): 75-101. doi:10.3167/np.2008.120206.

Recently, Mongolian politicians have become more ambivalent towards pastoralism, rejecting nomadic farming methods and values in favour of 'modernisation.' Nomadic pastoralism is slowly becoming viewed as obsolete and ineffective. In 2001, Prime Minister Nambaryn Enkhbayar declared: "it is not my desire to destroy the original Mongolian identity but in order to survive, we have to stop being nomads."<sup>[9]</sup> Not only has this political discourse had harmful repercussions on Mongolian cultural identity, it has also had a severe impact on the environment. Traditional methods of looking after the land are being lost and discouraged, replaced with global, often Western strategies focussed on short-term economics, purely for the sake of modernisation. Yet notably, the same politicians, through posters, election campaigns with traditional symbolism, ceremonies, dress, and foods, simultaneously embody the rhetoric of their most charismatic nomad, Genghis Khan, for their political advancement.<sup>[8]</sup>

Encouragingly, however, newer Prime Minister Nasatagiin Bagabandi has recently acknowledged these cultural and environmental issues, developing policies to actively challenge the current political environment.<sup>[10]</sup> He has recognised traditional Indigenous pastoral methods as the most effective for protecting the environment, as well as being vital to the preservation of Mongolian cultural identity.

So while challenges will prevail, Mongolia is thriving. From young girls competing in the rites of young warriors, to environmental plans incorporating traditional knowledge, today, across all facets of life, Mongolia successfully strives toward the equilibrium of tradition meeting globalisation.

[8] Marin, Andrei. 2008. "Between Cash Cows And Golden Calves: Adaptations Of Mongolian Pastoralism In The 'Age Of The Market'". *Nomadic Peoples* 12 (2): 75-101. doi:10.3167/np.2008.120206.

[9] Germeraad, Pieter W, and Zandangin Enebish. 1999. *The Mongolian Landscape Tradition: A Key To Progress. Nomadic Traditions And Their Contemporary Role In Landscape Planning And Management In Mongolia*. Rhoon.

[10] Bagabandi (Prime Minister), Nasatagiin. 2003. "Foreword On Mongolia Today: Science, Culture, Environment And Development", ix-x.

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# HIGHER EDUCATION IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

[ words NICHOLAS TAI SEN LIN ]

[ editors  
GENEVIEVE PETERS  
& DR DAVID BROPHY ]

Globalisation, referring to the spread of cultures and national economies beyond spatial and temporal boundaries, has affected higher education institutions (HEIs) such as universities all over the world. HEIs have evolved over time; they are now service-providers rather than centres of knowledge production and dissemination. They are closely entwined with the process of wealth-creation; not only has the production of education services become a means to profit, but graduates from HEIs are also inputs to be used in the production of other goods and services. Students are now seen as consumers who consume educational services, and also as human capital and labour to be used as production inputs. Redefining the purpose of HEIs has had numerous consequences of varying nature, some positive and others negative. To begin, globalisation is a boon to students as information about foreign HEIs is more readily



available to the public and enrolment has become more convenient as well. Moreover, classes as well as learning materials have become more accessible, especially across geographical boundaries. As a result, students now have access to quality education and research in a range of fields. Following, globalisation opens up the possibility of collaboration not just amongst universities, but with real-world industries as well, further enhancing the standards of higher education. However, globalisation has also had negative effects. Globalisation has served not just to perpetuate but also to exacerbate existing inequalities between students of different socio-economic standings. Furthermore, there is a growing concern that globalisation within the context of HEIs could lead to a wave of neocolonialism whereby cultures, ideologies and knowledge from the Global North are propagated at the expense of those of the Global South.

Globalisation has had a positive impact on students because access to foreign HEIs and education has improved tremendously. With the advent of the Internet, information about foreign HEIs and admission is now more readily available to prospective students. The Internet can also be a mode of delivery of lessons for HEIs.<sup>[1]</sup> For example, Open University of the United Kingdom (UK) is one such proponent of online lectures and tutorials. Globalisation has also brought about HEI partnerships, allowing students to work towards foreign credentials at their home countries. University of Nottingham Ningbo and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University are two such HEIs which offer British credentials to graduating students, the latter offering a certificate from Xi'an Jiaotong in addition to a University of Liverpool degree.<sup>[2]</sup> There are also indirect benefits to students that can be associated with partnerships. Cambridge University's £85 million partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other similar partnerships between British and American HEIs involve the pooling of resources between institutions, which help towards achieving better economies of scale and education standards. The British Ministry of Education claimed that '[n]o institution can offer real excellence in teaching or research across the full range of disciplines — the resources on the required scale are not there,<sup>[3]</sup> thus asserting the importance of a partnership approach. In these ways, globalisation has improved accessibility to foreign HEIs in many ways for students globally.

[1] Philip G. Altbach, "Globalisation and the University: Myths and Realities in an Unequal World," *Tertiary Education and Management* 10, no. 1 (2004): pp. 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2004.9967114>.

[2] Yi Feng, "University of Nottingham Ningbo China and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University: globalization of higher education in China," *Higher Education* 65, no. 4 (2013): pp. 472, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9558-8>.

[3] Roulla Hagen, "Globalization, university transformation and economic regeneration: a UK case study of public/private sector partnership," *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 15, no. 3 (2002): pp. 206, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550210423370>.

Inter-institutional collaborations across borders are not the only positive impacts of globalisation. Globalisation has also opened up new possibilities for students to participate in collaborations between HEIs and real-world industries. The Teaching Company Scheme by the UK Ministry of Education is one such scheme that allows students to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts by acting in advisory capacities for partner companies. By 1999, over 650 programmes had been launched under this scheme, and over £20 million had been invested by the British government.<sup>[4]</sup> Such programmes allow for students to participate in real-world contexts, giving them an opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills for practical purposes. In addition, the substantial sum of money involved in such programmes is a source of funding for HEIs which can be used towards improving their programmes and infrastructure, in turn benefitting their student populations in general. In sum, globalisation has given rise to government-HEI-industry partnerships which has benefitted students by enhancing their education and experience in HEIs.

Yet the neoliberal principles that underpin the process of globalisation can negatively impact students, serving to perpetuate and even widen gaps between students of different socio-economic backgrounds. Due to the increased mobility of students and HEIs alike, demand for tertiary education has exponentially increased, bringing about dramatic rises in tuition fees and other costs associated with education.<sup>[5]</sup> For prospective self-funded students, such fees are a sizable financial burden, and some students of lower socio-economic standing may find attending HEIs unaffordable. Some may point to scholarships and bursaries such as the American Fulbright programme, which serves to increase equity by alleviating financial burdens from prospective students of lower socio-economic standing. The reality is that most students are self-funded — more than 80% of international undergraduates in America, in addition to a majority of students who pursue other types of degrees and programmes, fund their own education.<sup>[6]</sup> Globalisation has served to segregate students based on socio-economic backgrounds. This process of segregation is self-perpetuating as well, especially in this knowledge-based economy where people are treated as

[4] Hagen, "Globalization," pp. 210.

[5] Ivan Illich, "Ritualization of Progress," in *Deschooling Society*, ed. Ivan Illich (London ; New York : Marion Boyars, 1974), pp. 34.

[6] Ravinder Kaur Sidhu, "Rethinking International Education: Place/Space and Politics," in *Universities and Globalization: To Market, to Market*, ed. Joel Spring (Mahwah, NJ u.a: Erlbaum, 2006), pp. 20.

**"The neoliberal principles that globalisation is premised upon see HEIs as a centre for capital production rather than a centre for knowledge production."**

factors of production and grouped into skill classes. Graduates who have attained a higher skill level are likely to be more valued in the workforce than those who did not. As a result, students of a higher socio-economic background are likely to earn more income than those of a lower socio-economic background upon graduation. These inequalities are reproduced in the next generation when children of former graduates from affluent socio-economic backgrounds enrol in HEIs while others from poor socio-economic backgrounds as a consequence of lower levels of education miss out on higher education.

Globalisation has widened gaps in other ways as well. The neoliberal principles that globalisation is premised upon have fostered a spirit of competition amongst HEIs globally. Ranking lists have bound HEIs and thus their reputations to a set of criteria based upon Western models. HEIs like the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) cannot afford to reject the notion of world rankings without forgoing the race for prestige, student admissions and subsequent funding for research and infrastructure. Indeed, lower-ranked HEIs tend to have less funding and consequently less research activities, with relatively poor infrastructure and equipment. These lower-ranked HEIs are teaching centres rather than centres of research, diluting the quality of education its students receive. Lower-ranked HEIs may enter into partnerships with other HEIs, in which case an asymmetrical relationship, where the higher-ranked HEI is dominant, may arise. For instance, the curriculum for the University of Nottingham Ningbo is managed solely by the British side of the partnership.<sup>[7]</sup> Some partnerships may not even serve to improve the quality of education for students, as seen in cases where the partnership merely involves leveraging reputations of higher-ranked HEIs without the sharing of technical expertise or financial strength to improve standards of education.<sup>[8]</sup> Naturally, demand for admission into these low-ranked HEIs are lower than that of high-ranked HEIs, thus tuition in lower-ranked HEIs is cheaper than that of higher-ranked HEIs. In fact, USM is a popular destination amongst Iranian and Indonesian students due to its relative affordability.<sup>[9]</sup> Even so, USM students may not be receiving an education to the same standards of the University of Sydney, for example. Even for students who are of lower socio-economic standing but have gained admission into HEIs,

[7] Feng, "University of Nottingham," pp. 476.

[8] Altbach, "Globalisation and the University," pp. 19.

[9] Yao Sua Tan and Soo Khoon Goh, "International students, academic publications and world university rankings: the impact of globalisation and responses of a Malaysian public university," *Higher Education* 68, no. 4 (2014): pp. 493, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9724-2>.

inequalities still exist; gaining admission into a low-ranked HEI could mean receiving a lower standard of education and as a result, poorer competitiveness upon graduation when compared to their peers who have attended higher-ranked HEIs.

Globalisation has created the conditions necessary for neocolonisation to occur. The fact that increased competition across borders has created a ranking system for HEIs on the basis of criteria set by the Global North and more specifically the West means that HEIs all over the world are forced into subservience under the Western model. For instance, research is conducted almost entirely in English.<sup>[10]</sup> For students and scholars from non-English speaking regions, they are forced into conducting their research in a foreign language in order to gain access to the network of research journals and work based in the West. Further, any research would also have to be conducted using norms and methodologies that are preferable and easily accessible in the West.<sup>[11]</sup> Of course, HEIs can choose to exclude themselves and by extension spare students from the influences of the Global North, including the West. One such HEI is USM, whose vice-chancellor Tan Sri Dzukifli Abdul Razak questioned Times Higher Education (THE) rankings, insinuating that Malaysian HEIs should not 'have to struggle' and that Malaysia can in fact 'design its own ranking.'<sup>[12]</sup> The danger is in the potential for HEIs like USM to be marginalised from the international community of academia and its students omitted from the discourses of academia. Even scholarships and bursaries can be used as a vehicle for neocolonisation. The Fulbright Programme was established to bring 'knowledge,' 'reason,' and 'more compassion into world affairs' in an era when America had to counterbalance the ideology of socialism from the Eastern bloc.<sup>[13]</sup> The programme can be said to have its roots in disseminating Western ideologies of neoliberalism to the world. For students, one of the implications of neocolonialism is confluence; students must internalise Westernised ideologies and practices in order to be able to integrate into this international academic community or risk ostracization and therefore less opportunities for research and collaboration, diluting the level of education and widening gaps between students in the Global South and the Global North.

[10] Altbach, "Globalisation and the University," pp. 5.

[11] Altbach, "Globalisation and the University," pp. 11.

[12] Tan and Goh, "International students," pp. 498.

[13] Sidhu, "Rethinking International Education," pp. 7.



[14] Joseph Zajda, "Globalisation and Education Reforms: Paradigms and Ideologies," in *Globalisation and Education Reforms: Paradigms and Ideologies*, ed. Joseph Zajda (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2018), pp. 1.

[15] Illich, "Ritualization of Progress," pp. 35.

In conclusion, globalisation has served to enhance the quality of tertiary education for students who do have access to higher-ranked HEIs typically of the global North, and those who can adapt to the Westernisation of academia. This is achieved through increased collaboration between borders and between different actors such as industry and government. Yet the same process of globalisation has also served to widen gaps amongst students through discrimination based on socio-economic status and geographical location. Perhaps the most profound impact that globalisation has had on students is the redefinition of the role of HEIs and by extension, the role of students. The neoliberal principles that globalisation is premised upon see HEIs as a centre for capital production rather than a centre for knowledge production.<sup>[14]</sup> Tertiary education is now seen as an economic good to be produced and consumed. Students are therefore seen as consumers of tertiary education as well as human capital to be eventually used in the production of other goods and services.<sup>[15]</sup> No longer are HEIs merely a centre for learning and students mere agents in the process of knowledge production and discourse. Globalisation has projected onto students a form of discipline whereby students are compelled to enrol in HEIs, preferably high-ranked ones, in order to gain a quality education, the reward of which would be the promise of gainful employment. In order for globalisation to be more equitable for students, tertiary education should not be seen as merely a good to be produced and consumed, but as a merit good with positive externalities in order to motivate governments to sponsor more students with government funds. Tertiary education can even be seen as a public good, to be provided by the state at no cost. This redefinition of tertiary education alone can serve to increase accessibility to students of lower socio-economic backgrounds. Tertiary education should also be looked upon beyond the parameters of economic imperatives. Education is merely to facilitate knowledge creation; to enrich students by imparting them with knowledge and skill for their own perusal. The rhetoric that skills and knowledge are to be obtained in order to produce economic goods more efficiently and at a better quality should be supplanted.

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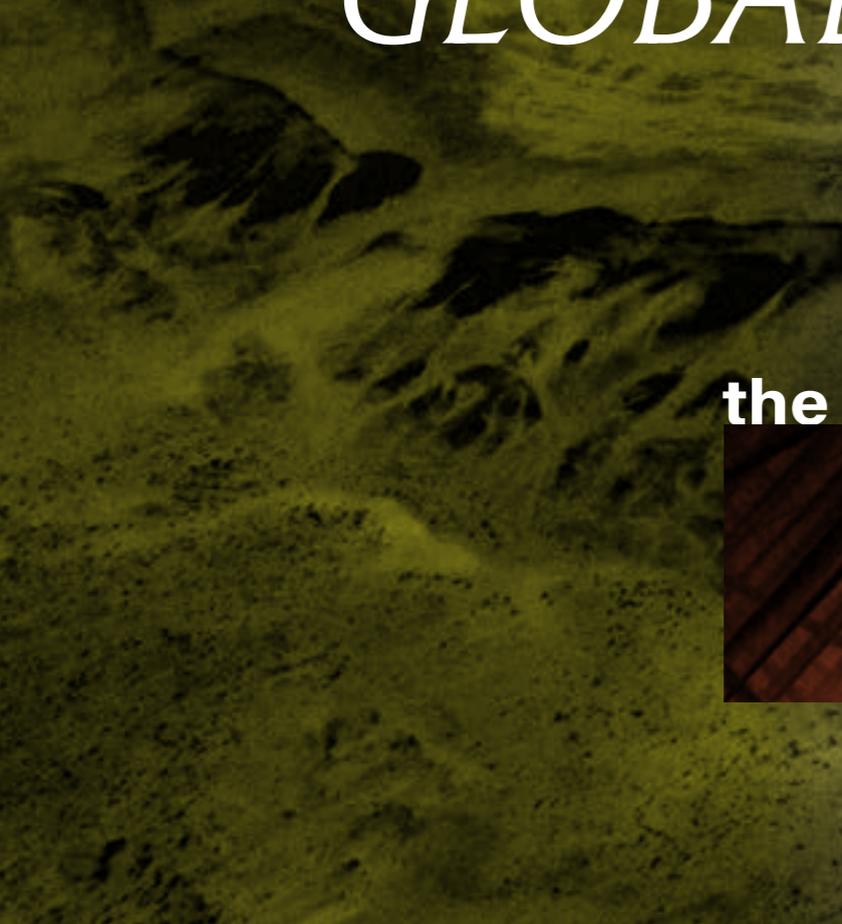
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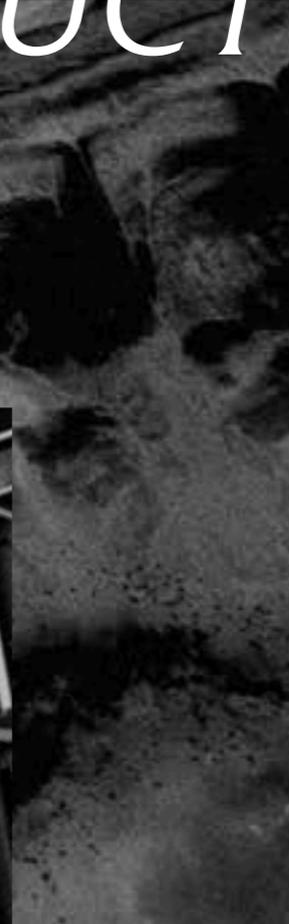
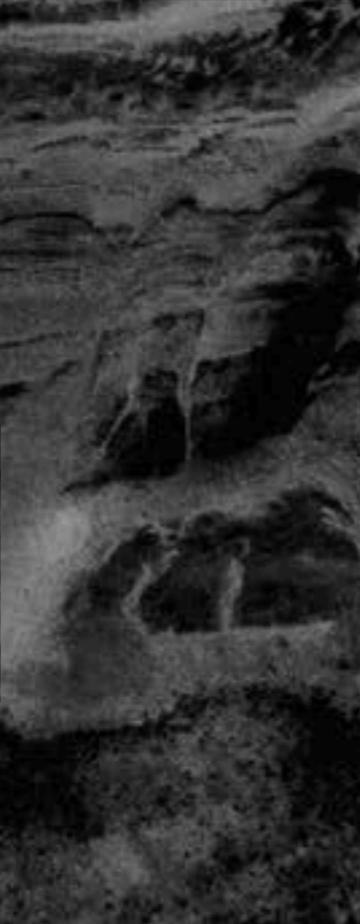
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# THE MORAL QUANDARY OF GLOBALISATION: TOWARDS THE HUMAN 'ONE WORLD'

[ words JASPAR MCCAHERN-BOERSMA ]



[ editors MIHIR SARDANA,  
MANON MIQUEL &  
DR ROBERT BONCARDI ]

**"The drastically unequal power dynamics of global capitalism clearly do not place a regular person's autonomy to prevent these harms on the same level as those at the levers of political and economic power."**

Globalisation has ushered in a new epoch of humankind. The rapid expansion and interconnection of political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, and environmental flows between individuals and nations has created an ever-complexifying interdependence of people around the world.<sup>[1]</sup> This intertwining of human actions, alongside the ever-increasing pool of knowledge elucidating their interconnections, has, I argue, led commensurately to the globalisation of humanity's moral responsibility; by exponentially extending the sphere within which our actions have 'knowable' impacts, globalisation has expanded the moral responsibility to minimise interpersonal harm to a global scale. This presents both untapped potential for societal progress, but also an unprecedented quandary for humanity: while we are gaining the ability to understand the globalised moral ramifications of each individual action we undertake, the task of calculating moral responsibility on such a scale for every daily decision taken by an individual is an impossible one.

In contrast to the dangerous fallacy of some 'deglobalisation' movements as attempts to shrink the sphere of moral responsibility, I contend that this predicament can only be resolved through system-level change for a more justly globalised world. Illustrating that contemporary capitalist globalisation is structurally incommensurate with such a world, I instead propose foundational principles upon which post-capitalist alternatives may rest to avoid the paradoxes of globalised moral responsibility today. Such change may, I believe, help realise a glimpse of the potential for human interdependence to build, in the words of Alain Badiou, the 'one world' of global humanity.<sup>[2]</sup>

[1] Lukas Figge and Pim Martens, "Globalisation Continues: The Maastricht Globalisation Index Revisited and Updated," *Globalizations* 11, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 875–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2014.887389>.

[2] Alain Badiou, "From False Globalisation to the One Communist World, via the Question of 'Foreigners,'" trans. Robin Mackay, *Urbanomic*, no. UFD026 (2017), <https://www.urbanomic.com/document/badiou-false-globalisation-one-communist-world/>.

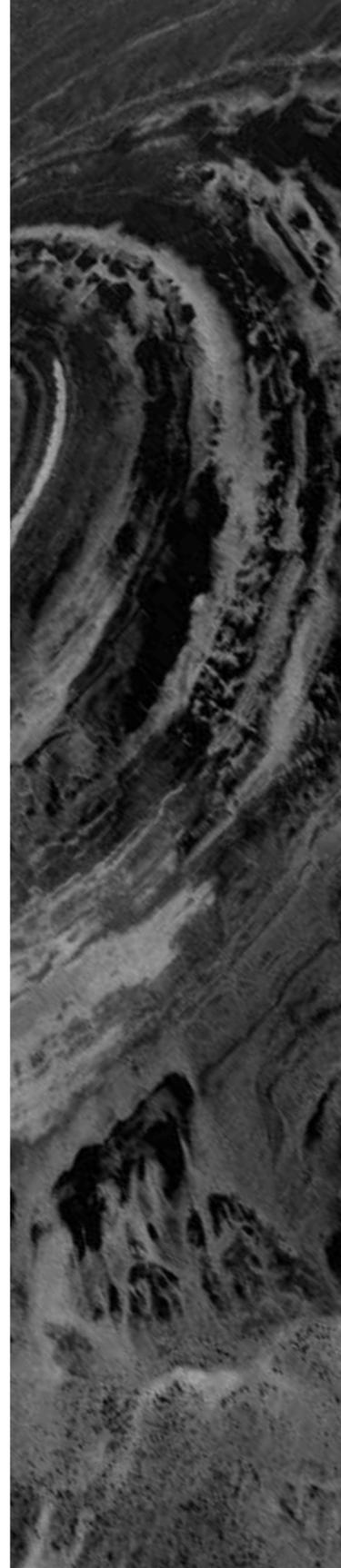
## I - GLOBAL MORALITY

The definitive conceptualisation of moral responsibility is a philosophical battlefield well outside the remit of this piece. This article is thus grounded in the following distilled two-part model. For person X to be morally responsible for the harming of person Y, two interconnected premises should be satisfied. Firstly, that person X's actions contributed to the harm inflicted on person Y, even if X's actions constituted a small portion of a greater collective act of harm. Secondly, that person X, regardless of their intention (or lack thereof) to contribute to this harm, had the capacity to understand that their action would do so.

Such a model can be found, with some alterations and competing ideas of harm or culpability, at the root of all human societies and cultures. Despite often being incommensurate with morality, systems of law and legal responsibility provide an institutionalised example of this model. That every nation upholds laws – nominally the codifications of collective moral principles – criminalising the informed and severe harm of others, regardless of intention, illustrates there exists an almost global consensus on these foundational tenets underlying the moral responsibility to avoid causing significant interpersonal harm.

Throughout history, systems of legal responsibility have expanded from town, to city, to nation-state, and then to international scales, illustrating that the application of this form of moral responsibility shifts in relation to the relative interconnectedness of human activity, as well as to our capacity to understand the impacts of these interrelations. With each expansion of scale comes a commensurate increase in the complexity of navigating such responsibility. The relative acceptance of international law, at least in principle, illustrates that many accept the legitimate global application of this form of moral responsibility.

Certainly, history shows that global interconnectedness is not a new phenomenon. The crucial roles of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and the destruction of the global environment from the 1500s onwards to the rise of the contemporary global capitalist order illuminate how the actions of most individuals around the



world have not had purely localised impacts for hundreds of years.<sup>[3]</sup> Anti-colonial and Marxist scholars in the Global South have long written of the role – and thus moral complicity of – those in the Global North in the subjugation of those in the Global South for the advancement of global capitalism.<sup>[4]</sup>

Contemporary capitalist globalisation has, however, seen the exponential expansion of the scale and complexity of moral responsibility through its development of a labyrinthine system of global economic and cultural interconnection, alongside an immense growth in our understanding of the impacts of the actions contributing to this system.

The exportation of free market capitalism to nearly all of Earth's nations, through a potent concoction of coercion and consent, has built a global maze of supply chains, trade routes, and financial flows.<sup>[5]</sup> The internet and the progression of communication technologies have facilitated near-instantaneous circulations of media and information across the world, which hybridise through the interactions of billions of people and shape the ideas and cultural practices of the global populace. Crises like the 2008 GFC and the COVID-19 pandemic starkly reveal the degree to which the political, economic, social, and environmental realities of all people are shaped by the intertwined material and ideational decisions of people the world over.

Alongside this, the staggering rise in global knowledge production and distribution has allowed a significant portion of the world to understand the mechanisms and impacts of these interconnections in ever-more granular detail. Journal article publication rates have risen meteorically, from fewer than 1 million articles published in 1980, to over 7 million in 2014.<sup>[6]</sup> From 2002-2022, Wikipedia, the most accessed online source of centralised knowledge in the world,<sup>[7]</sup> saw an increase in English-language articles from 20,000 to 6.4 million,<sup>[8]</sup> the number of articles published grows by 17,000 per month. The Washington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and BuzzFeed alone publish a combined ~1,970 stories and videos per day.<sup>[9]</sup>

[3] Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, Third edition, World Social Change (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015).

[4] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Classics (London, U.K: Penguin, 2001).

[5] OECD, "Interconnected Economies: Benefitting from Global Value Chains" (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013), <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/publication/9789264189560-en>.

[6] Michael Fire and Carlos Guestrin, "Over-Optimization of Academic Publishing Metrics: Observing Goodhart's Law in Action," *GigaScience* 8 (June 1, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gigascience/giz053>.

[7] Domantas G, "The Most Visited Website in Every Country (That Isn't A Search Engine)," *Hostinger Tutorials* (blog), September 13, 2022, <https://www.hostinger.com/tutorials/the-most-visited-website-in-every-country>.

[8] "Wikipedia: Size of Wikipedia," in *Wikipedia*, November 5, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Size\\_of\\_Wikipedia&ol=did=1120083009](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Size_of_Wikipedia&ol=did=1120083009).

[9] Robinson Meyer, "How Many Stories Do Newspapers Publish Per Day?," *The Atlantic*, May 26, 2016, sec. Technology, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/05/how-many-stories-do-newspapers-publish-per-day/483845/>.

These interwoven developments are critical to understanding the expansion of humanity's global moral responsibility because they help satisfy, on a global scale, its two underlying principles as laid out above. Humanity's global interconnectedness means that firstly, the actions of any individual are increasingly linked to the experiences of other individuals half the world away – including those of systemic harm.<sup>[10]</sup> The expansion in global knowledge production means that secondly, we are increasingly studying, and thus generating the ability to understand, the complex nuances and potential harms of these globally interconnected actions.

This is not only true on a macro level. The age of butterfly-effect speculation is closing; contemporary knowledge increasingly helps us understand the potential global harms of each individual action within a systemic whole.

Take for example the information that can be found on the implications of my decision to buy a shirt in so-called Australia. If purchased in person, my commute by petrol-fuelled car will contribute to global warming and air pollution; travelling by electric vehicle may facilitate environmental destruction and democratic subversion in nations like Bolivia as a result of lithium mining.<sup>[11]</sup> Buying from an online retailer, however, will enable the permeation of western TNCs into South Asia, depressing already staggeringly low wages, and deepening gender and labour inequities.<sup>[12]</sup> If I choose a cotton shirt, it will likely have a supply chain involving forced labour in Xinjiang and will have required 7000 litres of water to produce, thus contributing to severe drought in water-precarious countries.<sup>[13]</sup> A polyester shirt, however, will elevate ocean microplastic levels, degrading the food security of seafood-reliant communities in the Global South.<sup>[14]</sup> Some brands are particularly egregious in tolerating pervasive gender-based violence and harassment against the women creating their clothing in production centres like India.<sup>[15]</sup> Others lobby against measures supporting Burmese garment workers in their struggles with the vicious military dictatorship of Myanmar.<sup>[16]</sup> These harms are not simply hypothetical figures – they are measured by unnecessary and cruel loss of life.

Given enough time and thought, through accessing the vast network of information available to me, I may eventually evaluate the least globally harmful practice for buying a shirt; by doing so, I work

[10] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Marxism Today*, no. June (1991): 24–29.

[11] The Climate Council, "Transport Emissions: Driving down Car Pollution in Cities," Factsheet (The Climate Council, September 28, 2017), <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/transport-factsheet/>; Maeve Campbell, "South America's 'lithium Fields' Reveal the Dark Side of Electric Cars," *Euronews*, February 1, 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/02/01/south-america-s-lithium-fields-reveal-the-dark-side-of-our-electric-future>; Maribel Aponte-García, "Bolivia: A World Power in Lithium, the Coup d'etat and the Dispute for Technological Supremacy Between the USA and China 1," *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 22, no. 3 (2020): 55–58.

[12] Jeb Sprague and Sreerekha Sathi, "Transnational Amazon: Labor Exploitation and the Rise of E-Commerce in South Asia," in *The Cost of Free Shipping*, ed. Jake Alimahomed-Wilson and Ellen Reese, Amazon in the Global Economy (Pluto Press, 2020), 50–66, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16zjhjcj.10>.

[13] Mark Sumner, "Following a T-Shirt from Cotton Field to Landfill Shows the True Cost of Fast Fashion," *The Conversation*, December 1, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/following-a-t-shirt-from-cotton-field-to-landfill-shows-the-true-cost-of-fast-fashion-127363>.

to fulfil my moral responsibility to avoid facilitating interpersonal harm. However, the quandary emerges when we consider that similarly head-spinning chains of impacts can be constructed, backed up with easily accessible literature, about the dozens of decisions taken by each of us every single day – from deciding to tweet about a protest, to the choice to take the scenic route home from work. And so while I theoretically may have the capacity to evaluate the impacts of these decisions, and thus satisfy my global moral responsibility, its realistic implementation requires wading through an overload of information and engaging in complex moral evaluation for every daily action I take.

The drastically unequal power dynamics of global capitalism clearly do not place the potential harms of the actions of those in the Global South in an equal position to those in the Global North, nor a regular person's autonomy to prevent these harms on the same level as the politically and economically powerful. However, there is no escaping the reality that the current system of globalisation makes each person, on some level, directly complicit in the subjugation of people halfway across the world, and gives many the ability to understand this complicity. Our ability to painstakingly calculate the global moral ramifications of our actions is increasingly possible. Yet what is also clear is the impossibility of expecting individuals to engage in such moral calculus for every decision they make, to exist constantly in a state of research and evaluation, weighing up the webs of available information to make the least globally harmful decision.

Globalisation has exploded our mundane decisions into a million colliding shards of planet-encompassing impact, almost inevitably contributing to systems of globalised harm which disproportionately affect those in the Global South. Critically, we also have the increasing ability to understand how each shard cuts. A system which incentivises these complex harms and then expects people to avoid them on an individual level, dozens of times a day, is fundamentally broken.

## II - GLOBAL ALTERNATIVES

In response to this dilemma, movements have arisen which seek to deny the collective responsibility globalisation has created, or at-

[14] Francesca De Falco et al., "The Contribution of Washing Processes of Synthetic Clothes to Microplastic Pollution," *Scientific Reports* 9, no. 1 (April 29, 2019): 6633, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-43023-x>; Madeleine Smith et al., "Microplastics in Seafood and the Implications for Human Health," *Current Environmental Health Reports* 5, no. 3 (2018): 375–86, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-018-0206-z>; Zaki Alam Pushan et al., "A Critical Review of the Emerging Research on the Detection and Assessment of Microplastics Pollution in the Coastal, Marine, and Urban Bangladesh," *Frontiers of Environmental Science & Engineering* 16, no. 10 (March 24, 2022): 128, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11783-022-1563-2>.

[15] Shikha Silliman Bhattacharjee and Alysha Khambay, "Unbearable Harassment: The Fashion Industry and Widespread Abuse of Female Garment Workers in Indian Factories" (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) and Society for Labour and Development (SLD), April 2022), <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/briefings/unbearable-harassment/>.

[16] Jack Mansell, "Inside the Global Garment Industry," *Red Flag*, October 11, 2022, <https://redflag.org.au/article/inside-global-garment-industry>.

tempt to shrink its scale through 'deglobalisation'. Many nations have begun to shift towards domestic production and reduced interreliance to protect their control over economic stability, but also to lessen the obligations of mutual cooperation that travel alongside the goods.<sup>[17]</sup> Reactionary movements from Britain to Brazil argue against the responsibility of nations to greater global communities, intertwining xenophobic racism with the populations' bewilderment at their increasingly exposed global responsibilities.<sup>[18]</sup> This is not exclusively a conservative perspective – some left-wing critiques of globalisation's exacerbation of inequality have also led to calls for retreats from such interconnectedness.<sup>[19]</sup>

Withdrawing safely into domestic isolationism to ease our panic over our newly realised global moral responsibility, however, is both unjust and impossible. We have crossed a threshold of interreliance over which we cannot turn back.

Firstly, rejecting and withdrawing from our collective global responsibility is to condemn billions in the Global South to further devastation, through no fault of their own. Nations such as Chile and Rwanda, which were forced into the capitalist global system through bloodshed and destruction of their domestic subsistence industry by Western capitalist nations, now rely on international trade of primary resources to provide bare essentials for their populations.<sup>[20]</sup> The past complicity of those in the Global North in catalysing this contemporary situation provides a clear moral imperative to prevent its further worsening.

Alongside this, we now know that there is no smaller discrete unit for the impacts of human action than the globe. Climate change has shown that any constructed conception of an atomised society operating without influence from, or impact on, the rest of the world, is an impossibility. Science shows we require coordinated global action to prevent catastrophic climate change.<sup>[21]</sup> We live and act on one planet, we are one inexorably interconnected species. To collectively deny this is not only an intellectual falsity – it is a path to extinction. We will not survive the challenge to our planet with a retreat from our global moral responsibility.

[17] Elif Uzgoren, "Retreat from Globalisation? Crises of Liberal Hegemony and Rising Populism," in *CSR in an Age of Isolationism*, ed. David Crowther and Farzana Quoquab, vol. 16, *Developments in Corporate Governance and Responsibility* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020), 35–52, <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2043-052320200000016003>; Finbarr Livesey, "Unpacking the Possibilities of Deglobalisation," *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 11, no. 1 (March 10, 2018): 177–87, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsx030>.

[18] James Meek, "In Farage-land," *London Review of Books*, October 8, 2014, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v36/n19/james-meek/in-farage-land>; Guilherme Casarões and Daniel Flesmes, "Brazil First, Climate Last: Bolsonaro's Foreign Policy," *German Institute of Global and Area Studies Focus*, Latin America, 5 (September 2019), [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/64011/ssoar-2019-casaroes\\_et\\_al-Brazil\\_First\\_Climate\\_Last\\_Bolsonaros.pdf?sequence=1&is-Allowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2019-casaroes\\_et\\_al-Brazil\\_First\\_Climate\\_Last\\_Bolsonaros.pdf](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/64011/ssoar-2019-casaroes_et_al-Brazil_First_Climate_Last_Bolsonaros.pdf?sequence=1&is-Allowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2019-casaroes_et_al-Brazil_First_Climate_Last_Bolsonaros.pdf).

[19] Nikil Saval, "Globalisation: The Rise and Fall of an Idea That Swept the World," *The Guardian*, July 14, 2017, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/14/globalisation-the-rise-and-fall-of-an-idea-that-swept-the-world>.

[20] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, First Edition (Metropolitan Books, 2007); Isaac A. Kamola, "The Global Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2007): 571–92.

The impossible task of internalising global moral responsibility at an individual level thus cannot be remedied through its rejection or false shrinkage; the only way it can be resolved is through fundamentally altering the systems upon which globalisation rests. While contemporary globalisation is arranged along capitalist structural lines, globalisation as a process of geographic interconnection is not inherently bound to capitalism – it can be disentangled.<sup>[22]</sup> For the creation of a sustainable system of globalised moral responsibility, I posit that this disentanglement must first occur, as capitalism is a system structurally incompatible with such a goal.

It is the capitalist political-economic system that fuels the vast majority of the globalised systemic harms our actions reinforce. The exaltation of profit above human need structurally incentivises the degradation of worker rights and the use of forced labour, the institutionalisation of gender and racial discrimination, and environmental destruction.<sup>[23]</sup> To structurally overhaul capitalism is therefore to uproot many of the harmful systems we find ourselves responsible for perpetuating.

Alongside this, capitalism, especially of a neoliberal flavour, rests on an ideology of individual isolation. Its positioning of the individual as the fundamental political unit, responsible solely for its own self-maximisation, is incompatible with the interconnected reality of the globalised world.<sup>[24]</sup> An ideological system which refuses to acknowledge the collective factors affecting the conditions and actions of individuals, and thus holds them solely liable for the harms they inflict upon others, only reinforces the impossibility of ceaseless individual calculation of moral responsibility.

Capitalism furthermore structurally bars the vast majority of the world's population from shaping the systems that determine the global impacts of their actions. It is an anti-democratic system wherein a small but powerful minority holds decision-making power over the processes of production and distribution of goods and services. To thus have the capacity to work to prevent the interconnected harms of their actions, workers must collectively have the ability to control the systems which determine such impacts.

[21] IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. P.R. Shukla et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[22] Leslie Sklair, "Capitalist Globalization: Fatal Flaws and Necessity for Alternatives," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2006): 29–37.

[23] Martin Hart-Landsberg, *Capitalist Globalization: Consequences, Resistance, and Alternatives* (NYU Press, 2013), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qgbcck>; Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, 1st ed. (Simon & Schuster, 2014), <http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=dcff7141452fda4ed97e7f5ba3f0a46c>; Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usyid/detail.action?docID=5426797>; Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*.

[24] Massimo Pendenza and Vanessa Lamattina, "Rethinking Self-Responsibility: An Alternative Vision to the Neoliberal Concept of Freedom," *American Behavioral Scientist* 63, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 100–115, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218816827>.

To replace global capitalism with a truly democratic system based on human need and worker control, without the structural incentives for domestic and global exploitation, would therefore eliminate a vast swathe of the contemporary systems of institutional harm to which our decisions contribute.

However, we cannot expect this moral quandary to entirely vanish with the abolishment of global capitalism. The incredible complexity of the globalised impacts of individual decisions will remain in a globalised world, even if they are not made within systems of exploitative labour and social relations but within just systems grounded in genuine collaboration and human flourishing. With interconnection remains the potential to contribute to unintentional but nonetheless destructive consequences. Therefore, so does the requirement to engage in continual calculation to understand the potential moral responsibility of our every action.

Such a task, however necessary, is still an impossibility for the individual; no person can be expected to live in a constant state of infinitely complex moral calculation. Thus if there is to be a single globally interconnected humanity, there is, I posit, a reinforced need for state-led systems of political economic governance after capitalism.

This structural foundation is necessary to abrogate the individual's constant calculation of moral responsibility onto a recallable higher authority, with express remit to create systems aligning with our collective moral interests. It calls for, in essence, a democratically decided body that, based on the principles of human need, parses the immense volume of data and information on the interconnected web of consequences, and systematises it into liveable structures for a population. In doing so, the need for constant individual moral calculation on a global scale is restrained, while still allowing for democratic restructuring when the population believes it does not reflect their moral standpoints. While consideration of the differing dynamics of its application on a national or global level is outside the scope of this article, this basic principle of structural abrogation of moral responsibility to a higher system will, I believe, be critical to the sustainable maintenance of global moral responsibility on a systemic and individual level.

### III - CONCLUSION

We have long understood that we are a globally interconnected species. Writers and travellers have for centuries expressed that despite artificial borders constructed cynically by rulers, the differences in our outward appearances, languages, and customs, and the thousands of kilometres of land and sea separating us, we share a common humanity. Contemporary globalisation has built a world where that notion is a material reality; our every action creates innumerable interrelated impacts for those across the globe, and we increasingly understand the specific mechanisms by which they do so.

While this gives rise to a quandary for our understanding of individual moral responsibility, it also presents an unprecedented opportunity to build a better and more just world together. Globalisation offers the framework upon which, through working for global systemic change, we may build systems of collective political economic governance that genuinely realise a 'one world' of humanity.

**"An ideological system {capitalism} which refuses to acknowledge the collective factors affecting the conditions and actions of individuals... only reinforces the impossible individual calculation of moral responsibility!"**



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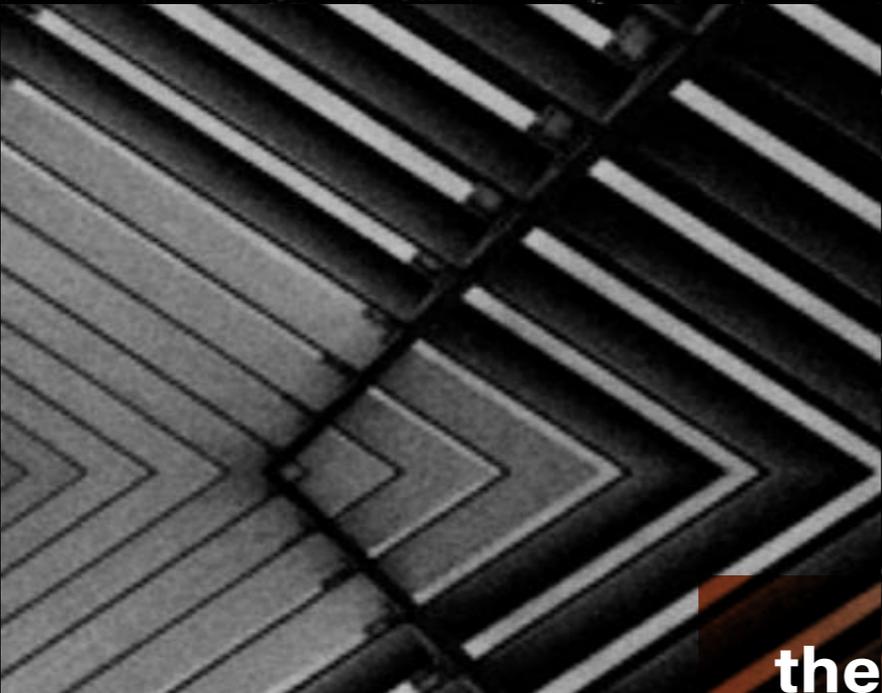
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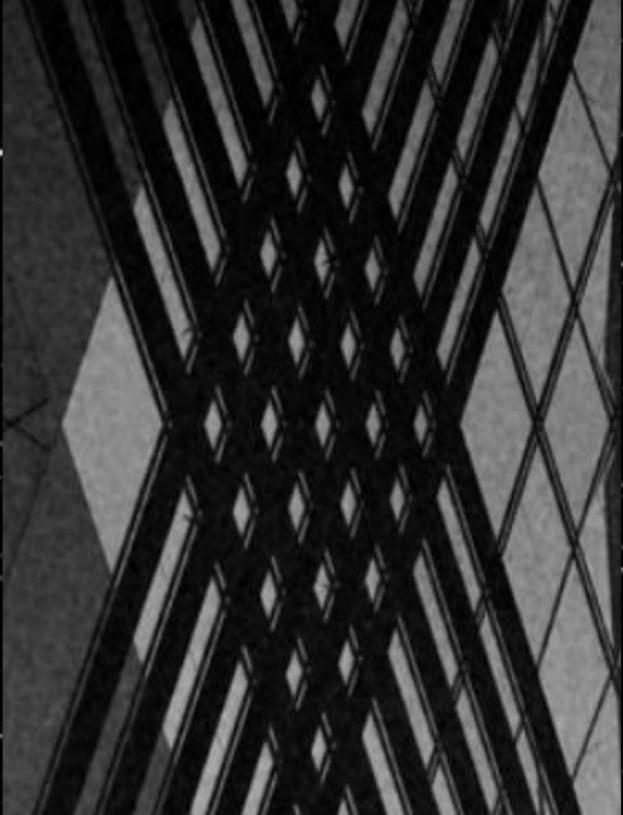
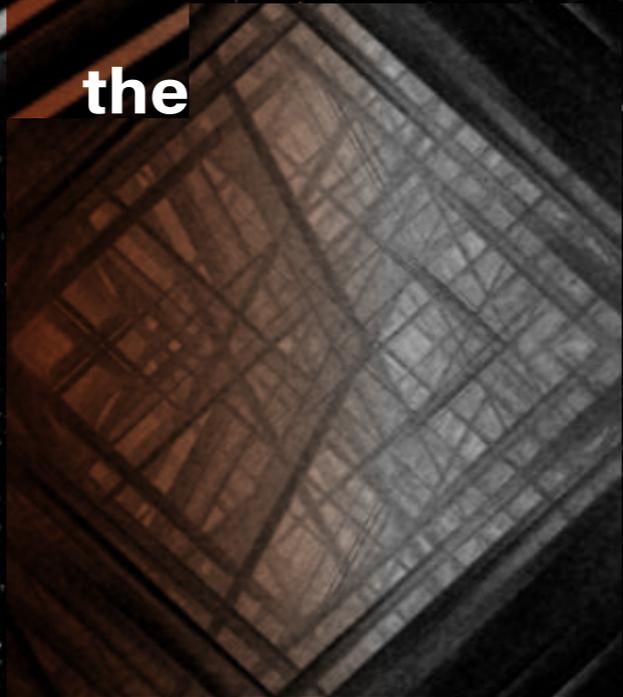
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# MEGA- AND THE MODEL: A

*Considering Alibaba Group*

[ words **AMELIE ROEDIGER** ]



*The India Company, however, still preserved traces of its original mercantile character, and the whole exterior order of its service is still carried on upon a mercantile plan and mercantile principles: in fact, it is a state in the disguise of a merchant, a great public office in the disguise of a counting-house. Accordingly the whole order and series, as I observed, is commercial; while the principal, inward, real, part of the Company is entirely political.*

— Edmund Burke <sup>[1]</sup>

# CONGLOMERATES COMPANY-STATE NEW CONCEPTION

*and Samsung Group*

[ editors **ANTHONY-JAMES KANAAN**  
& **JASPAR MCCAHERN-BOERSMA**  
& **DR NIRO KANDASAMY** ]

[1] Bond, E. *Speeches of the Managers and Counsel in the Trial of Warren Hastings. The Making of Modern Law: Trials, 1600-1926*. Vol. 4. London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1861, 16.

[2] Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195393736.003.0000.

[3] Eichner, Alfred S. 'The Nature of the Megacorp!' Chapter. In *The Megacorp and Oligopoly: Micro Foundations of Macro Dynamics*, 19-54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). doi:10.1017/CBO9780511895647.003.

[4] Dennis Ferenzy, "A New Kind of Conglomerate: Bigtech in China," *Institute of International Finance* (November 2018): 3.

The 'company-state' was originally conceptualised by Edmund Burke in reference to the burgeoning powers of seventeenth century joint-stock companies,<sup>[2]</sup> but the term also applies to their emanant legacy: twenty-first century mega-conglomerates. Mega-conglomerates are massive conglomerates (companies that hold controlling shares in multiple small companies) that have near-monopolistic power over many markets. Some mega-conglomerates target a specific industry such as mining or technology, while others diversify; almost all have multinational influence.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Alibaba Group (Alibaba) and the Samsung Group (Samsung) are two examples. Both Alibaba and Samsung represent an unequalled category of mega-conglomerates that have surpassed the modest sovereign power of common corporations,<sup>[4]</sup> and have emerged in the modern, multinational marketplace with an influence reminiscent of early modern company-states. This article will appraise the extent to which we can consider mega-conglomerates like Alibaba and Samsung in this capacity.

Joint-stock companies, an early progenitor of contemporary publicly-traded companies, were primarily recognised as ‘company-states’ because they existed as hybrid entities, operating with both corporate incentives and sovereign liberties.<sup>[5]</sup> Judicial autonomy, tax collection, and military capacity were standard characteristics of these early modern company-states. However, the increased capabilities of governments and the advancement of antitrust legislation have since prevented companies from exercising similar functions. Despite this, mega-conglomerates have emerged as a unique class of hybrid entity, possessing several state-like sovereign powers.

Hybridity is inherent to the conglomerate structure, whereby multiple subsidiaries exist under the common governance of a parent company. This results in a complex shift to vertically-integrated, profit-making imperatives through the value-adding conglomerate model,<sup>[6]</sup> thereby expanding a corporation’s domination. The subsequent power of successful conglomerates in multiple industries is also a product of their horizontal dominance in international markets. Samsung and Alibaba exemplify how the expansive hybridity of the mega-conglomerate model gives rise to contemporary equivalents of company-state sovereign powers. But what does this look like in practice?

Both mega-conglomerates control extensive supply chains in industries such as e-commerce and industry technology, own billions of dollars in assets, operate globally with infrastructure in multiple countries, significantly contribute to their respective nations’ gross domestic product, store or manufacture big data technologies, are leaders in the digital security market and interact with both civil society and governments. These characteristics make up the ‘quasi-sovereign prerogatives’ of mega-conglomerations, their cumulative significance offering unparalleled leverage in domestic and global economies.

[5] Andrew Phillips and J.C. Sharman, ‘Company-States and the Creation of the Global International System’, in *European Journal of International Relations* 26, no. 4 (December 2020): 1250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120928127>.

[6] Jay R. Galbraith. *Designing Organisations: Strategy, Structure and Process at the Business Unit and Enterprise Levels*. 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 247, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Such leverage is a result of long-term expansion. Samsung originated as a trading company in 1938 and grew into one of South Korea’s economic pillars during the ‘Korean Miracle’.<sup>[7]</sup> The company emerged as a global industrial conglomerate in the 1990s, as a chaebol supported by President Park Chung-hee, and was propelled into rapid development by a top-down system of management similar to the governance of European joint stock companies.<sup>[8]</sup> Alibaba is a younger conglomerate. It was founded in 1999 but now stands as a hegemon of Asia’s e-commerce industry, executing similar functions to Amazon, Paypal, and Google,<sup>[9]</sup> alongside additional financial services. It has fifty-one subsidiaries and was ranked 23rd on the Forbes 2021 largest companies list.<sup>[10]</sup> Alibaba dominates the Chinese market, facilitating 80% of the nation’s online shopping.<sup>[11]</sup>

Both companies also operate as ‘BigTech’. BigTech are major technology conglomerates defined by their market dominance, data leverage, and network effect reliance. Their monopolistic business models boast widespread influence within and beyond the technology sector and their online platforms host millions of dependent businesses. The largest BigTech firms include companies like Apple and Google. Samsung and Alibaba are lesser in size but still constitute BigTech.

The scale of these companies, tangibly supported by the aforementioned ‘quasi-sovereign prerogatives,’ allow mega-conglomerates to manipulate areas of society in the same way that early modern company-states exerted sovereign power to gain authority over new territories. A lack of government regulation of these companies has further facilitated their rapid growth. However, where company-states harnessed military force for such territorial enforcement, BigTech firms like Samsung and Alibaba opt for ‘soft power’ strategies; these are often derived from each company’s foray into entertainment, culture, and politics.

[7] Business Standard, “What is Samsung?,” last modified May 22, 2020, <https://www.business-standard.com/about/what-is-samsung>

[8] Alfons van der Kraan, “Anthony Van Diemen: From Bankrupt to Governor-General, 1593-1636 (PART I).” *The Great Circle* 26, no. 2 (2004): 3, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41563167>.

[9] Ming Zeng, “Alibaba and the Future of Business,” *Harvard Business Review*, October, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/09/alibaba-and-the-future-of-business?registration=success>.

[10] Andrea Murphy et al., “2021 Global 2000,” *Forbes*, May 13, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/lists/global2000/#6b7549975ac0>.

[11] Marc Lajoie and Nick Shearman, “What is Alibaba,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2018, <https://graphics.wsj.com/alibaba/>.

The role of BigTech in influencing the United States government's 5G policies is one example of how corporations can exercise their industry influence to manipulate policy outcomes. Lobby groups, including the Information and Technology Industry Council, of which Samsung is a member, urged the US government to refrain from 'promoting country specific [tech] standards' in favour of endorsing sector-led directives.<sup>[12]</sup>

Alibaba similarly used soft power by exploiting their digital infrastructure capabilities to shape Chinese judicial procedure in the development of the Hángzhōu online court platform; Alibaba facilitated the judicial reform and thus was able to link its subsidiaries Alipay, Alibaba Cloud and Taobao to the system.<sup>[13]</sup> A similar administrative role was also assumed by Alibaba in the drafting of China's *E-Commerce Law* (2018).<sup>[14]</sup>

Samsung has wielded similar power in legal spheres. Its long-standing and symbiotic relationship with the South Korean government, and its historical influence in contributing to Korea's economic miracle, have led to lesser convictions against Lee Jae-yong, the current executive chairman for Samsung electronics, who was sentenced to only two and a half years jail for a five-year offence. The conglomerate's influence also included the bribery of South Korea's former president, Park Geun-hye.<sup>[15]</sup>

Both conglomerates also exert significant influence on the processes of consumer socialisation. Alibaba's accumulation of block-chain patents,<sup>[16]</sup> and Samsung Electronics' latest technologies and data storage on Alibaba Cloud, additionally shape the idiosyncratic lifestyle changes of new, more technologically connected generations, and mould the future of technical capabilities in ways that are inextricable with the future of their conglomerations and market monopolisation. This parallels the framework proposed by Philips and Sharman which theorised that early modern company-states acted as "inter-regional bridge builders" between unique domestic actors and groups.<sup>[17]</sup>

As such, mega-conglomerates like Samsung homogenise global markets by pooling substantial market shares in their respective industries, and subtly forcing nations into monopsonistic contracts: workforces are funnelled into single dominant companies and supply and demand ceases to take full effect. Subsidiary Samsung Electronics is an apt example. It wields hegemonic power in the tech industry as the largest semiconductor manufacturer in terms of revenue,<sup>[18]</sup> is third in market capitalisation of the industry,<sup>[19]</sup> and ranked 11th overall on Forbes' 2021 list of the world's largest companies.<sup>[20]</sup>

Interestingly, just as there was little regulation preventing joint-stock companies from monopolising European trade with Asia, there are few constraints on the digital world and almost no regulatory bodies for transnational corporations. Thus, mega-conglomerates stand in positions of global leadership when targeting and developing technologies in certain markets.

In this way, mega-conglomerates like Alibaba and Samsung cannot be dismissed as purely for-profit companies. As companies with sovereign prerogatives and spheres of influence akin to early modern joint-stock companies, it is necessary to interrogate the mega-conglomerate model and draw links between Burke's novel conception.

Ultimately, the immense power held by mega-conglomerates, derived from dominance and vertical integration in emerging technological markets, extends the foundational profit-growth initiatives of corporate governance into the realms of global and geopolitical authority. These positions of leadership, while not identical to the sovereign prerogatives of early modern company-states, suggest that the company-state model is still relevant, and that a contemporary quasi-company-state has emerged.

[12] Greg Austin, "5G Debate: Security Challenges Still Ahead", *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, August 14, 2020, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/08/cs-fc-5g-security-challenges>.

[13] Alice Mingay, "Size matters: Alibaba shapes China's first 'Court of the Internet'", *Mercator Institute for China Studies*, October 17, 2019, <https://merics.org/en/analysis/size-matters-alibaba-shapes-china-first-court-internet>.

[14] Jinting Deng and Pin-yen Liu, "Consultative Authoritarianism: The Drafting of China's Internet Security Law and E-Commerce Law", *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, 107, 2017: 687, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2017.1305488>.

[15] Chloe Sang-Hun, "Samsung's de facto leader, imprisoned for bribery, will be paroled", *The New York Times*, August 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/09/business/south-korea-parole-samsung.html>.

[16] Paddy Baker, "Alibaba on Track to Be the Largest Blockchain Patent Holder by End of 2020: Study", *Nasdaq*, September 17, 2020, <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/alibaba-on-track-to-be-the-largest-blockchain-patent-holder-by-end-of-2020%3A-study-2020-09>.

[17] Phillips and Sharman, 'Company-States and the Creation of the Global International System', 1252.

[18] Park Eun-Jee, "Samsung back on top as biggest chipmaker", *Korea JoongAng Daily*, August 22, 2021, <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2021/08/22/business/tech/Samsung-Electronics-TSMC-Intel/20210822175700403.html>.

[19] Kim Eun-jin, "Samsung Electronic Ranked 3rd among Global Chipmakers in Terms of Market Cap", *Business Korea*, August 6, 2021, <http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=73517>.

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# BETWEEN A REGION AND A HARD PLACE: THE TENSION BETWEEN IDENTITY, HISTORY AND INTEGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA

[ words PADRAIC DALY ]

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[5] Tussie, Diana, *Latin America: Contrasting Motivations*

[6] Börzel, Tanja A, and Thomas Risse, *Comparative Regionalism*

[7] Börzel, Tanja A, and Thomas Risse, *Comparative Regionalism*

The desire for regional integration among Latin American (Lat-Am) nations reaches as far back as their independence. Traditional scholarship on regionalism and integration theory understands the process of regional integration as occurring through state-sponsored formal institution building, which progresses from economic organisation to political cooperation.<sup>[1]</sup> Despite many attempts at building organisations and frameworks to facilitate this linear progression, Lat-Am has not followed its expected path. This essay seeks to explore how we can explain Lat-Am's non-linear progress towards formalised regional integration, despite repeatedly engaging in such institution formation. While traditional regionalism theories would posit that Lat-Am has been unable to progress due to a lack of economic interdependence, this narrow view is not an accurate representation of the status or nature of Lat-Am regionalisation.<sup>[2]</sup> Rather, specific local historical, political and economic factors have precluded or prevented the region from following this expected linear route.<sup>[3]</sup> Instead, what has emerged is a dynamic and overlapping network of regional organisations forming a flexible regional architecture, unique to and representative of the region's shared political history.<sup>[4]</sup> While flawed and still evolving, the non-linearity of Lat-Am regionalism reveals limitations in the traditional paradigms through which regional integration is viewed.<sup>[5]</sup>

South America is, for our purposes, a flexible regional unit that will generally describe the nations south of Panama, with the phrase Lat-Am describing nations inclusive of Central America and occasionally the Caribbean.

## I - INTEGRATION THEORY

Traditional integration theories find their footing in Europe with liberal and realist ideas of international political economy, in which states enter economic agreements, build interdependencies, and foster integration and security, culminating in political cooperation.<sup>[6]</sup> An obvious prototype of this style of organising is the EU, the gravity and example of which looms large across scholarship on integration and regionalism broadly.<sup>[7]</sup> The EU's modern regional journey began with the 1950 Schuman Declaration which proposed the integration of the Western European coal and steel industries. This lowered regional barriers to allow for greater material gains and cheaper costs for involved states,

especially beneficial in the context of the post-war reconstruction.<sup>[8]</sup> It was stated at the time that the integration of French and German steel and coal rendered “any war between France and Germany... not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible,” explicitly referencing potential security benefits inherent to regional integration.<sup>[9]</sup> The anniversary of this is now celebrated as Europe Day, and considered the first of many supranational integration projects that collectivised the European economy - culminating in not just the political and economic entity of the EU as it is today, but also the modern conception of European normative regional identity.

The EU is a defining example of how state-sponsored institution building progressing to political collaboration can integrate and define a region. From this initial linear model, scholarship diversifies to highlight and privilege different drivers of regionalism and integration. Theories focussing on states as the primary actors became characterised as “old regionalism” in the 1990’s.<sup>[10]</sup> Neoliberal economic globalism led to a theoretical “new regionalism” which acknowledges other global actors like businesses, markets and informal actors as drivers of integration.<sup>[11]</sup> Illustrative examples include the interconnected corporate supply chains of Japan, China and Korea - to this day deeply economically integrated yet generally un-regionalised in the sense of a shared normative regional identity. Another example may be the implicit economic interconnection stemming from decades of migrant workers crossing the US-Mexico border.

Realist scholarship has explored the role of power and hegemony in allowing integration and cooperation to occur in various regions around the globe post-World War II. The security guarantee provided by the US and NATO was theorised as a solution to Europe's security dilemma even in the uncertainty of the Cold War, allowing cooperation and integration to occur at the such unprecedented levels.<sup>[12]</sup> US power has been understood as playing a similar role in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region, especially post-normalisation of the US relationship with China and the end of the Vietnam War.<sup>[13]</sup> A peaceful status quo between China and the US created security conditions such that a deeper integration within ASEAN could be facilitated, while in the Middle East, regionalisation has seen faltering progress - despite great normative, economic, and cultural similarities, as well as more of a historically intertwined regional identity comparative to Southeast Asia.<sup>[14]</sup> This has been attributed to the lack of

[8] Europa.eu. 2015. EUROPA - The Schuman Declaration – 9 May 1950. [online] Available at: <[http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration/index_en.htm)> [Accessed 2 November 2022];

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Carrillo Roa, Alejandra, and José Paranguá de Santana. *Regional Integration and South-South Cooperation*



a status quo between powers or the primacy of a single regional power to act as a security guarantor to foster the security climate required for regionalisation.<sup>[15]</sup> Regional security, usually fostered by powerful states, is a prerequisite for integration to occur, according to traditional views of regionalism. Peaceful conditions allow nations to invest in regional institution formation and deepen regional cooperation.

As these theories developed, it became difficult to rationalise the difference between the EU and other regional projects. The EU was clearly something more than cooperation between states, while examples like ASEAN represented regional economic cooperation rather than a deeper political supranationalism or economic integration. As such these concepts of cooperation and integration diverged.<sup>[16]</sup> Ostensibly an attempt to avoid all regional projects being compared to the EU, this served instead to create a false dichotomy between EU-like integration and non EU-like cooperation.<sup>[17]</sup> For example, the Treaty of Tlatelolco forbidding nuclear weapons in South America or the Central American Health Initiative (1984) would traditionally be understood as regional political cooperation projects, without large secretariats or member state power delegation.<sup>[18]</sup> Pre-2007 ASEAN would too be considered in this category of regional cooperation. However post-2007, upon adopting a charter of legal norms, values, and accountability and compliance measures alongside an expansion of its secretariat, ASEAN can be considered to have made the leap from non-supranational economic cooperation to more EU-like integration political arranging. In this we see the integration-cooperation conceptual delineation revealed to be, in truth, somewhat disingenuous, serving more to gatekeep what could be considered integration versus simpler cooperation as measured once again against the benchmark of the EU. So we see in ASEAN an example of how regional cooperation can give way to more complex integration, in this case in an almost expectedly linear fashion from economic to legal/political. Thus integration and cooperation should be understood as linked and interrelated concepts rather than distinct types of regional organising.

With this broader scope with which to view what could be considered integrative activity, how can we view the cooperative and organisational efforts of Lat-Am, and its divergence from the usual linear path? And what role does the more normative idea of regionality or regionness, as informed by a geographical grouping of states' shared self-identities, histories and experiences, play in this process?

## II - LATIN AMERICA, REGIONALITY AND NON-LINEAR INTEGRATION

This brings us to the core question of why Lat-Am, despite undertaking the theoretically necessary institution building, has not undergone linear integration. A traditional answer to this question is that inter-regional trade in Lat-Am has never exceeded around 20% of total trade, and has thus fostered limited economic interdependence, the traditional precursor to integration.<sup>[19]</sup> The formation of trade-facilitating organisations, such as Mercosur (1991), the Central American Common Market (1960), and the Andean Community (CAN, 1997), while moderately successful at lowering barriers to trade, has only marginally managed to increase it.<sup>[20]</sup> More recent waves of institution formation, notably the now defunct but ambitious Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, 2008), and organisations like Mercosur and CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, 2011) have pivoted away from a focus on economic cooperation and integration, towards political, social and legal goals.<sup>[21]</sup> Those that do remain in the economic integrative sphere often pursue competing agendas, like the Pacific Alliance's (PA) aim to liberalise trans-Pacific trade and Mercosur's initial aim of a free trade zone centred on South America's southern cone.<sup>[22]</sup> The result is a segmented and overlapping set of regional and sub-regional, non-supranational organisations with similarly overlapping memberships and roles across Lat-Am, a far cry from the state-supported economic interdependence and institutionalisation that is traditionally understood to facilitate regional integration.

This raises a number of questions. How did so many integrational projects not seem to progress as expected? Can traditional regionalism scholarship explain this? Lat-Am cooperation projects have been almost entirely state-sponsored, with very little support from new regionalism's market and sub-state actors. Indeed, the only real organic sub-state economic integration in the region is that which occurs on the US-Mexico border, contributing very little to the economies of the South.<sup>[23]</sup> As such, Lat-Am lacks a centralising economic process such as Europe's shared industries or the East Asian electronics production supply line, limiting its organic economic interdependence. Businesses in Lat-Am states still tend to have stronger ties with the EU and the US than with each other, undercutting attempts at economic integration as their economies stubbornly – and notably – point outward.<sup>[24]</sup>

[19] Hoffmann, Anne Marie. "Regional Organizations in South America."

[20] Nolte, Detlef. "Latin America's new regional architecture: a cooperative or segmented regional governance complex?." Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS 89 (2014);

Hoffmann, Anne Marie. "Regional Organizations in South America."

[21] Hoffmann, Anne Marie. "Regional Organizations in South America."

[22] Hofmann, Stephanie C, and Frédéric M érand. *Regional Organizations À la Carte*; Mera, Laura Gomez. "Explaining MERCOSUR's survival: Strategic sources of Argentine-Brazilian convergence." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37, no. 1 (2005): 109-140.

[23] Klaveren, Alberto, *Regionalism in Latin America*

[24] Klaveren, Alberto, *Regionalism in Latin America*

Lat-Am's security situation seems, at first glance, conducive to stable integrational progress. Since these nations' independence from (mostly) Spain and Portugal between the 1800s to the 1830s, there has been little inter-state conflict and a general tradition of regional solidarity and non-intervention.<sup>[25]</sup> Over the struggle for Latin American Independence the Lat-Am colonies largely worked collaboratively, led by independence leader Simon Bolivar who was firm in his desire for a united Lat-Am in opposition to external imperialism.<sup>[26]</sup> This broad regional sentiment, in conjunction with the lasting impact of the US Monroe Doctrine of 1823's anti-imperial solidarity and protection within the post-war west-hemisphere US security sphere, has meant that South America has faced little threat of an external physical re-conquest.<sup>[27]</sup>

However despite this seeming lack of risk, defensive posturing is the hallmark through which we can understand Lat-Am regionality, born from the region's shared colonial and post-colonial histories, fears and struggles. Lat-Am emerged from its colonial period with a deep mistrust of power, empire and hegemony. Andres Bello, a contemporary of regional independence leader Simon Bolivar, wrote "all strong nations have abused and will continue to abuse their power."<sup>[28]</sup> It is unsurprising then that fellow Argentinian writer Jose Ingenieros denounced the Monroe Doctrine as a "declaration of intervention", in response to the US founding of the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1948.<sup>[29]</sup>

In the OAS we can see the first wave of American integrative efforts; the US sponsored Pan-Americanism, promoting a joint North-South idea of American identity and cooperation. Despite the OAS being sold to the states of Lat-Am using distinctly Bolivarian language, the formation of the OAS does not constitute a regional security guarantor undertaking a regionalisation project, but rather represents Lat-Am's quasi-acquiescence - or subjugation - to US regional dominance.<sup>[30]</sup> A quiet but firm, mutually acknowledged statement of power. Simon Bolivar himself wrote that the US seemed "destined to plague America with torments in the shape of freedom."<sup>[31]</sup> In the context of this northward suspicion, Lat-Am states undertook a first wave of economic regional integration projects between the 50s to 70s - structuralist in nature and focused on the insulation and development of Lat-Am's industrial capabilities.<sup>[32]</sup> Though couched in the language of open markets - i.e. the Lat-Am Free Trade Association - these projects ostensibly aimed to maintain independence from the economic strength of the North, in the face of which OAS membership represented, at the very least, a seat at the

[25] Fawcett, Louise, and Mónica Serrano, eds. *Regionalism and governance in the Americas: continental drift*. Springer, 2005;

Scarfi, J. P., & Sheinin, D. M. (Eds.). (2022). *The New Pan-Americanism and the Structuring of Inter-American Relations*. Routledge.

[26] Bolivar, Simon. "Con-testación de un Americano Meridional...," Kingston, 1815

[27] Scarfi, J. P., & Sheinin, D. M. (Eds.), *The New Pan-Americanism*

[28] Andrés Bello, *Obras Colectivas*, pp. 641-56, cited in Jaksik, *Selected Writings*, 1999, pp. 214-17;

Fawcett, Louise, and Mónica Serrano, eds. *Regionalism and governance in the Americas*, 2005

[29] Fawcett, Louise, and Mónica Serrano, eds. *Regionalism and governance in the Americas*, 2005

[30] Fawcett, Louise, and Mónica Serrano, eds. *Regionalism and governance in the Americas*, 2005;

Scarfi, J. P., & Sheinin, D. M. (Eds.), *The New Pan-Americanism*

[31] Simón Bolívar, 'Carta a Colonel Patrick Campbell,' in *Obras Colectivas*, vol. III (Cuba, 1950), pp. 278-9.

[32] Gert.Rosenthal, "Un informe crítico a 30 años de integración en América Latina," *Nueva Sociedad* 113 (1991): 60-65.

regional table.<sup>[33]</sup> Regional cooperation projects slowed during the – often US-sponsored – political and economic strife of the 70s and 80s, but the 1991 establishment of Mercosur represented a turning point.<sup>[34]</sup>

The Cold War era was famously unkind to Lat-Am as the USA's global ideological battle against communism brought two decades of covert and overt political espionage to the region. In a damning fulfilment of Simon Bolivar's predictions, the US embarked on a broad program of political manipulation and agenda-setting across the region, up to and including forced regime change, ensuring the region's pliability to US political and economic aims.<sup>[35]</sup> These two decades of covert political violence undermined much of Lat-Am's political independence, leaving the region politically weakened and unstable. This reaffirmed once again the regional suspicion of, and demonstrated its vulnerability to, external powers.

As neoliberal economic globalism became the norm and the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed, Mercosur was designed as a regional free trade zone to counter the economic strength of the North.<sup>[36]</sup> A product of the monetary crises and political weakening caused by the implementation of neoliberal economic policies across the Lat-Am region, especially in its larger economies. Mercosur represented initially an effort to rekey the neoliberal economic experience into one that benefited the Lat-Am states in the Southern Cone, many of whom had incurred deep debts to the International Monetary Fund on the condition of continued liberalisation. While noble in intent, the Mercosur free market never eventuated as the political will to risk further economic integration or liberalisation had been exhausted. This profoundly disruptive period prompted a withdrawal from economic liberalisation and a change in regional interaction. This is perhaps best symbolised by the rejection of the OAS attempt to create an all-Americas free trade zone and the region's subsequent return to pre-neoliberal intra-regional defensive economic postures. US influence in the region declined as its economic aims went unfulfilled and the OAS decreased in centrality to become just one part of Lat-Am's regional architecture by the advent of the new millennium.

With the diminishing of US influence, the OAS, and their espoused 'Pan-Americanism', the region seemingly splintered into many overlapping projects. Which, rather than indicating a loss of regionalism or integration as compared with previous, instead can be seen as an expression of Lat-Am's distinctive regionality impacting this new phase of its integrative project.

[33] Fawcett, Louise, and Mónica Serrano, eds. *Regionalism and governance in the Americas*, 2005

[34] Fawcett, Louise, and Mónica Serrano, eds. *Regionalism and governance in the Americas*, 2005

[35] Weiner, T. *Legacy of ashes: The history of the CIA*, 2008

[36] Mera, Laura Gomez. *Mercosur's Survival*. 109-140.



**"The damage done by the 1980's and 90's experience with neoliberal economics has instilled a resistance to broad economic liberalisation or prescriptive co-organisation."**

[37] Mera, Laura Gomez. *Mercosur's Survival*. 109-140.

[38] Andrés Bello, *Obras Colectivas*, 1999

[39] Hofmann, Stephanie C, and Frédéric Mérand. *Regional Organizations À la Carte*

The damage done by the 1980s and 1990s experience with neoliberal economics instilled a resistance to broad economic liberalisation or prescriptive co-organisation. We can see this in the refocusing of Mercosur towards explicitly anti-neoliberal, sustainable economic and social development goals.<sup>[37]</sup> Indeed, most institution formation has followed this model since, eschewing broad economic reform and focusing more on collaborative economic cooperation in the interest of shared political and social outcomes, such as in UNASUR and CELAC.

It is worth remembering that this region's shared experience of decolonisation saw the formation of states centralised on ideas of Latin American solidarity, independence, and a suspicion of external powers. The post-Pan-American wave of institution formation can be seen as more reflective of this regional identity. Andrés Bello wrote, "trade has done more to improve international relations than all other causes put together."<sup>[38]</sup> Lat-Am states have traditionally conducted, and continue to conduct, a vast majority of their commerce bilaterally at a regional level, as well as internationally. Historically, Lat-Am's Bolivarian states have pursued trade as a means of security and bilateral diplomacy. This changed during the Washington-led, OAS-neoliberal period in which trade was opened, to the consequence of much hardship and instability. A loss of security and independence to the benefit of external interests which represented, in a sense, the historically feared reconquest - economic and ideological rather than military. In that period, economic multilateralism and open trade failed to sustain Lat-Am's security environment and political stability hence required a return to previous defensive state control over economic policy and a preference against open-trade. A preference which has remained the regional norm.

Only the Pacific Alliance (PA) (2011) - comprising Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Peru - represents something of a return to economic liberalisation in the current Lat-Am regional architecture. However, rather than part of a trend back toward liberalisation generally, the PA provides an extra-regional economic option for states should they desire it.<sup>[39]</sup> This is emblematic of the Lat-Am regional approach to integration since the 2000s: an opt-in and ad-hoc infrastructure of overlapping organisations with which states may engage as desired or needed, rather than the development of unitary and prescriptive regional institutions we see with the EU or ASEAN.

As such, the lack of regional economic interdependencies that could be identified by traditional integration theories as holding Lat-Am back from regionalisation is perhaps more of a feature of its regionality - the shared identities and history that comprises the region normatively. With the decentralisation of the OAS and Pan-Americanism, the shared Bolivarian ideals of Latin American solidarity, protectionism and independence - reinforced and informed by the economic and political problems of the 70s to 90s - have allowed for a uniquely Latin American style of regionalism and integration to develop. This Latin American regionalism is not as reliant on economic interdependencies and institutional integration as integration or development theories have generally suggested as prerequisite.

Not unexpectedly then, the political basis of Lat-Am's regional architecture is also contradictory to traditional models, with broad and multi-layered political and social programs at work within the region and regional political cohesion internationally.<sup>[40]</sup> In the early 2000s, the election of multiple left-wing governments, particularly in South America, led to another wave of institutionalisation.<sup>[41]</sup> Sponsored largely by regional powers Venezuela and Brazil, UNASUR (2008) - along with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC 2010) - seemed to allow a new level of scientific, environmental and social cooperation, as well as democracy promotion across the region.<sup>[42]</sup> In other arenas, even since the 1950s, cooperative regional health initiatives have remained in force both on regional and multiple sub-regional levels, despite the inconsistency and turmoil of the region's economic efforts.<sup>[43]</sup> As OAS is the regional forum through which Lat-Am communes with North America, CELAC has become the preferred interlocutor for Latin-American and Caribbean states to discuss regional matters with India, China and the EU - maintaining permanent international secretariats. Aside from these organisations, the region also has a decades-long history as a cooperative voting bloc within the United Nations. Despite lacking a single distinct regional structure underpinned by economic integration, Lat-Am acts and is organised as a cohesive political region.

## CONCLUSION

Latin America remains difficult to explain through traditional regionalisation theories. Its failure to economically integrate and its return to

[40] Lockhart, Nicolás Falomir. "La identidad de Unasur: ¿ regionalismo post-neoliberal o post-hegemónico?." *Revista de Ciencias Sociales (Cr)* 2, no. 140 (2013): 97-109.

[41] Hoffmann, Anne Marie. "Regional Organizations in South America."

[42] Lockhart, Nicolás Falomir, *La identidad de Unasur*, 97-109.

[43] Carrillo Roa, Alejandra, and José Paranaquí de Santana. "Regional Integration and South-South Cooperation in Health in Latin America and the Caribbean." *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública* 32, no. 5 (2012): 368-75;

Hoffmann, Anne Marie. "Regional Organizations in South America."

[44] Hofmann, Stephanie C, and Frédéric M érand. *Regional Organizations À la Carte*;

Tussie, Diana, *Latin America: Contrasting Motivations*

[45] Hofmann, Stephanie C, and Frédéric M érand. *Regional Organizations À la Carte*;

Brosig, Malte. "Governance between international institutions: Analysing interaction modes between the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE." In *Cooperation or conflict*, pp. 29-58. Routledge, 2016.

[46] Sanahuja, José Antonio. "La construcción de una región: Suramérica y el regionalismo posliberal." *Una región en construcción. UNASUR y la integración en América del Sur*, Madrid: Fundación CIDOB (2010): 87-136;

Nolte, Detlef, and Brigitte Weiffen. "How Regional Organizations Cope with Recurrent Stress: The Case of South America." *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 64, no. 2 (2021).

[47] Malamud, Andrés, and Gian Luca Gardini. "Has regionalism peaked? The Latin American quagmire and its lessons." *The international spectator* 47, no. 1 (2012): 116-133.

[48] Dabène, Olivier, 2014. *La cuarta ola del regionalismo*, in: Institut des Amériques (ed.), *Los desafíos del desarrollo en América Latina*, Paris: AFD, 92;

Dosenrode, Søren. "Crisis and Regional Integration: A Federalist and Neo-Functionalist Perspective." In *Regions and Crises. New Challenges for Contemporary Regionalisms*, edited by Lorenzo Fioramonti, 13-30. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012;

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, Mette. "What kills international organisations? When and why international organisations terminate." *European Journal of International Relations* 27, no. 1 (2021): 281-310.

intra-regional economic protectionism runs antithetical to the conventional logic of interdependence deepening to political cooperation. This of course relies on the theory that the process of regionalisation is necessarily linear. Latin America's non-linear progress towards formal regional integration, however, cannot be properly understood through traditional theories of integration - which reveal primarily an insufficient economic interdependence to support a linear economic-political regional integration path. These are unable to take into account the weight of the shared historical and political experiences that define modern Lat-Am as a region, nor recognise the complex and evolving regional architecture that integrates it together.

Lat-Am as a region is not held together by unitary strong institutions and complex interdependencies, but perhaps more so through its distinct shared understanding of itself as a region. Rather than the way integration in the EU contributed to a new European identity, Lat-Am's shared normative self-identification, history and sense of identity has supported its own integrative efforts. As the region functions as a political entity, supported by a multi-layered opt-in approach to various political, economic and social agendas, acting cohesively on the international stage.<sup>[44]</sup> With its flexible regional governmental architecture that is strengthened by its internal redundancies, overlapping memberships and evolving internal components, Latin American regionalisation is very different to the static and centralised end-point provided by linear progression models.<sup>[45]</sup>

Of course it must be noted that the Lat-Am regional project is still in a process of transition, recently under stress from right-wing populism in Brazil and the authoritarian crisis in Venezuela. Many of its component parts still remain untested, as shown sadly by the collapse of UNASUR in 2018 under the weight of such crises and the internal regional divisions these have sown.<sup>[46]</sup> While it has been suggested that Lat-Am's both simultaneously overlapping and segmented regional infrastructure represents a precursor to hemispheric disintegration, a failure of regional potential.<sup>[47]</sup> However Lat-Am has shown, in the words of Olivier Dabène, "the capacity to continue a fruitful political dialogue in spite of divisions". Crisis creates demand for international organisations and cooperation, just as it may fracture them, and only time can tell us what this may mean for the Latin American integration project.<sup>[48]</sup>

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*POLITICAL*

the





Brazil's 2022 general elections saw the rise of lunacy and terrorism, with Bolsonaro supporters protesting violently, including a man arrested for putting a bomb in a fuel truck near the capital city's airport (Stargardter 2022). Other Bolsonaro supporters called for alien intervention while waving phones at the sky until eventually, they invaded Brazil's congress on January 8, 2023 (Picheta 2023; Rival Times 2022). This was a well-planned coup attempt that mirrored Trump's 2021 United States Capitol insurrection (Phillips 2018; Picheta 2023). The first time that Bolsonaro mentioned he would stage a coup if he became president was in 2001, and since his 2018 election campaign, Bolsonaro has claimed that if he loses an election, it would have been due to fraud (McCoy 2021). Since Brazil's 1985 democratic transition following 21 years of military rule, the country experienced progressive politics which ended with the election of the Bolsonaro administration. The 2022 election's anti-democratic misinformation campaign, hate speech, gun violence, terrorism, and anti-environmentalism, reflected increased polarization, presenting a "critical test for democracy and the rule of law", and with international implications due to "Brazil's size and influence" (Brown and Canineu 2022, par. 3; Faiola and Pessoa 2022b; McKenna 2020).

[ words DYANA SATYA MOITINHO FREITAS ]

# ELECTION 2022: BRAZIL

[ editors  
MIHIR SARDANA,  
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*NOTE: This article was initially written on November 27, 2022. Various developments on Brazil's elections have unfolded since, which is reflected in a concluding update.*

## THE ELECTION

The presidential election was contested by right-wing incumbent president Jair Messias Bolsonaro, of the Liberal Party (PL), against previously two-times president from 2003 to 2010, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Worker's Party (PT) (Sullivan 2022; Al Jazeera 2022). Out of 156 million votes, Lula won the first round with 48.4% beating Bolsonaro's 43.2% votes. However, lack of a majority led to a second round in which Lula narrowly won with 50.9% of the vote against Bolsonaro's 49.1% (Sullivan 2022; Tähtinen 2022). Bolsonaro's nationalist campaign centred around family and the Church, with tough-on-crime, anti-corruption, and conservative values, which was supported by wealthier Brazilians, mainstream media conservatives, evangelical Christians, and the business class (Bastos Lima and Da Costa 2022, 508). Lula campaigned on his past presidencies' success, promising to help poor citizens and re-introduce environmental protection to rebuild the country after Bolsonaro's

four-year mandate, with a support base representing the rural and working-class, mostly in Brazil's northeast (Al Jazeera 2022). The election results revealed Brazil's political division "from the Amazon jungle to the megacities of the southeast... upending churches, making targets of pollsters and igniting feuds between strangers, friends, family, even branches of government, all while pitting region against region and opening fresh rifts over sexuality, religion and race" (Faiola and Pessoa 2022b, par. 4). The election focused more on the two presidential candidates of opposite ideological realms, rather than debating policies, budgets, and public spending. This highlights an emergent culture war fed by Bolsonaro's misinformation attacks on the electoral system and democracy, as well as his admiration of a Trump-like coup, highlighting the Americanisation of Brazilian politics in a country that also has evangelical voting groups, race and slavery legacy issues (Faiola and Pessoa 2022b).

#### IMPLICATIONS

Despite Lula's win representing a victory for Brazilian democracy over far-right extremism, Brazilian society has been left divided with increased violence and threats of a coup. Bolsonaro's supporter's acts of violence before, during, and after 2022's election represented an enactment of Bolsonaro's rhetoric during his 2019 to 2022 mandate and campaign, which systematically implemented violence through COVID-19 mismanagement and underfunding environmental protection organizations.

During Bolsonaro's 2017 campaign, he compared African Brazilians to livestock and promised to remove State protection of the environment, Indigenous peoples, and slavery descendants, suggesting an agenda to eradicate Brazil's Afro-descendant majority through exclusion and violence (Treece 2021, 213). Once in power in 2018, Bolsonaro deviated from the global environmental agenda. His administration defunded environmental organisations and spread anti-indigenous hate rhetoric fuelling attacks against activists, such as the assassinations of Indigenous leader Bruno Pereira and British journalist Dom Phillips, who were "shot dead, burned, dismembered and buried deep" (McCoy 2022, par. 7) in the Amazon rainforest (Bastos Lima and Da Costa 2022, 508). The ac-



**"It was an election with less focus on policies, budget and spending debates, focusing more on the two presidential candidates of opposite ideological realms."**

tivists had been tracing illegal loggers, land grabbers and miners, and Bolsonaro downplayed their murder as a misadventure done by drunk poachers (Bastos Lima and Da Costa 2022, 508; McCoy 2022). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro's administration ignored 81 calls from Pfizer offering vaccines, while Bolsonaro spread misinformation about COVID-19, likening it to a small flu linked to AIDS, questioned the vaccine's safety, stating it turned people into alligators and promoted a non-proven and hazardous COVID-19 kit of hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin. This misgovernance is associated with Brazil's 700,000 deaths from COVID-19, limited vaccination rates and hospitals nearing collapse (Horton 2021; McCoy 2022; Phillips 2022). Bolsonaro's COVID-19 mismanagement disadvantaged indigenous peoples and isolated communities, suggesting a neo-fascist project of genocide against the most vulnerable (Bastos Lima and Da Costa 2022, 508; Rolling Stone 2022). The increasing violence in Brazilian society against the Left, democracy, indigenous peoples, African descendants, and other minority groups including women and the LGBTQ+ community has been ignited through far-right hate speech and anti-democratic electoral misinformation.

In a livestream prior to the 2022 election, Bolsonaro stated that he had felt chemistry with 15-year-old Venezuelan refugees, whom he suggested were prostitutes, and despite this unethical conduct, he still came close to winning the 2022 election (Phillips 2022a). Bolsonaro also falsely stated that if he was to lose the election, then there had been electoral fraud, mirroring Donald Trump's US coup rhetoric and attempt while spreading pro-dictatorship populist rhetoric (Phillips 2022a). Three months prior to the election, there were 21 politically motivated assassinations and 212 attacks, an increase of 110% from the previous quarter of 70% since 2020 (Tähtinen 2022; Ware and Merino 2022).

On the eve of 2022's election, Bolsonaro supporter and far-right congresswoman Carla Zambelli chased an unarmed journalist of colour with a gun and is yet to face any consequences (Faiola and Pessoa 2022a; Phillips 2022a). Roberto Jefferson, another politician who calls Bolsonaro a close friend, attacked and wounded federal police with a rifle and grenades, later advocated his actions as pro-Bolsonarismo (Phillips 2022b). The rise of gun violence in a country with the highest number of gun assassinations in the

world, with 40,000 lives lost in 2020, can be attributed to Bolsonaro's live streams' encouragement for his supporters to arm themselves, while inventing an inexistent communist threat from Lula's Worker's Party (PT). Alongside Bolsonaro's frequent use of gun gestures, his Trumpesque campaign to ease firearm laws and grant access to modern weapons, has doubled gun ownership in Brazil since 2018 (Watson 2021; Ware and Merino 2022). Violence has also been ignited through fake news spread through television, social media, universities, libertarian think tanks, voluntary organisations, and evangelical churches that have accused Lula of being an anti-church communist Satanist. However, Lula supporters made equally exorbitant claims, accusing Bolsonaro of being a cannibal (Faiola and Pessoa 2022b; McKenna 2020).

In the month of Bolsonaro's 2022 electoral loss, his supporters have protested by blocking highways with burnt tires and calling for a military intervention, including for an alien coup, on the false pretences of electoral fraud (Faiola and Pessoa 2022a; Phillips 2022a; Rival Times 202). Robson Candido, a pro-Bolsonaro protester confessed and was arrested for putting a bomb in a fuel truck near the capital's airport, while rifles and explosives Candido had attempted to activate were also found in his home (Stargardter 2022).

In the face of such lunacy and terrorism, it will be difficult for the new president to govern an increasingly polarized and dangerous country emerging from the extremist Bolsonarismo movement, even though Lula's election represents the most favourable outcome for democracy, the Left, human rights, indigenous rights, anti-racism, and gives hope for minority groups. The case of Brazil warns other democracies of the dangers of electoral misinformation and fake news in facilitating the entrance into power of politicians with extremist agendas.

In conclusion, Brazilian society has become increasingly polarized since Bolsonaro's administration and extremist far-right movement, which has been fueled by anti-democratic pro-dictatorship rhetoric, hate speech, neo-facism, and racism. Bolsonaro has framed an inexistent communist threat from what is a pro-democracy moderate Left, as Lula's past administrations had turned Brazil into an emerging economy that was improving social inclusion and sustainable development (Bastos Lima and Da Costa 2022). How-



ever, Bolsonaro's attack against the international democratic order, disregarding environmental and human rights protections, "gave neo-racist opinions public legitimacy" (Treece, 2021, 214) and "has represented a severe backlash against transparency and democratic participation" (Bastos Lima and Da Costa 2022, 515). The 2022 elections provide lessons for both Brazil and other democracies. They point to the urgency of eradicating divisive conflict, fake news, hate, racism, violence, homophobia, poverty and misogyny, and the need to establish social harmony and peace to progress human rights, social welfare, and democracy in Brazil.

#### UPDATE

This article has argued that Brazil's increased polarisation has occurred since the Bolsonaro administration's undermining of democracy, encouragement of violence and discrimination, neglect of the environment, indigenous peoples' rights, and human rights.

Two months after the article was written, Bolsonaro supporters invaded the Brazilian Congress on January 8th, reflecting the author's presumption of Bolsonaro's Trumpian coup attempt to challenge the election results. In the videos of the January 8th invasion, the Brazilian police stand passively watching invaders and taking selfies with smiles on their faces rather than taking action to stop crimes against democracy. Bolsonaro is currently in exile in Florida, US, attempting to flee legal persecutions and possible jail if he returns to Brazil.

Despite the jailing and persecution of some invaders of the Brazilian Congress, Bolsominions (Bolsonaro's supporters), continue to defend the false idea that the 2022 elections were a fraud. Meanwhile, environmentalists and humanitarian activists continue to be assassinated in Brazil, and the new president, Lula, attempts to reverse what has been called Bolsonaro's genocide against the Yanomami Amazon tribe through health crises and violence against them committed by illegal loggers. Economic, health, and social issues remain, challenging the new president after increased polarization and violence induced by hate rhetoric from an extremist far-right movement that may last for years to come.

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It seems that humanity has yet to learn from Aesop's fable, 'The Ant and the Grasshopper.'

# WAS THE GREEK CRISIS REALLY JUST A "DEBT" CRISIS

[ words **KENNY SELAMATAN** ]

[ editors

**JASPAR MCCAHERON-BOERSMA,  
ANTHONY-JAMES KANAAN &  
DR ROBERT BONCARDI ]**

The eruption of the 2009 Greek crisis stupefied numerous economists and politicians. The mainstream explanation of the crisis was that it was a "Greek problem" catalysed by corruption, falsehood, greed and economic illiteracy.<sup>[1]</sup> Is this, however, what ultimately caused the collapse of the Greek economy? Perhaps it would be more pertinent to ask, what kind of economic system incentivises individuals to succumb to their all-too-human greed and corruptness? It was Karl Marx who said that one should not simply blame the wickedness of capitalist individuals, for the problem is not an ethical one, but a systemic one.<sup>[2]</sup> Building from Marx's analysis, I will argue that capitalism is not only a system or a 'theory' but contains within it a pervasive bourgeois ideology—parasitising on our unconscious daily activities and practices—that conceives of itself as a harmonious, crisis-free and stable system.<sup>[3]</sup> In the same manner in which the divine right of kings was absolute in feudalism, capitalist ideology blinds its stakeholders to the inherent discontent and economic crises within the very system. It is thus no wonder that mainstream, neoclassical economics renders itself improvident to crises which consequently leads them to exclusively fault individual agents and policy errors.<sup>[4]</sup> As an alternative to the mainstream perspective, I will propose a Marxian reading of the Greek crisis. I will begin with a brief overview of the crisis, followed by its mainstream analyses and theoretical framework. In contrast, I will present the Marxian theory of the "money circuit of capital," which ties together the possibilities of crises and the internal tension within the production process. I will further argue that the systemic problem already resides within what Marx calls "interest-bearing capital," which explains the decades of financial market deregulations and investments into Greece's false economic prospects.

In 2009, the new Greek government revealed that its predecessor had been falsifying public economic data to conceal the economy's instability.<sup>[5]</sup> Specifically, it had hidden the discreet overaccumulation of public debts in the form of fiscal and current account deficits.<sup>[6]</sup> For instance, what was previously reported as a budget deficit of 6.7%

[1] "The first Mainstream explanation variant argues that the Greek crisis is the outcome of special national policy errors and structural deficiencies. Thus, it can be branded a 'Greek disease.'" Stavros Mavroudeas and Dimitris Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek crisis: More heat than light?," in *Greek Capitalism in Crisis: Marxist analyses*, ed. Stavros Mavroudeas (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 12.

[2] "[What is the] answer to the outcry about the physical and mental degradation, the premature death, the torture of over-work, ... ?... [L]ooking at these things as a whole, it is evident that this does not depend on the will, either good or bad, of the individual capitalist. Under free competition, *the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him*" (italics added) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Group, 1976), 381.

[3] For a detailed theory of ideology see the chapter "Commodity Fetishism" in Slavoj Žižek's magnum opus *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), 18-22.

[4] Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek Crisis," 9.

[5] Loukas Tsoukalis, "International Bubbles, European Currency Union, and National Failures: The Case of Greece and the Euro Crisis," in *The Greek Crisis and European Modernity*, eds. Anna Triandafyllidou, Ruby Gropas & Hara Kouki (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 28; Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek crisis," 12-14.

[6] Tsoukalis, "International Bubbles," 27-28; Yanis Varoufakis, "We Are All Greeks Now! The Crisis in Greece in Its European and Global Context," in *The Greek Crisis and European Modernity*, eds. Anna Triandafyllidou, Ruby Gropas & Hara Kouki (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 50.

of GDP in 2009 was discovered to be 15.4% of GDP in actuality.<sup>[7]</sup> The result was over expenditure throughout the government's budget, and a widening of the yield spread of bonds credited by Germany.<sup>[8]</sup> It was only a matter of time before Greece had to declare bankruptcy.

Mainstream analysis is predominated by two schools of thought: neoclassical economics (alongside its sibling neoliberalism) and Keynesian economics. On the one hand, many neoclassical economists attributed the causes of the Greek crisis to the corrupt government regime. Specifically, they adduced the causal roles of clientelism, the manipulation of debt statistics, tax evasions, and inappropriate caricatures of the "lazy" Greeks.<sup>[9]</sup> On the other hand, the Keynesian economists put forth the influential "Twin Deficits Hypothesis" (TDH), suggesting that Greece's overaccumulation of public debts was a result of national policy errors and economic illiteracy.<sup>[10]</sup> Although there is a grain of truth in these orthodox analyses, they only touch upon the 'weak' structural causes of the crisis.

There are three chief components to the mainstream analyses: firstly, astonishment; secondly, a reproval of policy errors and government corruption; and finally, the suggestion that there was little correlation between the debt crisis and the 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis (GFC). To begin with, economists and politicians alike evoked the Aristotelian concept of 'Thaumazein,' a state of philosophical wonder especially in the face of crisis or the astonishment at an unheard-of object, to use Peter Sloterdijk's words.<sup>[11]</sup> This is the very astonishment of the carefree grasshopper in Aesop's fable who, unlike the ants, did not think to reserve food for the impending winter. Instead of ridiculing the laziness of the grasshopper however, we should ask why the grasshopper failed to anticipate the looming calamity in the first place. The answer is this: the grasshopper was blind to the cycles constitutive of the seasons of nature. To add a Marxist twist to Aesop's tale, the grasshopper was blinded by an ideology which rendered them oblivious to the cyclical crises that are constitutive of the system itself.<sup>[12]</sup> For

the grasshopper, it is nature; for us, it is global capitalism.

One can discern this ideology in the general equilibrium thesis of neoclassical theory which posits that all markets within capitalism tend to reach an equilibrium in the long run.<sup>[13]</sup> Any "errors" in the supply of a commodity, be it an excess or deficit, are rectified by the laws of supply and demand in the form of the well-known occasional fluctuations of the market price of commodities. This view originated from classical economics, through Smith's "invisible" hand and Say's law that production can itself become a source of demand.<sup>[14]</sup> Milton Friedman famously championed the former in his dictum that the market system "permits unanimity without conformity": arguing that it is the only fair means of distributing wealth, commodities, and income.<sup>[15]</sup> Say's law, on the other hand, revitalises itself in the mathematical oeuvre of Alfred Marshall: "Cost of production has for instance no perceptible influence on the day's bargaining in a fish-market".<sup>[16]</sup> In neoclassical theory, the price of any commodity is thus mainly determined by the domain of exchange (market), not by the production process. This is why mainstream economics perceives capitalism as a harmonious economic system, therefore holding no possibility for a general crisis.

The neoclassical axiom of market equilibrium thus implies that every single human behaviour can be mathematically determined with precision.<sup>[17]</sup> This is known as the social welfare function, which argues that society's sole purpose is to seek the maximisation of its wealth.<sup>[18]</sup> Here we can address the second main component of mainstream analyses of the crisis, that when a certain individual or institution behaves irrationally, for instance the corrupt Greek government, they are disrupting the efficient and natural equilibrium of capitalism.<sup>[19]</sup> This was expressed vociferously within the neoclassical analyses in their recurring emphasis on Greece's clientelist state. Prior to the crisis, plebiscites were rigged as "voters are bought through provision of employment and wages".<sup>[20]</sup> Consequently, tax evasions and cheap borrowing were made feasible. Since the government was unable to collect taxes due to clientelism and tax evasions,

[7] Rebecca M. Nelson, Paul Belkin and Derek E Mix, "Greece's Debt Crisis: Overview, Policy Responses and Implications," *Journal of Current Issues in Finance, Business and Economics* 4, no. 4 (2011), 375.

[8] Yanis Varoufakis, *And The Weak Must Suffer What They Must?: Europe, Austerity and the Threat to Global Stability* (London: Vintage, 2017), 2.

[9] Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek Crisis," 9, 12-13.

[10] Dimitrios Pappas, Christian Richter and Hairong Mu, "An Econometric Analysis of the Twin Deficits Hypothesis in Greece During the Period 1960-2014," *Applied Economics Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2016), 349-353.

[11] Peter Sloterdijk, *Stress and Freedom* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 3;

Tsoukalis, "International Bubbles," 31-32.

[12] Samo Tomšič, *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2015), 203-204.

[13] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics, Eighth edition*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1920), 288.

[14] "Products can only be bought with products," Jean-Baptiste Say, *Catechism of Political Economy: Or Familiar Conversations on the Manner in Which Wealth Is Produced, Distributed, and Consumed in Society* (1814), quoted in Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Group, 1976), 210; See Smith's notion of "unintended consequences" in apropos the "invisible" hand of the market in Yanis Varoufakis, *Foundations of Economics: A Beginner's Companion* (London: Routledge, 1998), 17-18.

[15] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 23; Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 13; Richard D. Wolff and Stephen A. Resnick, *Contending Economic Theories: Neoclassical, Keynesian, and Marxian* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 98.

[16] Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 411.

[17] Yanis Varoufakis, "Taking the Red or Blue Pill?" *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 80 (2017) 68, 71.

[18] Varoufakis, "Taking the Red or Blue Pill?," 68.

[19] This neoclassical and neoliberal view is discernible in the economist George Joseph Stigler, *The Citizen and the State: Essays on Regulation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 29-30;

Friedman and Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 23;

Richard D. Wolf and Stephen A. Resnick, *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 49.

[20] Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek Crisis," 12.

[21] Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek Crisis," 12.

[22] Varoufakis, "We Are All Greeks Now!" 45.

[23] George Economakis, George Androulakis and Maria Markaki, "Profitability and crisis in the Greek economy (1960-2012)," in *Greek Capitalism in Crisis: Marxist analyses*, ed. Stavros Mavroudeas (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 130.

[24] Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek Crisis," 14, 27.

[25] Slavoj Žižek, "Slavoj Zizek: How Alexis Tsipras and Syriza Outmaneuvered Angela Merkel and the Eurocrats," *InTheseTimes*, July 23, 2015, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/slavoj-zizek-syriza-tsipras-merkel/>;

Catherin Neilan, "Yanis Varoufakis to Matteo Renzi: Europe bullied and blackmailed Alexis Tsipras, but you still haven't got rid of me," *CityAM*, September 22, 2015, <https://www.cityam.com/yanis-varoufakis-matteo-renzi-you-didnt-get-rid-me-im-alive-and-kicking/>;

"Greek Syriza official says lenders' proposals 'blackmail,'" *Reuters*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/euro-zone-greece-idUSA8N0Z300S20150625>;

Mavroudeas and Paitaridis, "Mainstream accounts of the Greek Crisis," 14, 27;

"By May 2010 he [George Papandreou] was forced to accept an austerity program as the price of a massive loan to avert the collapse of the Greek banking system, which was deeply invested in the unpayable debts of the Greek state...With that loan, power over economic policy passed to a committee of creditor institutions—the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund—the infamous troika. Austerity, in turn, was supposed to make it more probable that the Greek state would be able to service its new and old debts." James Kenneth Galbraith, *Welcome to the Poisoned Chalice: The Destruction of Greece and the Future of Europe* (Michigan: Yales University Press, 2016), 4-5.

[26] Bill Dunn, *The Political Economy of Global Capitalism and Crisis* (London: Routledge, 2014), 148.

[27] Jonas Čeika, *How To Philosophize with a Hammer and Sickle: Nietzsche and Marx for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Repeater

mountains of public debt rapidly and inevitably accumulated beneath the Greek economy. This was further exacerbated by the fraudulent manipulation of Greece's economic data.<sup>[21]</sup> Such irrational agents or behaviours, from the standpoint of orthodox economics, interfere with the inherent pursuit of economic growth in capitalism and are ipso facto the primary perpetrators of any economic crises.

The combination of both the first two arguments implies that the crisis was a "local" problem exclusive to the Greek economy and not due to "exogenous forces".<sup>[22]</sup> Mainstream analyses of the crisis conclude that the 2007-8 financial crisis had nothing to do with the Greek crisis.<sup>[23]</sup> In fact, this view is expounded in the reports by the triumvirate of the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and the European Union.<sup>[24]</sup> To aggravate the situation, the troika then "blackmailed" Greece into achieving the largest loan in history under the condition that it undergoes austerity — the reduction of income and increased taxations.<sup>[25]</sup> Their erroneous logic was that austerity will supposedly extricate Greece out of their mountains of debts.<sup>[26]</sup>

It is here that Marxian theory comes to light. As Jonas Čeika puts it, the strength of Marx's analysis is not simply that it can explain "everything within the capitalist mode of production, that bourgeois economists overlook and ignore, but also why [they] overlook and ignore it in the first place".<sup>[27]</sup> In contrast to orthodox economics, Marx repeatedly stressed that crises are inherent to the capitalist mode of production.<sup>[28]</sup>

As Marx writes in volume three of *Capital*: "The true barrier to capitalist production is capital itself".<sup>[29]</sup> This formula is to be supplemented with a passage from the *Grundrisse* wherein Marx states that capital overcomes its own obstacle by reappropriating it as a means to its self-expansion.<sup>[30]</sup> Or as Slavoj Žižek elucidates, the very obstacle to capital is precisely what drives capitalism into permanent development: "the more [capitalism's] immanent contradiction is aggravated, the more it must revo-

lutionize itself to survive".<sup>[31]</sup> In other words, the recurring crises in capitalism are an "internalised" necessity to its very self-expansion and as such, are precisely the "normal" state of capitalism.<sup>[32]</sup> There is therefore no "harmony" in capitalism, for if this internal contradiction were to be truly resolved, capitalism would then cease to exist.

The constitutive limit to capital is exemplified in the Marxian objection to the doctrine of market equilibrium. "Nothing could be more foolish", Marx writes, "than the dogma that because every sale is a purchase, and [vice-versa], ...necessarily implies an equilibrium between sales and purchases".<sup>[33]</sup> The reason: money itself. Marx illustrates how money serves as a means of circulation in the form of C-M-C.<sup>[34]</sup> Money, Marx argues, must constantly circulate, as "No one can sell unless someone else purchases. But no one directly needs to purchase because he has just sold".<sup>[35]</sup> The aforementioned formula would be advanced in great detail in Marx's second volume of *Capital*: the money circuit of capital.<sup>[36]</sup> Expressed as M—C (MP, LP) ...P...C'—M' the money circuit of capital depicts a class conflict between the capitalists and workers within C (commodity inputs), between MP (means of production) and LP (labour-power) respectively.<sup>[37]</sup> P stands for productive capital whilst C' represents commodities containing surplus-value. The circuit ends with the sale of commodities that are of higher price than its initial money capital (M).

For Marx, an economic crisis mainly arises from a glut in any of the individual circuits of capital.<sup>[38]</sup> A stoppage in the circuit of C'-M', for example, would result in what Marx termed the crisis of overproduction.<sup>[39]</sup> An overproduction (recession in neoclassical theory) occurs when there is a widespread excess in commodity supply due to a disproportionality in the production sphere, or inability for consumers to spend their money.<sup>[40]</sup> Thus, the production sphere—the exploitation of labour power—is linked to the sphere of exchange in Marxian economics; neoclassical economics, in contrast, is only limited to the latter.<sup>[41]</sup> What Marx objects to is not the theory of supply and demand, but rather the

Books, 2021), 12.

[28] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* (London: Penguin Group, 1973), 414-415.

[29] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 3: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Group, 1981), 358.

[30] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 410.

[31] Marx, *Capital Volume 3*, 358;

Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 53-54.

[32] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), xv;

See also: "the point of Marx is that [the self-] movement [of capital] never catches up with itself, that it never recovers its credit, that its resolution is postponed forever, that the crisis is its innermost constituent... which is why the movement is one of the "spurious infinity," forever reproducing itself," Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 51-53;

"Capitalism can always escape into the future precisely because it harbours permanent and inherent contradiction [between forces of production and relations of productions]," writes Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han in *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* (London: Verso, 2017), 11;

Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End?* (London: Verso Books 2016), 57.

[33] Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 208.

[34] *Ibid.*, 200.

[35] *Ibid.*, 208-209.

[36] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 2: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Group, 1978), 132.

[37] Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho, *Marx's 'Capital' - Sixth Edition* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 47

[38] Fine and Saad-Filho, *Marx's 'Capital'*, 80.

[39] Marx, *Capital Volume 3*, 364.

[40] Fine and Saad-Filho, *Marx's 'Capital'*, 81.

[41] *Ibid.*, 47.

bourgeois economic theory's inability to foresee the inherent contradictions (realised as crises) of capital itself.

The internal contradiction of capital reaches its sharpest point in the "most superficial and fetishized" form of money: interest-bearing capital.<sup>[42]</sup> Specifically, it is the moment when capital as such becomes a commodity. Therein lies the rise of the public credit system, in other words, the development of fictitious capital in the form of national debt which "has given rise to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy".<sup>[43]</sup> In fact, Marx had already anticipated how the state's creditors would create "easily negotiable" public bonds to earn profit at the expense of the oblivious masses, a process which strikingly parallels the widening of bond yield spreads and the increase in the cost of credit default swaps by international markets as creditors invest in Greece's false economic prospects.<sup>[44]</sup> The reason is that the Greek government was compelled to falsify its debt statistics nolens volens. Or perhaps, they were compelled by the forces of capital—or as Byung-Chul Han put it, "Today, the Dictatorship of Capital rules over everyone."<sup>[45]</sup>

It is for this reason that Marx did not fault the wickedness and irresponsibility of capitalists, for "the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him".<sup>[46]</sup> Capitalism, as it were, reproduces itself by "borrowing from the future". Thus debts are fetishised illusions that can never be paid back.<sup>[47]</sup> This explains the tragedy of the Syriza Greek government, which was brought to power in 2015 after 61% of the Greek referendum voted "no" to austerity.<sup>[48]</sup> The opposite, however, happened the morning after as Syriza carried on with an even harsher EU austerity program.<sup>[49]</sup> Before the tragedy, Yanis Varoufakis, the Greek finance minister at the time, had negotiated a rational pragmatic proposal to allow Greece to repay its debts on time but it was brutally rejected.<sup>[50]</sup> Why? From a Marxian standpoint, it is because it would undermine the hitherto logic of financial capital of (European) capitalism — primarily that of Germany.<sup>[51]</sup> This is the dictatorship of capital par excellence.

Finally, Marx's analysis of the credit system allows us to refute the argument that the debt crisis and the GFC are not independent of one another, as it explains why bourgeois economic theory has led to four decades of market deregulation and "desupervision" in the financial sector of the United States.<sup>[52]</sup> Although entirely consistent with neoclassical theory, the result was the notorious 2007-8 crisis: the collapse of the American mortgage market.<sup>[53]</sup> Thereby, Greek and other European bankers were pressured to "dump risk—in the form of peripheral country debts whether public or private—and turn to their national governments for help".<sup>[54]</sup> Hence within the Marxian framework, the "cycle of euphoria and panic made possible by the credit system" comes as no surprise.<sup>[55]</sup> The Greek crisis was therefore not only caused by an overaccumulation of public debt, but also by the prior systemic contradictions within the capitalist system that are epitomised in the 2007-8 financial crisis.

In conclusion, the market is not as harmonious as neo-classical economists would have it. Nor should economic crises be a shocking revelation, as they are constitutively necessary to the capitalist mode of production. The bourgeois economic ideology of equilibrium implies that there can be no possibility of a general crisis in capitalism. This explains the tendency for mainstream analyses of both the Greek and global financial crisis to incriminate irrational agents as its primary cause. Such an economic perspective allows people to project their frustrations and prejudices onto others—caused by the structural antagonisms of capitalism—which in turn, engenders even more disunity, dissension and fragmentation. As Walter Benjamin presents, economic crises and turmoil breed the perfect conditions for dictatorship and fascism to capitalise upon these divisions. A Marxist economics perspective, I believe, will help avoid this fate. We can start by acknowledging the immanent contradiction within money itself: a glut in the money circuit of capital leads to crises of overproduction or economic recession. This is exemplified in the aftermath of the Greek crisis, which saw high

[42] Marx, *Capital Volume 3*, 515;

David Harvey, *Marx, Capital and the Madness of Economic Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 64.

[43] Marx, *Capital Volume 3*, 596;

Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 919.

[44] Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 919;

Alex Callinicos, *Deciphering Capital: Marx's Capital and its destiny* (London: Bookmarks Publications, 2014), 280-281;

Stavros Mavroudeas, "Introduction," in *Greek Capitalism in Crisis: Marxist analyses*, ed. Stavros Mavroudeas (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 1;

Varoufakis, *The Weak Must Suffer What They Must?*, 157;

Though not a Marxist, this perfectly describes what Sloterdijk calls the paradox of the "World Interior of Capital" in which the first-world nations benefit and are protected from the self-enclosed cupola of capital, thereby forcing the rest of the world to suffer from class antagonisms, Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: For a Philosophical Theory of Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 195-197.

[45] "In our world, we no longer work in order to satisfy our own needs. Instead, we work for Capital. Capital generates needs of its own; mistakenly, we perceive these needs as if they belonged to us. Capital therefore represents a new kind of transcendence, which entails a new form of subjectivation. We are being expelled from the sphere of lived immanence – where life relates to life instead of subjugating itself to external ends." Han, *Psychopolitics*, 12-13.

[46] Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 381.

[47] Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, xv.

[48] Nektaria Stamouli and Stelios Bouras, "In Rebuke to Europe, Greeks Vote Resounding 'No' to Bailout Terms: Outcome sets Athens up for further clash with European creditors and uncertain future in eurozone," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/polls-close-in-greek-referendum-1436113280>.

[49] Megan McArdle, "Greek deal: Tsipras agreed a deal worse than proposals Greeks said no to," *Irish Examiner*, July 14, 2015, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-20342320.html>.

[50] Slavoj Žižek, *The Courage of Hopelessness: Chronicles of a Year of Acting Dangerously* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), 56; Varoufakis, *The Weak Must Suffer What They Must?*, 250-257.

[51] Slavoj Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Melville House, 2015), 32-35, 114;

Slavoj Žižek, "Fictitious Capital and the Return of Personal Domination," *The Philosophical Salon*, June 19, 2017, [https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/fictitious-capital-and-the-return-of-personal-domination/#\\_ednref1](https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/fictitious-capital-and-the-return-of-personal-domination/#_ednref1);

The following is a lengthy but nonetheless succinct and digestible extract of Alex Callinicos' speech in his debate with Stathis Kouvelakis about the Greek crisis: "The second lesson [of the Greek crisis] is about capitalism, because a lot of the commentary says that the rulers of the European Union are being irrational i.e., these people are crazy, they haven't read Keynes, they don't understand about the levels of debt



and things like that. This is a mistake. The rulers of the European Union are operating according to the logic of capital. What is this about? What is austerity about? It's ensuring that the economic model of the dominant capitalism in Europe—German capitalism, an economy that is built on high levels of export, keeping inflation low, the central banks steering the economy in a way that maintains high levels of exports—it's about ensuring that nothing happens to undermine that model. That's why they're fighting so hard. This isn't about nastiness or economic illiteracy or anything about. And the fact that the conflict is so brutal and so harsh reflects the brutality of the kind of competition that is going on on a world scale. We are in a historical period where capitalism is struggling with huge problems. I mean remember those idiots who said that China would save world capitalism? Look at the Chinese stock market at the minute. Capitalism is struggling with enormous problems. Each bit of the system is fighting to maintain its position against the others, and who is paying for it? The working class. And what the rulers of the European Union are trying to do is to ensure the people who pay most are the weaker and less organised sections of the working class in Europe. We'll see whether it works." Stathis Kouvelakis and Alex Callinicos, "Debate: Syriza in power: wither Greece?," *Marxism 2015*, July 11, 2015, 26:09-29:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1paxMRddOoM>.

[52] Galbraith, *Welcome to the Poisoned Chalice*, 3.

[53] Varoufakis, "Taking the Red or Blue Pill?," 71.

[54] Galbraith, *Welcome to the Poisoned Chalice*, 3.

[55] Callinicos, *Deciphering Capital*, 282.

unemployment and deep recession. The contradiction then sharpens in the money form of interest-bearing capital which lead to the capitalisation of wealth via national debts. This explains why the Greek politicians had falsified their statistics under the influence of the financial deregulation of the West. Only the acknowledgement of the structural necessities of crises in the self-expansion of capital can help one finally grasp the lesson of Aesop's fable. The only problem is: when will this happen?

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# ABORTION ACCESS IN MALAYSIA: A WORLD APART FROM ROE V WADE

[ words MUN LEE ]

[ editors  
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The landmark ruling of *Roe v Wade*, by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1973, enshrined the constitutional right for individuals to obtain abortions.<sup>[1]</sup> Recently, however, *Roe v Wade* was overturned by the same court, restricting abortion access for 33.6 million people in US states that opt to ban or severely restrict abortion.<sup>[2]</sup> While abortion issues are often highlighted by feminist activists in western democracies, they often fly under the radar for observers of Southeast Asian countries. This is especially the case in Malaysia, which raises the question of its status of abortion rights and access.

## ABORTION IS GOVERNED BY MALAYSIA'S RESTRICTIVE PENAL CODE

Abortion in Malaysia is primarily governed by Section 312 of the country's Penal Code, which states that abortion is illegal in all circumstances EXCEPT where the abortion can save the person's life or preserve their physical or mental health.<sup>[3]</sup> Although not mentioned in the Penal Code, the Ministry of Health has specified these exceptional abortions can take place up to 22 weeks of gestation.<sup>[4]</sup> But Muslims, who are subject to Sharia Law, have a reduced gestation period of up to 120 days (approx. 17 weeks).<sup>[5]</sup> Moreover, Malaysia's laws do not make exceptions according to the special circumstances of conception or pregnancy, such as rape, incest, or foetal impairment.<sup>[3]</sup> This is despite the fact that many of Malaysia's neighbours allow abortion based on some or all of these special circumstances, including Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.<sup>[6]</sup> More importantly, by now it is common knowledge that restricting abortions does not stop them from happening, or even reduce their occurrence.<sup>[7]</sup> Instead, such bans force those seeking abortions to turn to unsafe methods, often referred to as 'back alley' or 'coat-hanger' abortions.<sup>[8]</sup> It is essential for the Malaysian government to reevaluate and reconcile the current abortion laws to address the inconsistencies between the gestational limits set by Sharia Law and civil law. Additionally, expanding abortion rights to encompass special circumstances and further considerations is a crucial step for Malaysia to keep pace with advancements made by neighbouring countries in the region.

[1] *Roe v Wade* 410 US 113 (1973). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/410/113/>

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### ABORTION LAWS ARE OFTEN UNCLEAR LEADING TO WIDESPREAD UNCERTAINTY

Many unanswered questions, such as the ambiguities in abortion law and related guidelines, remain in Malaysia and healthcare professionals continue to struggle with confusion about the legal status of abortion. In fact, a report by the Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia has found that, out of 120 doctors and nurses surveyed, 43% are unclear about the legality of abortion. Inaccuracies surrounding the legality of abortion were also found in some government and NGO publications.<sup>[9]</sup> Furthermore, the availability of abortion services in government hospitals are dictated by the 'views' of the Heads of the various Obstetrics and Gynaecological Departments, which further worsen abortion access.<sup>[9]</sup> For example, although abortion is permitted for the preservation of mental health, what qualifies as harm to a person's mental wellbeing is not clearly defined by the Penal Code.<sup>[3]</sup> The lack of objective guidelines on mental health allows doctors to decline abortions based on their personal views.<sup>[10]</sup> Confusion is further exacerbated by the fact that discussions around sex education, unplanned pregnancies, and safe sex practices are widely stigmatised in Malaysia, contributing to more unsafe abortions.<sup>[11]</sup> Clearly defining what constitutes harm to mental health must be part of the Malaysian government's review of the Penal Code. This will enforce objectivity among abortion providers. Moreover, urgent efforts must be made to educate healthcare professionals on the specific legality of abortion, and better sex-ed in schools to reduce unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

### PRIVATE PROVIDERS ARE MORE INCLINED TO PROVIDE ABORTION SERVICES THAN PUBLIC PROVIDERS

Because public health care professionals are able to decline abortion services based on personal values, those seeking abortions are often redirected to private providers.<sup>[10]</sup> While private providers are more willing to accept them, their services come

**"Not only does the legislation fall behind that of neighbouring countries, but a lack of clarity and decisive regulation of abortion access in the public sector is putting millions of women/pregnant people at unnecessary risk."**

with a much heftier price tag. Furthermore, the availability of abortion services in government hospitals are dictated by the 'views' of the Obstetrics and Gynaecological Departments Heads, which further worsen abortion access.<sup>[9]</sup> Most people are forced to undergo the lengthy process of going from hospital to hospital until they find a willing public provider, or resort to a private provider, which can charge up to RM 4,500 (approx. AUD 1500) for termination in later pregnancy stages.<sup>[12]</sup> This puts marginalised communities at a disadvantage, making abortion services inaccessible to most migrant workers and people from low socio-economical backgrounds.<sup>[10]</sup> Individuals who are unable to pay for private abortions are compelled to continue their pregnancy without adequate financial support from the government, despite the fact that this support is made scarce by the same government that limits their access to abortion.<sup>[10]</sup> This highlights the pressing need for impartial regulation of abortions and government subsidies for those who cannot afford the service in Malaysia.

### CONCLUSION

America's recent repeal of *Roe v Wade* was a dangerous reminder of the importance of progress on reproductive rights. The Penal Code governing abortion rights in Malaysia is woefully under par in protecting abortion access. Not only does the legislation fall behind that of neighbouring countries, but a lack of clarity and decisive regulation of abortion access in the public sector is putting millions of pregnant people at unnecessary risk. These issues can be remedied, such as through the implementation of robust legislation that clearly and objectively addresses abortion rights and access, and explicit guidelines for public healthcare professionals in their execution of abortion services. Ultimately, legislation like Malaysia's disregards the fact that abortion is not a criminal issue but a health issue; the core issue with Malaysia's Penal Code is that it approaches abortion as the pregnant person's crime, and not what it has been and always will be — the pregnant person's health.

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*Pronoms.*

Je, moi,	<i>jo.</i>	Nous,	<i>no.</i>
Tu, toi,	<i>to.</i>	Vous,	<i>vo.</i>
Il, elle, le, lui,	<i>lo.</i>	Ils, eux, elles,	<i>zo.</i>
Notre, nôtres,	<i>noti.</i>	Votre, vôtres,	<i>voti.</i>
Soi, eux-mêmes,	<i>so.</i>	Ce, ces,	<i>soli.</i>
Ceci, cela,	<i>sola.</i>	Ces choses-là,	<i>solas.</i>
Qui, quel, quels,	<i>ki, qui.</i>	Mon, ma, mes, mien,	<i>me.</i>
Ton, ta, tes, tien,	<i>te.</i>	Son, sa, ses, sien,	<i>se.</i>

the

Modifications,	Number,	Classes,	Singular, Plural.	Methods of forming the Plural,	Regular, Irregular, Foreign,	Latin, Greek, French	
		Gender,	Classes,		Masculine, Feminine. Common, Neuter.	Formation of Feminine,	By another word, By change of termination, By prefix.
	Person,	Classes,	1st, 2d, 3d.	Case,	—Outline extended on next page.		
	Form of Parsing,	Species, Class, (Sub-class,) Person, Number, Gender, Case, Construction, Rule.					

# GENDERED

Singular,  
Plural,  
forming the Plural,  
Regular,  
Irregular,  
Foreign,  
Masculine, Feminine,  
Common, Neuter,  
By another word,  
By change of termination,  
By prefix.

1st,  
2d,  
3d.  
ended on next page.  
(Sub-class,) Person, Number, Gender,  
ion, Rule.

*Pronoms.*

<i>no.</i>	Nous,
<i>vo.</i>	Vous,
<i>zo.</i>	Ils, eux, elles,
<i>voti.</i>	Votre, vôtres,
<i>soli.</i>	Ce, ces,
<i>solas.</i>	Ces choses-là,
	Mon, ma, mes, mien, <i>me.</i>
	Son, sa, ses, sien, <i>se.</i>

*Pronoms.*

<i>jo.</i>	Je, moi,
<i>to.</i>	Tu, toi,
<i>lo.</i>	Il, elle, le, lui,
<i>noti.</i>	Notre, nôtres,
<i>so.</i>	Soi, eux-mêmes,
<i>sola.</i>	Ceci, cela,
<i>ki, qui.</i>	Qui, quel, quels, <i>ki, qui.</i>
<i>te.</i>	Ton, ta, tes, tien, <i>te.</i>

Number, Classes, Singular, Plural,  
Person, Classes, 1st, 2d, 3d, —Outline extended  
Gender, Classes, Masculine, Common,  
Formation of F  
Methods of form  
Classes, Plural, Singular

ifications,

of Parsing, Species, Class, (Sub-

# FRANCE VS FRENCH: THE DILEMMA WITH 'IEL'

[ words JULES VAHL ]

[ editors  
GENEVIEVE PETERS,  
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"What happens when evolving social values collide with a nation's linguistic structure?"

I was sitting at Hammersmith tube station, reminiscing about Euphoria, which I had watched during a post-exams Netflix binge. Nostalgia blended with eagerness for an upcoming trip to Paris, and my thoughts proceeded along these lines. Jules from Euphoria, a trans woman and a very interesting character, has an androgynous name of French origin. How would Jules, and other non-cisgender people, express their identity in French?

And so, the subject of this article: how does the French language accommodate people who identify as non-binary? I did some digging on this, and it turns out the French themselves don't really know. That was until a French Dictionary, Le Petit Robert, formally recognised 'iel' as a non-binary pronoun.<sup>[1]</sup> 'Iel' is a combination of 'il' (he) and 'elle' (she) and equates to 'they' in English. The decision to recognise 'iel' caused enormous controversy in France.<sup>[2]</sup> French MP François Jolivet described the inclusion as a symptom of #woke-ism<sup>[3]</sup> and asked the Académie Française<sup>[4]</sup> (the official council which regulates the use and development of French) to comment on the issue. Earlier this year, the conservative Académie decided that 'iel' "made no sense"<sup>[5]</sup> and was included by Le Petit Robert as a publicity stunt.<sup>[6]</sup> Even within the French LGBTQ+ community, whether 'iel' has a place in their language is a contentious topic.<sup>[7]</sup>

But why is the concept of a French non-binary pronoun so controversial? How could it possibly offend French values and beliefs? Why is there such a contrast between the French language and the context it operates in? And what can French learn from ancient and other languages in order to solve their non-binary problem?

To understand this linguistic controversy, we've got to go back to basics.

## FRENCH 101

French has nine pronouns:

FRENCH	ENGLISH	FRENCH	ENGLISH
<i>je</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>we</i>
<i>tu</i>	<i>you (singular)</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>you (plural)</i>
<i>Il/elle/on</i>	<i>he/she/one</i>	<i>ils/elles</i>	<i>they (masculine)/ they (feminine)</i>

[1] "iel" definition, Le Robert Dico en Ligne, 2022, <https://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/iel>.

[2] Florence Villemot, "A big fuss over a little word? New French pronoun 'iel' sparks debate", *France 24*, December 2, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/french-connections/20211202-a-big-fuss-over-a-little-word-new-french-pronoun-iel-sparks-debate>.

[3] Josephine Joly, French dictionary accused of 'wokeism' over gender-neutral pronoun 'iel', *Euro News*, November 19, 2021, <https://www.euronews.com/2021/11/18/french-dictionary-accused-of-wokeism-over-gender-neutral-pronoun-iel>.

[4] Académie Française, *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acad%C3%A9mie...Fran%C3%A7aise>.

[5] Divine Posadinu, Pour l'Académie française, le pronom iel "n'a aucun sens" et relève d'un "coup de pub", *NEON*, February 5, 2022, <https://www.neonmag.fr/pour-lacademie-francaise-le-pronom-iel-na-aucun-sens-et-releve-dun-coup-de-pub-558072.html>.

[6] Posadinu, Pour l'Académie française, le pronom iel "n'a aucun sens" et relève d'un "coup de pub"

[7] Albin Wagener, "No need to 'iel':

why France is so angry about a gender-neutral pronoun", *The Conversation*, December 9, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/no-need-to-iel-why-france-is-so-angry-about-a-gender-neutral-pronoun-173304>.

[8] polýMATHY, What's the Point of Grammatical Gender? [Youtube], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AnG3t-bwllw>.

[9] Divine Posadinu, "Pour l'Académie française, le pronom iel 'n'a aucun sens' et relève d'un 'coup de pub'", *Neon*, March 23 2022, accessed <https://www.neonmag.fr/pour-lacademie-francaise-le-pronom-iel-na-aucun-sens-et-releve-dun-coup-de-pub-558072.html>

So far, so good. However, French differs from English when these pronouns appear in a sentence. Compare the following examples:

FRENCH	ENGLISH
<i>il est content</i>	<i>He is happy</i>
<i>elle est contente</i>	<i>She is happy</i>

In English, the gender of the happy person does not change how the word "happy" looks. However, French adds an **-e** to the end of the adjective *content* to show that the happy person is a woman. Linguists call this phenomenon "agreement" between the gender of the noun and the adjective. One might argue that, in this context, agreement is not really necessary: since 'elle' is the feminine pronoun, we already know that the happy person is a woman. Why is there a need for the adjective *content* to look different?

This is a difficult question. French inherited gender agreement from Latin, and while it's useful for deciphering some complex sentences<sup>[8]</sup> and creating linguistic shorthands, many languages function without it. The simpler (but less scholarly) answer is that French, and many other European languages, have always been preoccupied with gender. That's just the way it is. Desk is masculine (*le bureau*), drink is feminine (*la boisson*), rock is feminine (*la pierre*), you get the gist. Gender is important when putting a sentence in the past tense, speaking to someone directly, and especially when taking a grammar test. Saying or writing *elle est content*, rather than *contente*, is just bad French.

Gender is important, or even crucial, to the essence of the French language. French's reliance on gender for structure and identity can be seen as a barrier to treating non-binary people with sensitivity and respect. It also makes it complicated for non-binary people to express their identity.

This is where the issue with 'iel' rears its head. From a purely linguistic perspective, the Académie Française is right to say that 'iel' "makes no sense."<sup>[9]</sup> Since it is neither masculine nor feminine, it is grammatically incorrect to say both 'iel est **content**' and 'iel est **contente**.' Moreover,

choosing a masculine or feminine adjective ending to describe a non-binary person might be socially insensitive, because it clearly connects them to one of the binary genders.

There is also the problem of non-binary people identifying themselves. Should they use masculine adjective endings, or feminine adjective endings? According to non-binary Francophones on Reddit,<sup>[10]</sup> there are a few workarounds. In written French, some non-binary people may choose to include both masculine and feminine endings, separated by punctuation: for example, *je suis content\*e*. This style belongs to the French social movement of "inclusive writing" (*l'écriture inclusive*), which has become increasingly common in progressive, feminist and queer circles.<sup>[11]</sup> The goal of inclusive writing is to de-masculinise French by including all possible noun and adjective endings, in defiance of the "default" masculine ending. Inclusive writing is also incredibly controversial, with Académie Française member Sir Michael Edwards saying that it "disfigures the beauty of French."<sup>[12]</sup>

Alternatively, non-binary people might use a new adjective ending which is neither the standard masculine nor feminine ending. However, this runs the risk of being considered grammatically "incorrect" if it is used without explanation. More commonly, a non-binary person will identify themselves with the endings that they are used to, which normally correspond to their gender assigned at birth, or the gender closest to their presenting gender. Although some might see this as problematic, there aren't really any other solutions. The non-binary French community agreed that asking someone's personal preference is the most important first step.

Ironically, if French stuck to its Latin roots, there might have been a solution. In Latin, there is a third gender called the neuter. Neuter nouns are neither masculine nor feminine, and have their own special endings. They tend to be inanimate objects or abstract concepts: eg. rock (*saxum*), war (*bellum*), shore (*litus*) etc. Over time, the neuter has dropped out of most European languages,<sup>[13]</sup> but it still exists in German, Romanian and some Eastern European languages like Russian. Non-binary people who speak these languages could choose to identify themselves using neuter endings. You might argue that this is somewhat dehumanising,

[10] Keakealani, Reddit, 2018, accessed at [https://www.reddit.com/r/learnfrench/comments/ckfowo/how\\_do\\_i\\_talk\\_about\\_nonbinary\\_people\\_in\\_french/](https://www.reddit.com/r/learnfrench/comments/ckfowo/how_do_i_talk_about_nonbinary_people_in_french/)

[11] Liv Rowland, "France's 'Inclusive Writing': Have you Spotted Examples like Ami.e.s?," *The Connexion*, June 17 2021 accessed <https://www.connexionfrance.com/article/Mag/Language/France-s-inclusive-writing-Have-you-spotted-examples-like-ami.e.s>

[12] Rowland, "France's 'Inclusive Writing': Have you Spotted Examples like Ami.e.s?,"

[13] "The Decline and Fall of the Latin Neuter," Danny L. Bate, accessed 2022 <https://dannybate.com/2021/03/15/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-latin-neuter/>.

[14] GPB, "Neologisms and Portmanteau Words," GPB, accessed 2022 <https://www.gpb.eu/2022/02/neologisms-new-words.html>.

[15] GPB, "Neologisms and Portmanteau Words," GPB

[16] Aliénore Manteau, "The Factory of Words," *Harvard Political Review*, 2020.

[17] B92, "France bans English words in bid to 'protect language'" B92, January 31 2019, accessed <https://www.b92.net/eng/news/world.php?yyyy=2013&m-m=01&dd=31&nav...id=84444>

given that neuter nouns tend to be objects, but this is not always true. For example, in both German and Ancient Greek, the word for "child" is neuter (*das Kind*, Τὸ τέκνον).

Unfortunately, French does not have a neuter, and so the country finds itself in a dilemma. What happens when evolving social values collide with a nation's linguistic structure?

In Australia at least, the language and values usually develop in alignment with the context. Thanks to its flexibility and mutability, English is perfect for this. Take, for example, all the neologisms<sup>[14]</sup> that developed out of the social context of COVID: covidsafe, anti-vaxxer, covidiot, super-spreader, covid bubble, and, my favourite, Zoom bombing – when your Zoom meeting is disrupted by an uninvited user. All of these phrases appeared in reputable newspapers.<sup>[15]</sup> They grew out of our human need to describe what the hell was happening to the world, and so we invented new words. Naturally, English had no problem adapting to the increased representation of queer people: nowadays most people have no issue with displaying their preferred pronouns and non-binary people can use the gender neutral pronoun "they." Admittedly, English didn't have to worry about gender agreement, since it's no longer part of the language, but the point stands. English is constantly and rapidly changing as its speakers move through social movements and contexts. The speakers lead the way, and the language follows in step.

France, on the other hand, is far more resistant to changing its language. The French government has a distaste for the dominance of English as a global *lingua franca*. This is informed by a historical rivalry with, and sometimes hatred of, the Brits, which the Hundred Years War can attest to. Therefore, part of the Académie Française's job is to restrict the use of anglicisms<sup>[16]</sup> – French words that are too similar to their English counterparts – in the French language. They do this by fining newspapers and websites that use too many anglicisms, by issuing official guidelines on words, and even banning others. For example, in no official French document published after 2013 will you see the terms "Facebook," "Twitter" or "e-mail."<sup>[17]</sup> The Académie's purpose is to protect the beauty of French culture from English/American cultural dominance.

The French have every right to do this. In an increasingly English-centric world, defending their own unique culture is a noble cause. The issue with the Académie is its function as an Orwellian gatekeeper of language. Rather than French-speaking individuals leading the way, any linguistic change must be considered and ratified (often much later) by a conservative institution. A lot of cultural power sits in the Académie's hands, and, as in the case of 'iel,' they do not always permit the official language to mirror the social context of its speakers.

Unofficially, French speakers will still use 'iel.' The Académie has no power to regulate how people actually speak day-to-day French. But the Académie's linguistic conservatism creates a chasm between their romanticised ideals of French culture and what French culture actually is. Non-binary people are just one of many groups stuck in the divide.

In years to come, we will witness the French language evolve to align with social context. It was not so long ago that Middle English was the norm, and yet English has changed drastically since then: would Beowulf or Shakespeare really be able to understand texting shorthands and emojis? Linguistic narrow-mindedness is endemic in our society: in the same way that we can't imagine a new colour, we can't imagine an entirely new English language, or new French language. Nevertheless, our language has always changed with the social tides. Sooner rather than later, what may have been unimaginable could become real.

FINIS

"The goal of inclusive writing is to de-masculinise French by including all possible noun and adjective endings, in defiance of the "default" masculine ending."

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[shows/french-connections/20211202-a-big-fuss-over-a-little-word-new-french-pronoun-iel-sparks-debate](https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/french-connections/20211202-a-big-fuss-over-a-little-word-new-french-pronoun-iel-sparks-debate).

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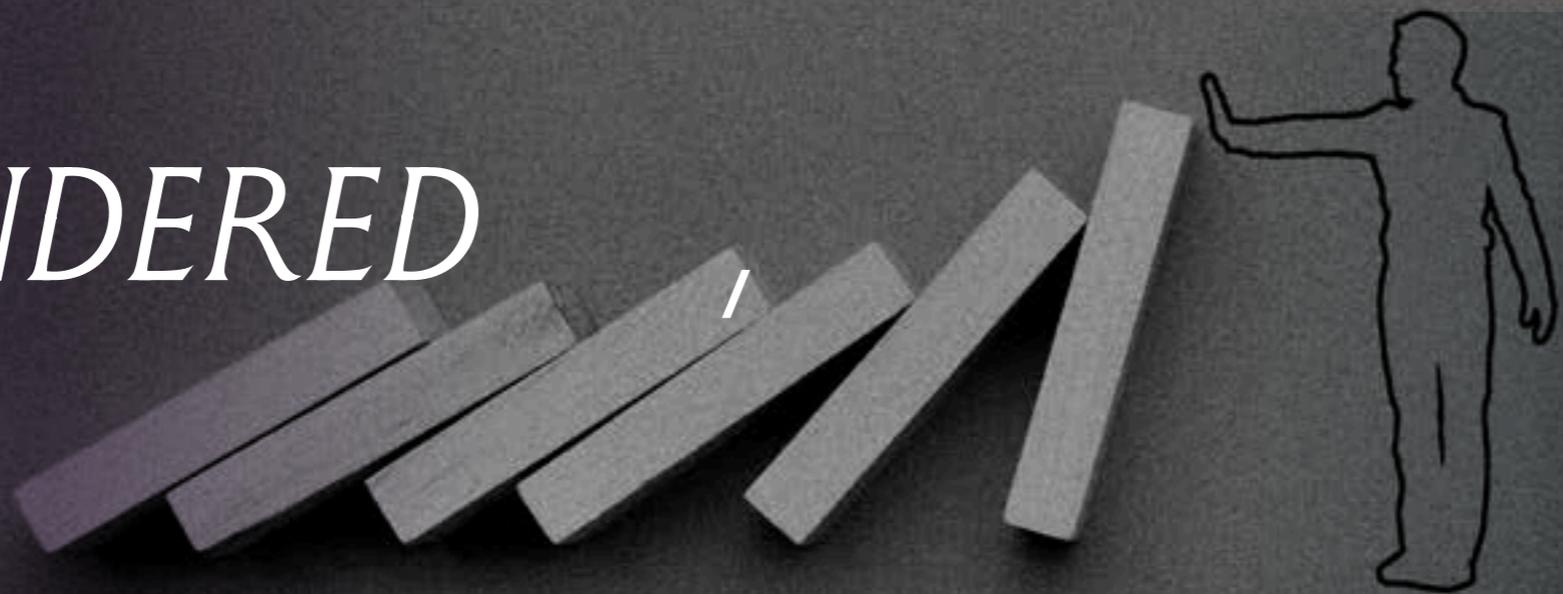
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the



*GENDERED*



*MEDIATED*

the



"Gender conflict was present in South Korea before the digital age, but now it runs rampant through online forums and social media networks."

# SOUTH KOREA'S DIGITAL GENDER WARS

[ *words* SEVANA OHANDJANIAN ]

[ *editors* JASPAR MCCAHERN-BOERSMA,  
GENEVIEVE PETERS & DR ALEXANDER HOWARD ]

An exit poll at the 2022 South Korean presidential election showed that 58% of women aged 18 to 29 years old voted in support of the progressive Democratic Party of Korea, while only 32% voted for the conservative People Power Party. However, 59% of men aged 18 to 29 years old voted for the conservative candidate and eventual winner, Yoon Seok Yeol, with less than 36% voting for the progressive party (Yoon, 2022). This unique disparity, seen only with young people, is a clear representation of the political rift developing between young Korean men and women.

Choi (2022) notes that there has been a rapid rise of misogyny not only online, but in the real world, and attributes this to the evolution of women's role in society. Most often, discussions in the gender debate have come to revolve around ideas of women's traditional roles as housewife and mother being maintained, whereas many women wish to have greater freedom in their work and personal lives.

In the digital age, the expansion of this decades-long rift can be seen in how masculinity and patriarchy manifests in online spaces, such as gendered online forums, in South Korea.

In this essay, I will explore how the visible gendering of cyberspace and the popularity of gendered online communities has led to contrasting belief systems among young Korean men and women, and reinforced the political rift between them.

## TRADITION CLASHING WITH MODERNITY

Historically, Korean society has been built on the pillars of family and national duty. Global economic downturn, coupled with Korea's neoliberal policies in the 1990s, have affected some of these traditional structures. Korean women are expected to epitomise

traits emblematic of Korean tradition, such as frugality and industriousness (Choi, 2022), developing gendered divisions of labour in the home that extend to the workplace. Take for example the 1997-98 Asian debt crisis, where Chun (2014) notes that men were given jobs fitting to the traditions of a male breadwinner, whereas women were left to take on low-paid, precarious jobs. These discriminatory practices in the home and workplace “exacerbated the marginalisation and exploitation of women under industrial capitalism” (Chun, 2014).

By contrast, one of the central factors in male hostility towards feminism in South Korea is a reaction to the national conscription policy, which only applies to men. Many men view the policy as a hindrance to planning for the future, and a waste of time (Choo, 2020). Yet in the context of the national labour market, “preferential treatment for male job seekers continues to shape the material realities of gender discrimination” (Chun, 2014).

According to Choo (2020), military conscription is the core of the feud between men and feminists, and the backlash towards feminism in South Korea. The animosity between the genders, and this hatred for feminism is most visible when looking at Korean gendered online communities.

#### MALE ANXIETIES IN MISOGYNISTIC ONLINE FORUMS

Gender conflict was present in South Korea before the digital age, but now it runs rampant through online communities and social media networks, such as the male-only *Ilbe* forums and the feminist *Megalia* website (now defunct, replaced by *Womad*). As the space in which the modern gender wars are fought, cyberspace is harshly defined by gender, with these highly popular online communities furthering this division.

These online communities are spaces where people can share political views, and enter into rich discussions regarding social and political issues, from military conscription to women’s workplace rights. As Lee (2019) notes, eventually they can grow their following by taking themselves offline, sparking social movement. For example, the men who belong to the ultra-conservative *Ilbe* community attend feminist rallies to counter-protest causes like sexual discrimination and violence (Draut, 2022).

Online misogyny is ever present in the highly gendered South Korean internet space; it “patrols and polices gender borders, and reinforces the male-dominated online atmosphere by limiting women’s presence, silencing women’s and feminist voices” (Kim, 2018). *Ilbe* is a popular members-only website that strictly prohibits female members, and is known for its right-wing politics. Its popularity is so great that it was the third most-viewed website in South Korea in 2016 (Draut, 2022). In these spaces “the blaming of Korean women works as a glue or homosocial bond among Korean men” (Jeong & Lee, 2018). These spaces are where online misogyny thrives and builds a movement that then spills over into the offline world.

Communities such as *Ilbe* also coin neologisms that can serve to stereotype and denigrate women. When these new words enter the public mainstream, the impacts on women’s rights are great. The community originated a series of derogatory terms using the suffix *-nyeo* (meaning girl, woman/bitch), which have now gone beyond the community’s forums into the general public. One such buzzword is *kimchi-nyeo*. An expletive used to describe Korean women, *kimchi-nyeo* is employed in discussing women as gold-diggers, cosmetic surgery-obsessed and sexually promiscuous. Through such terms, “young Korean men tag, label and stereotype the Korean women of their generation as a selfish, self-obsessed, and vain group” (Jeong & Lee, 2018).

These terms, along with acts such as trolling, cyberbullying and the distribution of revenge porn, reflect “crises in hegemonic masculinity and anxiety about changing gender relations” (Kim, 2018). These insecurities are projected onto Korean women who these conservative men deem to be selfish for not only not playing their role in established patriarchal societal structures, but for stepping into positions that they do not believe should be afforded to women. As Kim (2018) found, Korean men who believe young women disproportionately benefit from social policies are highly likely to sympathise with online misogynistic discourse. By collectively targeting and denigrating women in the ways described, men who frequent these forums develop a pack mentality which reinforces misogyny not only online, but also in the real world.

#### FEMINIST FORUMS AS SAFE SPACES

The internet has also been a fertile ground for the growth of feminism in the country. Since the popularisation of online communication in the 1990s in South Korea, women have carved out a space for themselves online, “based on their shared interests and to avoid the discomfort of being a woman in male-dominated communities” (Jeong & Lee, 2018). Sites like the popular feminist online community *Megalia* (now *Womad*) are spaces where women with similar values are able to meet, share feminist messaging, and develop their activism.

*Megalia* grew out of “female internet users who were aware of the highly misogynistic nature of the Korean web, where male users indulged in their ‘fun’ of ridiculing, denigrating and bullying women” (Jeong & Lee, 2018). One of the ways in which online feminists fought back against male internet users has been through the act of mirroring, wherein Megalians employed the same language used by misogynists but reversed it to spread

feminist messaging. An example of this was when users started using the term *hannamchoong* to refer to Korean men, which likens men to insects. It was a twist on the *Ilbe*-coined term *momchoong*, which implied that stay-at-home mothers were insects or parasites feeding off of society.

By parodying the writing styles of misogynistic male users on sites such as *Ilbe*, Megalians used gaming language and other popular slang to retaliate against the trolling of women. This method proved so successful that “male users at first responded... by insisting that they could not have been made by a woman” (Jeong & Lee, 2018). Unfortunately, such mockery of male misogynists has also amplified the already present hatred between the genders, further catalysing an era of gender conflict that has been fought both online and offline (Kim, 2017).

These female-dominated online communities thus became safe spaces for women, “where they could escape from gendered regulation of the form and content of their self-expression” (Jeong & Lee, 2018). Spaces like *Megalia* allowed women to shed social expectations around their traditional role in South Korean society as dependents or actors in the service of men, and to develop methods to fight back against misogyny.

#### UTILISING THE GENDER WAR POLITICALLY

Unsurprisingly, what happens on the internet does not stay just on the internet. Online communities are both real and virtual, and what occurs online can spread into the ‘real’ world. We must consider that “online identity is not separate from offline power relations; indeed, cyberspace reinforces and reproduces inequality in terms of gender” (Kim, 2018). The two worlds are intrinsically connected, and the internet is “a site where political potentials

are intensified by the strategic use of online media to amplify the significance of events” (Jeong & Lee, 2018).

The intrinsic connection of the online and offline would see the online gender conflict utilised by the 2022 presidential candidates, and be reflected in the polls and the gendered results to showcase the stark difference in views between men and women. The now-President Yoon Seok Yeol ran a campaign that purposefully appealed to anti-feminist male supporters by “gaslighting feminism as the cause of their economic woes and current gender conflict” (Kang, 2022). He was advised by his Party’s chairman Lee Jun Seok to explicitly appeal to male voters (Ko, 2022), and warned against appointing women’s rights-focused politicians to his cabinet.

In January 2022, he pledged to abolish South Korea’s Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, stating that the policy needed to shift from women’s rights to gender equality, claiming that the current ministry “treated men as criminals” (Lee, 2021). After this policy announcement, Yoon’s polling figures jumped over 6% from the week prior to overtake his progressive opposition (Draudt, 2022).

Yoon has also been vocally anti-feminist, stating that it “prevents healthy relationships between men and women”, and that it is “ill-suited for having and raising children” (Shim 2021). Such rhetoric from a government official further legitimises misogynistic online discourse.

Yoon Seok Yeol’s actions worked as he expected. By denigrating women and uplifting men, he earned greater support from a right-wing young male base who would go on to vote him into power, and caused many young women to move further to left-leaning parties.

This campaign fanned the flame of the gender war, to gain a majority vote from the male-right extreme and bring Yoon to power. The already extreme political rhetoric of gender conflict between men and women in South Korea became all the more apparent through its political exploitation in the 2022 presidential election.

In conclusion, the deepening of the political rift that has been growing for decades between young Korean men and women can be traced clearly to the ways in which hegemonic masculinity in a patriarchal society is experienced in online spaces. As gender roles are broadening in modern South Korean society, men are “experiencing a crisis of masculinity, anxiety, and... bear hostility towards feminism” (Choo, 2020). Through cyberspace and the establishment of gendered online communities, both genders have been able to create movements that exist in the online and offline realms. Through the internet, everyday misogyny has become more visible than ever before, and women’s experiences are visible to the greater public.

As a result, young Korean men and women have become two starkly contrasting communities both online and offline, and their community-bound discourses have only caused further division between the genders. Until new masculinities can be developed that include women on an equal footing, and policies catch up with women’s roles in modern society, it is unlikely that this political rift can be overcome.

“...the internet has also been a fertile ground for the growth of feminism in the country. Since the popularisation of online communication in the 1990s in South Korea, women have carved out a space for themselves online”



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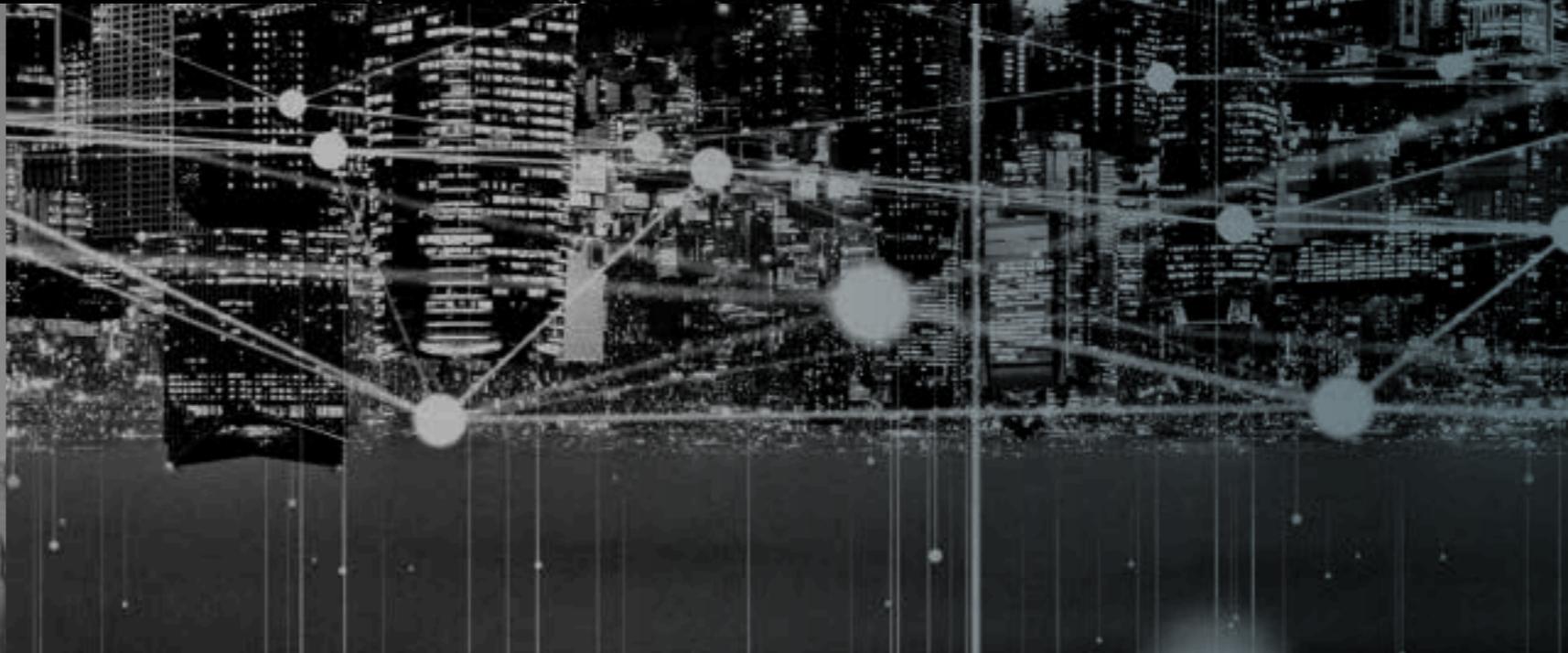
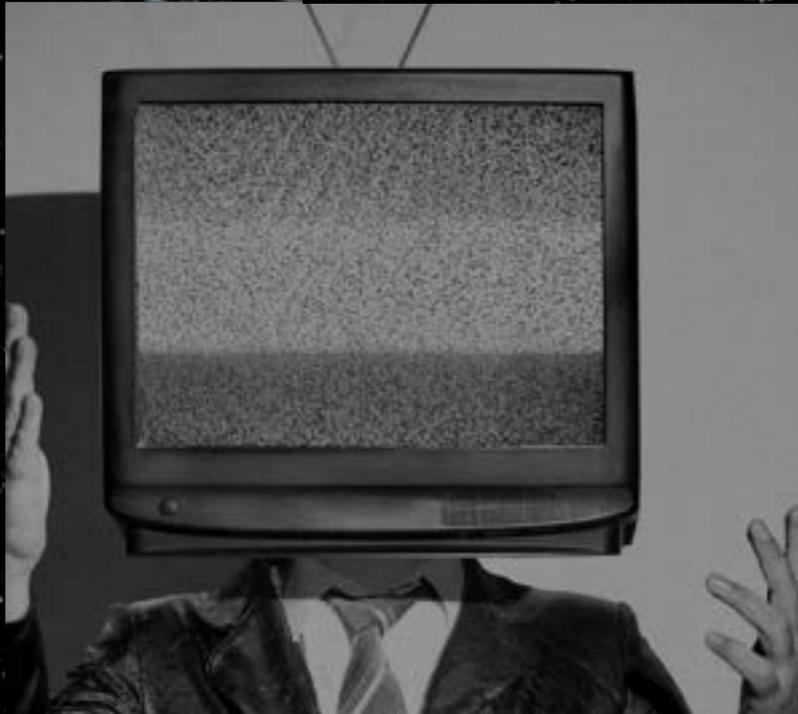
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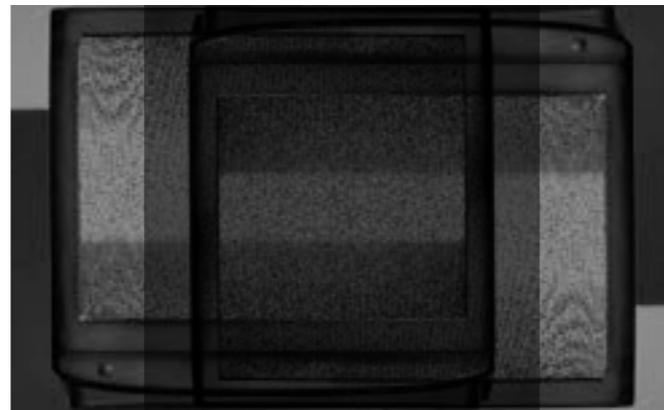


[ words BIPASHA CHAKRABORTY ]

# THE DIGITISATION OF WARFARE

[ editors ANTHONY-JAMES KANAAN, MIHIR SARDANA,  
MANON MIQUEL & ELIZABETH BLACK ]

"The participatory nature of new media forms, especially the internet, decentralised the capacity for governments to conceal and restrict wartime coverages."



From oral stories to paintings and embroideries, stories of war and conflict have always been a topic of conversation passed down through generations. However, new forms of technology introduced in the twentieth century, and developed further into the twenty-first century, have dramatically restructured forms of warfare mediation through film, television, and more recently, the internet. Silverstone (2002) defined the mediation of war through culture as the “fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life.”

The emergence of technological, mass-media forms in the twentieth century reconfigured social and public perceptions of the global environment. However, these mainstream media forms have been subject to military influence. The military’s domination of mainstream media has allowed for “its successful propaganda activities and [...] achieved an important informational victory,” (Merrin, 2018), as shown by the American-centric views of the Vietnam War and the Afghan Invasion following 9/11. Government interventions in the media limited journalistic freedoms, with war reporting by domestic media outlets restricted and disrupted (Limor & Nossek, 2006).

Despite this, government domination of media in countries such as the United States, collapsed with the development of online platforms. Images released of US soldiers torturing prisoners of war in Iraqi camps at Abu Ghraib in 2004 became a turning point in how symbols of war were mediated. The participatory nature of new media forms, especially the internet, decentralised the capacity for governments to conceal and restrict wartime coverage (Jenkins et al., 2009).

Whilst digital media itself is not a controlling force in warfare, it increases unmediated public access to the discourses of war. Social media platforms, especially Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, have become powerful tools in mediating war as they permit anyone to become an active participant and allow them to create and publicise their own opinions. Smartphone-equipped leaders are able to project their policies and thoughts on any current event directly to the public and without the intermediary traditional press, particularly seen on Twitter.

Political figures, notably former US President Donald Trump, and their direct communication with the public, dramatically impacts the mediation of war. Three days into 2020, trending tags about “World War Three” as #ww3 had spread due to Trump’s ordered drone strike on Qasem Soleimani, further fuelled by his cryptic tweets: “Iran never won a war, but never lost a negotiation!” Trump’s overt declarations of military force illustrates an intersection of government officials and internet users, both becoming participants to real-time conflicts from the privacy of their homes. These internet platforms thus permits “a convergence of the domestic environment and the battlefield by offering new ways for participation in warfare” (Asmolov, 2021). The public’s active participation in mediation is most notably recorded through memes, humorous posts usually in video, text or image format, which form as “digital artefacts of participatory culture” (Asmolov, 2021).

Participatory culture is recognised as possessing four main pillars: affiliations through online communities on platforms such as Facebook, expressions through user-created content, collaborative problem solving and the circulation of media (Jenkins et al., 2009). All four elements are visible through the lived experiences of civil war as civilians use social media to globally publicise conflict from their perspective such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Syr-

ian civil war. As a result, participative culture in warfare allows for the challenging of hegemonic western media narratives by providing their own personal alternative realities. The Syrian civil war has been described as the “most socially-mediated conflict in history” (BBC News, 2014). As the Syrian civil war gravely escalated, journalists were no longer able to safely report their findings, ergo protesters became the main source of information, turning a local civil war into a global conflict (Merrin, 2018). Similarly, Palestinians were able to inform the global community of Israeli crimes and atrocities being committed, which allowed for support to be garnered online at its peak in the summer of 2020 with the hashtag #SaveSheikh-Jarrah and condemnation of the violence inflicted by Israel despite their domination of mainstream media outlets.

Drones have become increasingly prevalent in military tactics raising questions regarding ethicality in the emerging field of digital warfare. Prominent narratives of cyberwar include relations between Russia and the United States, especially during the 2016 U.S elections of speculated interventions in democracy. Russia has been accused of creating fake American profiles and hacking into government servers, effectively enabling them to “manipulate political discourse, to exacerbate and weaken existing divisions, to polarize political beliefs, ... and create contradictory realities to undermine cohesion or reasoned debate” (Happer et al., 2018). Rather than physical military warfare, informational warfare is focused on and disseminated within discourse.

Warfare has been expanding throughout time, at first, only one domain existed, which was land, with advancements in sea fare it allowed for the second domain, water. Further advancements in aviation allowed for the third domain of air. Following this came space, most notably during the cold war. Finally, more recently, is the fifth domain of cyberspace (Seebeck, 2019). The first four

domains mentioned are physically tangible whereas cyberspace is a human-made imaginary, creating complexities for attack and defence strategies due to a lack of legal framework as an emerging field. As well as being able to mediatise wars digitally, wars can as well be digitised through media. Newer forms of warfare mediation are emerging, where war is completely digitising. Forms such as hacktivism, digital civil wars, computational propaganda, surveillance, and drones are growing in relevance and regularity.

Media, and more recently social media, have become integral to wars and conflicts due to their ability to “capture it, promote it, denounce it, deny it,” through the different mediums of “images, videos, bloopers, memes, jokes, graphics, gifs, and comments” (Merrin & Hoskins, 2020). As a result, this can “help organise, raise funds, raise awareness, accrue new recruits, direct combat operations, spread disinformation and propaganda, and rally aid and help for its victims” (Merrin & Hoskins, 2020). Boundaries between public communication and the internet are becoming obsolete, enhancing the visibility and proximity of warfare, which as a result creates a participative area of internet users through diversifying and new technological formats.

Mass media has been characterised as a “necessary pillar of democracy where the people can speak truth to power and debate issues of the day” (Kellner, 2018). However, the recent use of social media as a podium for war discourse has left companies such as Facebook struggling to create a balance between freedom of expression and the fight against propaganda and fake news as these social networking platforms had never intended for themselves to become media outlets. Questions continue to arise on whether these platforms ever envisioned themselves as actors in warfare mediation, and how they are tackling the participant-driven changes in their structures to retain neutrality.

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