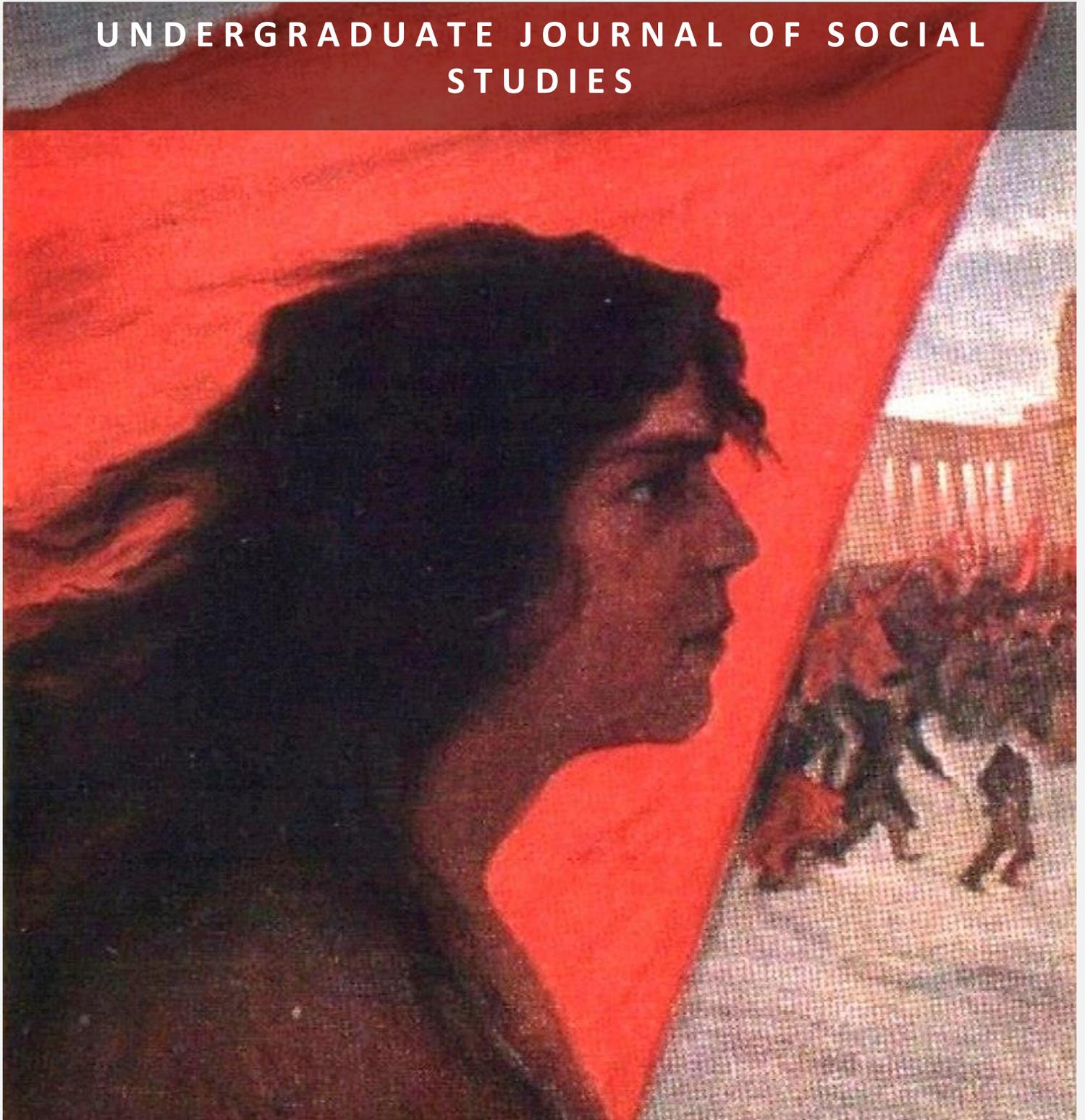


WINTER 2020

# THE FORUM

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STUDIES



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The association would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our former President Josh Lai, whose guidance and support was invaluable for releasing the second edition of *The Forum*

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## Editor's introduction

“Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.”

— **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

Change and continuity are the cornerstones of history, both in how it plays out, and how it is studied. Growing up, the world around me seemed in many ways sedentary. A period of unprecedented peace and stability marked the world, and everything seemed well within the control of humanity. Like all beliefs born out of childish innocence, this reality, once studied, presented itself as nothing more than a temporary illusion. In many ways, change has accelerated to unprecedented levels. In the past few years, we have observed a revolution in how social change is affected. With the rise of the internet, the #MeToo movement provided the world with a global sense of solidarity against sexual violence and sexual assault.<sup>1</sup> Since the Second World War, the United States has maintained hegemonic stability across the international system. But with the rise of novel powers – India and China to name the prominent ones – and the resurgence of old ones such as Russia, the world has asked, “has America’s global order come to an end, and if so, what is next?”<sup>2</sup>

Arguably the greatest challenge of our generation, climate change has come to the forefront of our concerns as we face a host of environmental challenges in food security, housing and more. As of now, sea levels are rising by 3.3 millimeters per year, intensifying a series of new challenges faced by cities and coasts all over the world.<sup>3</sup> It is the pressing needs of our planet that is encouraging rapid change across society, of which many of its components require rethinking. Put eloquently by 2019 *Time* Person of the Year Greta Thunberg, “We can’t just continue living as if there was no tomorrow, because there is a tomorrow.... That is all we are saying.”<sup>4</sup>

If the past 5 years can be known for anything, it is unprecedented *change*. It is for that reason that this year’s theme of our social sciences journal *The Forum* is dedicated to **Revolution and Change**. This year we sought to encapsulate our student’s research on different aspects of rapid transformation. With regards to this theme, students in the various fields that study human society were encouraged to submit their work for publication. We accept submissions from all U of T undergrads, writing from any field that studies human society, and publish essays with either Chicago style or APA style citations, including both variants of Chicago style. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to those authors for their work and our privilege to publish it.

Our first article is an opinion piece by Joyce Silva Desmond, who discusses modern revolution, with a focus on the #MeToo movement. We then move on to our first research essay by Sukiena Abdulla, whose structuralist explanation for the rise of the Islamic State offers new insights about the insurgency. Anastasia Volkov delves into bio-engineering in a comparative analysis of food labelling

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the “History and Vision” of the #MeToo movement can be found at: <https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history>

<sup>2</sup> This question has come up across many International Relations theories. A prominent reading on the topic: *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*. By Stephen G. Brooks, and William C. Wohlforth. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> NASA offers a dedicated page for up to date climate statistics and facts, found here: <https://climate.nasa.gov/>

<sup>4</sup> See the *TIMES* official page on Greta Thunberg: <https://time.com/person-of-the-year-2019-greta-thunberg/>

practices in the United States, Canada and Australia. Elizabeth Santamaria has focused on the social rights movement fighting for disability rights. This essay covers the origins of the movement, challenges and future goals. Finally, Jacobo Matta has presented his essay on a changing international system as China Jockeys for a place in the world as a global power, in opposition to US hegemony. We then move on to our literature review, where Aysha Ashfaq examines the human wills' effect on crisis and collapse in Station Eleven and how story telling can alter the human condition.

On behalf of the team, we offer our gratitude to the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies (HCS) at the University of Toronto Scarborough and to our chair, Natalie Rothman. The invaluable financial support of our department made printing and distribution a reality. We would also like to thank Heather Seto, program support coordinator for HCS. Heather went above and beyond to support the Historical and Cultural Studies Student Association throughout the academic year on our various projects.

I would like to thank Josh Lai, former president of the HCSSA, for his continued guidance, support and inspiration. Under his leadership in the 2018-19 academic year, the association was transformed into a dedicated and effective organization. During his tenure, we offered the students of HCS study groups, petitioned for more study spaces, communicated the needs of the students to faculty among many more accomplishments. Josh Lai was responsible for the inception and first publication of *The Forum*. As a mentor, he guided me in my role as president and for that, I am in his debt.

Congratulations are also in order for the editors of *The Forum*. Despite their academic commitments, our volunteers worked many nights to edit and mold the essays you are about to read. I reserve my final thanks to Justin Brodie. As my fellow editor-in-chief, Justin proved to be the steel frame behind the production process. His work throughout the year managing the editorial team, reviewing research and so much more is the reason why we were able to accomplish this project. His work as an editor was stellar. As a colleague and friend, one cannot ask for better.

It is with great pleasure that I now invite you, the reader, to enjoy our journal *The Forum*. I hope the articles resonate with you, and that they inspire further research in our ever-changing planet.

- Jacobo Matta Gallego

Editor-in-chief



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THE FORUM



# OPINION PIECES

# Revolutions Are Centuries in the Making: Where We Are Now

Joyce Silva Desmond

*“Fantasy. Lunacy.*

All revolutions are, until they happen, then they are historical inevitabilities.”

— **David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas***

Tarana Burke, a civil rights and human rights activist, founder of the MeToo movement, and an all-around inspirational woman was also one of the keynote speakers at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus Making HERstory Conference 2019. The conference aimed at empowering women through story and opening up a conversation about the importance of language, expression, and active listening in fighting for equity. Her movement was born through the necessity to provide an understanding network and community of and for survivors of sexual violence, in particular, black and brown women; though the scope of the movement has evolved to expose the intersectionality of experience and is now composed of survivors of diverse origins but shared experiences. In an interview with Business Insider, Tarana Burke stated that “MeToo is essentially about survivors supporting survivors. And it’s really about community healing and community action. Although we can’t define what the process of healing looks like for people, we can set the stage and give people the resources to have access to healing” (2017). The response both locally and globally has been tremendous. Survivors from all over standing up to fight for an end to sexual violence and for increased awareness and policy reform with women at the forefront. MeToo has evolved into much more than a local movement, it has reached revolutionary levels, mobilizing people across the globe and forcing change in our current social paradigms.

A revolution, as defined by Merriam Webster, is an “activity or movement designed to effect fundamental changes in the socioeconomic situation. **d**: a fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualizing something: a change of paradigm” (2019). Following the #MeToo Movement, there has been a sharp increase in the number of people reporting their sexual assault and pushing for social change in the way that we talk about sexual violence and treat survivors. In countries all around the world, there have been changes made in light of #MeToo regarding sexual violence and attitudes toward the discussion of the topic. In Pakistan, a woman named Khadija Siddiqi won her appeal after her attacker, who stabbed her 23 times for denying his advances, was acquitted. In South Korea, a lawyer named Seo Ji-hyun publicly accused her former boss senior prosecutor, Ahn Tae-geun, of sexual misconduct on national television. The courage Ji-hyun displayed inspired hundreds of other women to come forward about their experiences leading to the resignation of several high-ranking Korean men. In Egypt,

Rania Fahmy was caught on camera defending herself against an abuser which sparked support for her case. In February, she became one of the first Egyptian women to receive a court ruling in her favor on a sexual harassment case (Stone 2019). These are just a few of the many developments that have arisen on the global stage in light of the MeToo movement. Voices of survivors are finally being heard and validated.

Many of the comments in light of the rise of the MeToo Movement praised women for having the courage to finally speak up publicly about the mindless inequalities they face and the abuses that have resulted from them. However, women have been speaking up against the injustices for centuries, unfortunately, their cries have too often fallen on deaf ears. Numerous female writers and activists such as Simone de Beauvoir, bell hooks, Carol Hanisch, Sojourner Truth, and more recently, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Malala Yousefzai, and Tarana Burke, have spoken out publicly about the systemic and social inequalities women and racialized women face in contemporary society. Carol Hanisch is credited with popularizing the slogan for the Women's Rights Movement "the personal is political". This slogan raised awareness for the fact that domestic issues could, and should, also be political issues; that men cannot maltreat women and not face repercussions because they believe their wives are under their dominion. People would only fear speaking up if they have experienced or seen others be silenced and chastised for doing so. It is a collective trauma whose effects have then been used by the power structures who inflicted the damage to say that "if she didn't agree with it she would have said something".

What may be said about the revolutionary nature of the MeToo movement is that women are finally not only heard but listened to. There exists an important distinction between being heard and being listened to, in my opinion. To be listened to can be described by the saying "in one ear and out the other", whereas to be heard implies an understanding and consideration. For example, you can probably recognize thousands of songs when you're listening to the radio, however, only songs that you have truly heard, in the sense I have described, are those whose lyrics you know and whose meaning you understand. The cry of injustice from women wronged is a song that has been sung and heard for centuries and people are finally beginning to listen and understand its lyrics.

The unique thing about the nature of social media is it gives people little choice in being constantly exposed to information. Since nobody wants to be out-of-the-loop, being up to date has become "trendy". The use of hashtags on social media platforms such as Twitter to support one's cause also referred to as hashtag activism, has turned activism into a trend, which may be harmful in cases of misinformed support for a movement (Malik 2018). However, in the case of the MeToo movement, it served to bring the movement to heights never before observed. Social media and its possibilities for global outreach are in large part responsible for the overwhelming success of the MeToo Movement. Social media has earned itself a bad reputation for many reasons including the harmful spread of misinformation, however, in what concerns the propagation of this revolutionary movement, it would not have been possible without the far-

reaching influence of social media. The new age of social media has created a culture in which people feel the need to stay up to date with the newest trending hashtag. In an article on how social media supports activism Malik et al. discuss the importance multivocality plays in the success of hashtag activism. It unites and centers people around a common cause which, with enough participation, eventually gets the attention from mainstream media. The phrase “Me Too”, simple yet powerful, created a collective identity which allowed people to identify other survivors by sharing as little or as much of their story as possible; they controlled their own narrative and their narrative was understood (2018). It is important to note the evolution that the internet and media have played in historical activism. In cases such as the organization of the Zapatista movement in 1994 in the early years of the internet as well as the Seattle WTO Protests in 1999 “social media” as we know it today was pivotal in their success (Cleaver, 1998, p.629; “EL EZLN”, 2017).

In light of the MeToo movement, countries such as China and Japan who do not have many laws governing sexual harassment or assault, France, Spain, Morocco, the UK, and Australia have all passed similar bills and laws stating that sexual violence will not be tolerated and imposing measures to support them. Many changes include making it easier for survivors to seek justice when pursuing their aggressors. “Government ministers around the world have resigned in the wake of accusations, including a spokesman for the Israeli prime minister, the British defense secretary, and nine members of the U.S. Congress. [...] U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres created an overdue task force on sexual harassment to ramp up institutional responses to abuse.” (Stone 2019).

This summer, the International Labour Organization (ILO) plans to vote on the “Convention and Recommendations Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work” which will help reduce the normative gap in the workplace that allow space for unwelcome sexual behaviors to exist. Countries that ratify the treaty will have to enforce and adopt policies focused on the prevention and on addressing these behaviors which will also entail providing survivors with access to resources to ensure proper support. This is extremely important in establishing new precedents and norms of sexual misconduct mitigation on the international stage (Bettinger-Lopez 2019).

Revolutions do not happen in a vacuum as can be evidenced by the rise and spread of the historic Arab Spring Revolution. What started in Tunisia quickly became one of the most important revolutions sweeping through the Middle East. The MeToo Movement is inspired by revolutions passed and is undoubtedly going to inspire future revolutions. Recently, Alaa Saleh, a Sudanese activist whose history-worthy photo was captured by activist Lana H. Haroun, has become the identifiable face of the Sudanese Revolution that ousted former dictator Omar al Bashir after a 30-year rule\*. Women are being looked toward as a beacon of change and hope. All around the world, not only is the movement against sexual violence dominating conversations, but so is that of female empowerment. While social media and the rise of female

whistle blowers have pushed forward the movement, the future remains uncertain. However, it is exciting to see the evolution of society's attitudes toward women and the role which social media plays in activism and in history-making. Revolutions are centuries in the making, and we are constantly standing in moments of great change. A key question of any movement is whether one will become an active participant or passive witness to history in the making

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\* On the topic of Sudan, there have been many developments from when I first started writing this essay. On June 3rd the military turned against the people and brutalized peaceful protestors, with the death toll rising to around 128 people many of them being thrown into the Nile, with dozens of women raped, and tents burnt. Protesters gathered again on Sunday June 30th to continue to rally against the current oppressive rule, extremely high food prices, accessibility to fuel and shortage of bank notes, and to demand a civilian-led government. The people of Sudan are currently facing a media black-out making it difficult for updates to be shared with the outside. The death toll on Sunday June 30th is reported to be 7, with around 200 people injured. Negotiations between the military and the Forces for Declaration of Freedom and Change, who represent the protestors, are underway, However, talks have been halted until the military officially ratifies the AU-Ethiopian proposal (Malla 2019). Power to the people of Sudan in this difficult time.

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THE FORUM

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# RESEARCH ESSAYS

The Forum

**WINTER 2020**

Ryesgade, Aarhus, May 1945. The resistance rounds up collaborators,  
Cheering crowds celebrate..jpg

# The Destruction of Country and Rise of Islamic State: A Structuralist Approach

Sukienna Abdulla

For decades, revolutionary calls to action have responded to the needs of the people and the aspiration to reform structural failures of a country. It takes the actions of many who desire to fight for the same cause to reach revolutionary changes. However, in order for the wants of the people to align, there must be deep rooted and long-standing unresolved conditions that are outside the realm of responsibility of any one person. Under the leadership of unknown Ibrahim 'Awwad al-Samarra'i, who would later begin to fight under the moniker Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, Sunni political activism rose and the 2014 siege of Mosul was underway (Stansfield, 2016). Al-Baghdadi's leadership helped foster the growth and strength of The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL/ISIS) (Stansfield, 2016), but his revolutionary<sup>5</sup> leadership actions are not primarily responsible for the successes or failures of the ISIS revolution. Rather, the structural forces and history that help forge the successful revolutionary interests and ideologies of ISIS made the Islamic revolution the unforeseen success it is today. The rise of ISIS and the Sunni Islamic revolution demonstrates that despite Al-Baghdadi's role in inspiring and instilling the ideology that aided the rise of ISIS, structural factors were the main driving force in the successes of the Sunni Islamic revolution.

This paper argues that the structural approach gives a more convincing explanation of the ISIS revolution, and supports the viewpoint that ISIS is both a political and social revolution. This is to contrast the perspective that the revolution followed the guise of a more voluntarist approach. By ways of definition, a political revolution is an "instance in which government or political regime is overthrown by a popular movement in an irregular fashion" (Way, 2017). The institutions of Iraq had changed post the US-led invasion in 2003 (Stansfield, 2016). Despite there being a perceived peaceful phase of 2003-development, and instead of classes and different backgrounds coming together to form a new government system, the Iraqi government institution continued to be "dominated by the politics of sectarianism and ethnicism" (Stansfield, 2016). Although the 'Iraqiyya party list of Iyad 'Allawi<sup>6</sup> had achieved a victory over the State of Law Coalition of the incumbent Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, the resulting negotiations saw the former marginalized by an alliance of different Shi'a blocs (Stansfield, 2016). It was then that Maliki not only continued on as prime minister, but also then became the acting minister of both defense and interior workings of the government (Stansfield, 2016). The state moved from the Ba'ath nationalist and socialist rule, to a more military based administration (Stansfield, 2016).

Furthermore, when reviewing definitions of social revolutions, we see that they are defined as "rapid, fundamental, and often violent transformations of a country's state structure, [and] social structure, that is accompanied by mass revolts from below" (Skocpol, 1976). Skocpol emphasizes how a

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<sup>5</sup> Editor's note: the term 'revolutionary' is being used throughout the essay in reference to a process of rapid and radical change, and only that.

<sup>6</sup> "a largely secular nationalist slate that brought together a range of parties emanating from different parts of the Sunni Arab community" (Stansfield, 2016)

basic requirement of a social revolution is an administrative/military breakdown, which can often be a result of economic crisis or war (1976). The state of economic crisis that Iraq was in following the US-led invasion and execution of Saddam Hussein led to major discontent from within the Iraqi people (Cockburn, 2015). Maliki's military rule became a problem of hegemony and he was no longer able to lead by consent. ISIS and the Sunni revolution created a rapid and fundamental transformation of the Iraqi state structure by rebelling against current government structures through infiltration, and social structure by the 2014 sieging of Mosul and attacks on Kurdish and Shi'a communities (Segrest, 2016). Most of the revolt has been carried out by members of the community, rather than political elites (Segrest, 2016).<sup>7</sup>

There is a counter-argument to be made that the ISIS revolution is more convincingly understood and defined through the voluntarist approach. Long before ISIS there had been the threat of violent jihadist in the cases of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), and then following the 2006 killing of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi in a US military strike, its successor organization, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) (Stansfield, 2016). With both cases spreading over a ten-year period, it is clear to see that jihadist violence had been long-suppressed in Iraq. Destruction of the Iraqi state following the 2003 US-led invasion led to a corrupt government system where sectarianism and ethnicism ruled over the country (Stansfield, 2016). The weak economic climate left communities in devastating conditions, where the residue of war strained the lives of the people (Cockburn, 2015). The overhaul of the Ba'ath party ignited a hunger within the Shi'a and Kurdish communities, demanding the Sunni population be far removed from the levers of state power (Stansfield, 2016). The Shi'a party dominated, and this disparaging gap between the different religions and ethnicities left the country without unity (Stansfield, 2016). People had lost their families, their businesses, their will to live, and the loss – due to outside conflict – had a continual ominous presence; the communities were grieving (Segrest, 2016). When ISI regrouped in Mosul in 2008 (Stansfield), this time under Al-Baghdadi's rule, reigns were passed over and ISIS was formed; no jihadist rule in Iraq had ever reached such immediate success. Through the voluntarist perspective, it is argued that the on-going interaction amongst Al-Baghdadi, Syrian al-Qa'ida affiliate, the Nusra Front and Jabhat al-Nusra led to program re-building and immediate insurgence that was a direct result of leadership choices (Gerges, 2016). The success of ISIS came contingent on the immediate fall of the Ba'ath party, and their current success is emphasized on the short-term (Cockburn, 2016). This is a convincing argument for the most obvious reason: no jihadist organization has ever achieved what ISIS has achieved. The difference between past organizations and the current state of ISIS is leadership. Al-Baghdadi's rule proves the most effective, and in turn he is the root cause for success (Gerges, 2016). Al-Baghdadi and his band of terrorists are single-handedly leading this revolution. The leadership choices made by Baghdadi, and his experience in policing danger and being an expert in fear, is what has led to this immediate and short-term success (Gerges, 2016). Viewing the success of the ISIS revolution from the perspective of voluntarism makes it is easy to believe that by appointing Al-Baghdadi to power, ISIS became a more thoughtful and observant organization. However, the limitations to this argument stem from the voluntarist quality of focusing ISIS' success on Al-Baghdadi and believing that the political and

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that the result of the ISIS and Sunni Revolution can not yet be determined, as it is currently progress. The siege of Mosul and the attacks in Aleppo, Syria have all been rapid and fundamental, but the length of revolts, and transformations of both countries entire state structure, cannot be spoken for as the events are currently underway.

social structure of Iraq and Syria is a constraint to his actions (Way, 2017). When the onus is placed on Al-Baghdadi, all the broader milieu of instability that has stalked the Middle East and North Africa for decades gets erased (Stansfield, 2016). By believing that Al-Baghdadi's leadership choices and plan formulations<sup>8</sup> (Stansfield, 2016) are driving the ISIS revolution forward, we are saying that the history of the Middle East and its experiences of sociopolitical upheavals, which caused them to be susceptible to these attacks, are not as important. For this reason, the voluntarist perspective used to defend ISIS' success is a less convincing one than the structuralist. It limits the success of this revolution to Al-Baghdadi and his people and lacks the necessary credit that should be given to the continuous turmoil and long history of war within the Arab Peninsula and Syria. I would argue that structural forces play a much larger role in driving a revolution forward, especially in the case of ISIS.

Despite the rise of ISIS being immediate, the revolution itself is not contingent on the current events and actions of ISIS (Gerges, 2016). The point must be stressed that the current success of ISIS is not short-term as this insurgency has been manifesting for over a decade through the relationship to Saddam's regime, ISI, AQI and the position the states were in prior to revolt (Stansfield, 2016). Had the countries in question had a differing history, stronger economic stability, and state capacity, the rise of ISIS and the Sunni revolution most likely would not have been as prevalent or as strongly organized. It is more compelling to view the revolution from a structuralist perspective. There is no doubt that Al-Baghdadi played a contributing role in the success of ISIS, but it is rather his human action as "a consequence of social relations and impersonal processes" (Way, 2017) that defined ISIS' interests, ideas, and roles. Firstly, ISIS was able to easily invade and siege states within Iraq and Syria due to critical geo-political positioning of the states (Stansfield, 2016). With the overhaul of the Ba'ath party, there was a heightening of the ethno-political and religious fragmentation within Iraq (Stansfield, 2016).

It is no coincidence that ISIS and its extreme jihadi message took root in a region that was experiencing sociopolitical upheavals. Several Arab countries saw their nondemocratic regimes overthrown and the capacity of the states were weak (Stansfield, 2016). There were long-lived national tensions; Iraq had been split along social, ethnic, religious, and economic fault lines: "Sunni versus Shi'ite, Arab versus Kurd, tribal chief versus urban merchant, nomad versus peasant" (Stansfield, 2016). Massive repression and attempts at stabilization caused dissatisfaction within the masses (Stansfield, 2016). Corruption is bred through the desperation of many, and because of the structural forces of the country, the people were more vulnerable to ISIS' message (Cockburn, 2015). Sunni revolutionary movements occurred in two occasions; the discontent of Sunni communities with Shi'a military, and the fear of the Sunni minority in Shi'a-dominant Baghdad (Cockburn, 2015). There were a significant amount of Sunni Royal Guards and Sunni Hussein<sup>9</sup> empathisers out of work (Stansfield, 2016) and angered by the dissolution and overhaul of the Ba'ath regime. The evident gap between power of the Shi'a forces and Sunni people led to relative deprivation for the Sunni communities. It exacerbated the experience of discontent because they were being deprived of the power that they believed they were entitled (Stansfield, 2016). Without the overhaul of the government due to war, and the way the poor economic

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<sup>8</sup> targeting ISF forces as part of its "Operation Soldiers Harvest," taking control of much of Anbar and the towns of Falluja and Ramadi and their assault on Mosul (Stansfield, 2016)

<sup>9</sup> Saddam Hussein was fifth President of Iraq and a leading member of the revolutionary Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, and later, the Baghdad-based Ba'ath Party and its regional organization the Iraqi Ba'ath Party—which espoused Ba'athism, a mix of Arab nationalism and socialism—Saddam played a key role in the 1968 coup (later referred to as the 17 July Revolution) that brought the party to power in Iraq.

climate ravaged the country, ISIS would probably not have gotten their message across as successfully, and most likely would have been repressed (Brooke, 2017). Additionally, if the long history of divisive tactics and abuse of racialized minorities had not been set up within Iraq, the fear mongering and Sunni revolutionary ideologies of ISIS would not have been as effective (Cockburn, 2015). In turn, the demand for most jihadists' interests and roles would not have been created, and thus fulfilled (Cockburn, 2015).

Lastly, the long historical religious ideologies that once provided confusion within a "perceived" secular state help successfully align with the radicalized ideologies of ISIS and provide refuge for those who were affected by conflict (Cockburn, 2015). Religion has been introduced, and re-introduced, for centuries – it has been interpreted and reinterpreted for centuries – and with the on-going belief that *Yawmul- Qiyamah*<sup>10</sup> is drawing nearer and nearer, ISIS is able to manipulate people now more than ever (Gerges, 2017). This is not a result of Al-Baghdadi's leadership, but rather the climate in which he operates (Gerges, 2017).

It is easy to be convinced that revolutions are made successful by the people who spearhead them. In the case of ISIS, it is a convincing argument to believe that Al-Baghdadi's leadership helped foster the growth and strength of The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL/ISIS) (Stansfield, 2016). Conversely, the rise of ISIS is a consequence of structural forces and history that helped forge the pathway to the successful revolutionary interests and ideologies. Through historical turmoil, the ethno-political climate, past leadership and government upheaval, ISIS and the Sunni Islamic revolution were able to find success. For these reasons, it is important to analyze revolutions through the structuralist approach, and understand that "*revolutions are not made, they happen.*"

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<sup>10</sup> Judgement Day in Islam

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# **Policy Trajectories of the Gene Revolution: A Comparative Policy Analysis of Genetically Modified (GM) Food Labeling in Australia, United States, and Canada**

Anastasia Volkov

## *Abstract*

This research paper evaluates GM food labeling policies developed in response to the repercussions of the Gene Revolution. The research was focused on isolating an explanatory factor for the divergence of domestic GM food labeling policy choices in Australia, United States and Canada. The concluding analysis of the domestic context illustrates that structural power had influenced the relatively stable policy development process in all three states and explains the atypical policy change in the United States. In addition, this paper identifies that the diffusion of international norms accounts for the initial deviation of Australian GM labeling policy from that of United States and Canada. Relying on a case analysis, this paper argues that while ideas shaped the initial perception of normative considerations, the Gene Revolution allowed for industry interests to guide the policy development process in the domain of GM food labeling in all three states.

## **Policy Trajectories of the Gene Revolution: A Comparative Policy Analysis of Genetically Modified (GM) Food Labeling in Australia, United States, and Canada**

A revolutionary process - whether political, economic, or social - begins with a specific development. Development, in turn, is evaluated through a lens of progress and risk. Outcomes of that development may transform society at its core and implications may spill out into varying political, economic, and social trajectories domestically and internationally - impacted by unique domestic combinations of interests, ideas, and institutions. To illustrate which of these three factors is most dominant in a revolutionary process, this paper will explore GM food labeling policies developed in response to the repercussions of the Gene Revolution in Australia, United States, and Canada.

Australia, United States, and Canadian can be reasonably compared to one another as the three states have many broad institutional and ideological similarities. The three former British Colonies are industrialized and multiethnic, western liberal democracies with free market economies. Public opinion polls of all three countries show comparable public interest in the mandatory labeling of GM food: Canada (2017 - 83 per cent), United States (2015 - 89 per cent), Australia (2012 - 85 per cent) (Agnus Reid Institute 2017; Centre for Food Safety 2019; Roush & Tribe 2012). In addition, the institutional constraints of federalism present challenges for the reform of food law and policy within the three states, as the division of power within this policy domain is shared by different orders of government.

This research paper will seek to describe the GM food labeling policy development process of the three states, to demonstrate how a single policy challenge may have different policy responses. Taking on an interests-based argument, this paper will discuss how the Gene Revolution has resulted in policy responses heavily guided by the discourse of progress and risk, tinted by what is reasonable. This paper will present a case analysis that begins with a summary of international regulatory frameworks for food safety and labeling, as well as an outline of key international principles applied to foods derived from biotechnology. The paper will then provide an overview of the diverging GM food labeling policies in Australia, United States and Canada. The concluding analysis of the domestic context will illustrate that structural power – referring to the natural accommodation of industry interests by policy frameworks within a given state – had influenced the relatively stable policy development process in all three countries and serves as the explanatory factor for the atypical policy change in the United States in 2016. In addition, this paper identifies that the diffusion of international norms accounts for the initial divergence of the Australian policy path from that of the United States and Canada. Relying on a case analysis comparing these three countries, this paper will argue that while ideas shaped the initial perception of normative considerations, the Gene Revolution has allowed for industry interests to guide the policy development process in the domain of GM food labeling in all three states.

***Background:***

Most food for human consumption is derived from domesticated plants and animals bred for generations. Traditionally, farmers have chosen specimens with most favorable characteristics for production and/or consumption to be used for selective breeding - enhancing the desired traits for the next generation. Overtime, variations in the genetic make-up of select plants and animals modified. Traditional selective breeding practices are time consuming and are limited in precision, even in high-yield production agriculture. Hence, technological advancements to agriculture did not end with the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. The Gene Revolution of the 1990s quickly enhanced the high-yield production agriculture with “a relatively new and complex process that involves insertion of a gene, often from a different species, into a plant or animal” (Hoffman 2004). This process is a product of biotechnology, which allows genetic engineering techniques to enhance genetic modification of plants and animals.

Yang and Chen (2015) explain that biotechnology has penetrated the global food supply and organisms produced “are known under a few acronyms to the public, like genetically engineered foods or genetically modified (GM) foods but are most commonly known to the public as genetically modified organisms (GMOs)” (Yang & Chen 2015: 1851). According to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), by 2017 the commercialization of biotechnology has resulted in 189.8 million hectares of GM crops globally, grown by 24 countries (19 developing and 5 industrial) (ISAAA 2017). In addition, 43 countries - 26 in the European Union and 17 others - import GM crops for food, feed, and processing (ISAAA 2017). In the 24 producer countries, GM soybeans, maize, cotton, and canola had the highest acreage and adoption rate (ISAAA 2017). United States is (and has been) the largest producer of GM crops globally, while Canada and Australia were in fourth and twelfth place respectively (ISAAA 2017).

The Gene Revolution brought enormous economic benefit for the United States and Canada prior to Australia entering the market. The ISAAA reports that the first 21 years following the commercialization of GM crops has amounted to \$80.3 billion in economic benefits for the United States and \$8 billion for Canada (ISAAA 2017). Dibden et al. (2013) argue that the competitiveness of GM crops “resulted in the belief that Australia will be ‘left behind’ by competitors unless it moves quickly to facilitate the development and commercialization” (Dibden et al. 2015: 60). By 2017, based on GM crops with highest adoption rates, United States was a producer of modified soybeans, maize, cotton, and canola; Canada produced soybeans, maize and canola; and Australia produced cotton and canola (ISAA 2017).

A development of this magnitude brings challenges for domestic and international policymakers who must interpret conflicting positions of ethical, economic, and legal implications. Proponents of GM crops argue that they are “the greatest invention since the beginning of farming”, as they present a feasible solution to food shortages, and have measurable economic, environmental and health benefits (Hoffman 2014: 5). Opponents - or mainly international environmental groups and citizen groups disagree, framing their commercial and transparency arguments with selective environmental, legal, and health rational (Hoffman 2014; Yang & Chen 2015; Smyth 2014). Arguments of the opposition result in the rhetoric of the consumer’s right to know. However, in absence of existing health concerns justified by the scientific community, policymakers have varying outlooks of mandatory informative labeling. Without an internationally unified GM labeling regime, GM labeling policies are largely domestic and vary between countries (Borges et al 2018; Du 2014).

### **International Approach**

Out of international agreements that followed the international commercialization of GM foods in the late 1990s, the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (TBT Agreement) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) applies to “technical regulations, standards, including labelling requirements, and conformity assessment” (Josling 2005). Even though GM food labeling regulations are mandated domestically, they must then comply with the TBT Agreement to ensure that they do not pose barriers to international trade and are set with legitimate domestic objective (Josling 2005). For example, the aggressive GM food labeling policies of the European Union (EU) have been argued to be strenuous for the United States and Canada exporters, “who see this as a way of giving credibility to those who are opponents of biotechnology” (Josling 2005). However, the WTO has not formally reviewed these contestations (Josling 2005).

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - a multilateral treaty opened at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil - and its protocols are rooted in the precautionary principle and set the general direction for the precautionary approach to governing biotechnology by ratifying states (Smyth 2017). It came into force in 1993 with 196 parties among which were Australia and Canada who signed, ratified, and showed strong support for the treaty and its protocols; the United States signed, yet did not ratify (Convention on Biological Diversity 2019). The three main objectives of the CBD included “the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources” (Convention on Biological Diversity 2019). According to L. Du (2014), Article 8(g) of the treaty has set in motion domestic GM food regulations in countries who

have endorsed the CBD by providing a firm legal basis. More specifically, Article 8(g) “mandates parties to ‘establish or maintain means to regulate, manage or control the risks associated with the use and release of living modified organisms resulting from biotechnology which are likely to have adverse environmental impacts that could affect the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account the risks to human health’” (Du 2014: 40).

In 1945 the United Nations established a specialized agency - the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) - to lead international food safety and security efforts, which today contribute to the evaluation of GM foods. In 1963 in collaboration with the WHO, the FAO established the Codex Alimentarius Commission (the Codex), which sets international food safety standards and promotes fair international food trade. Presently, the Codex has 185-member states, including Australia, United States, and Canada. Provisions by the Codex, as they relate to food or ingredients derived from biotechnology, are mostly focused on risk assessment. Its internationally recognized standards are directed at decreasing consumers’ perception of risk, promoting consumers’ confidence, all while facilitating international food trade (Wong 2003). Labeling of GM food is therefore addressed by the Codex “only in the context of risk management: if risk assessment identifies no significant risk, labeling is not needed” (Borges et al. 2018: 2). However, even though the FAO does not advocate for the mandatory labeling of GM food, the agency does emphasize “the importance of consumers having access to information and resources” (Du 2014: 28).

To enhance the FAO position on GM food labeling with international coherence, the Codex Committee on Food Labeling (CCFL) – a subsidiary of the Codex responsible for international food labeling standard - spearheaded the conversation of an internationally unified GM food-labeling regime in 1993. After eighteen years of disagreement and four drafts of recommended guidelines, the Codex adopted labelling guidelines proposed by the CCFL in July of 2011 (Du 2014). Earlier proposals were blocked by Australia, United States, and Canada (among others). However, the opposition did settle on weak restrictions of GM components in foodstuff, and voluntary adoption of a domestic GM food-labelling regime, hence bringing the discourse full circle away from international coherence (Du 2014).

### ***Case Study:***

#### **Australia**

Australia has one of the more rigorous GM food labeling regimes of the GM crop producing countries. In Australia, the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) regulates biotechnology. The OGTR is an agency of the Australian Commonwealth empowered by the *Gene Technology Act, 2000* to “protect the health and safety of people, and to protect the environment, by identifying risks posed by or as a result of gene technology, and by managing those risks through regulating certain dealings with GMOs” (FSANZ 2005: 5). The *Gene Technology Act 2000* contains monitoring, compliance and enforcement powers at the national level. However, the legislation considers regional interests of all Australian States and Territories, which have a similar legislation applied to their individual jurisdictions (Borges et al 2018).

In addition to national and regional biotechnology regulations, Australia and New Zealand share statutory authority over food standards. *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act, 1991*

established an independent statutory agency Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) responsible for the development, amendment, and review of the *Food Standards Code* - it applies to both Australia and New Zealand nationally. Standard 1.5.2 outlines regulations specific to GM food safety assessment and labeling (FSANZ 2005). The two organizations - OGTR and FSANZ - work collaboratively on policy issues related to GM food in Australia.

FSANZ specifies that because the safety of GM food is assessed prior to it entering the market “the purpose of labelling is simply to provide information to consumers, allowing them to purchase or avoid GM foods depending on their own views and beliefs” (FSANZ 2005: 4). FSANZ requires the labeling of “GM foods and ingredients (including food additives and processing aids) that contain novel DNA or novel protein” (FSANZ 2016). Foods with less than 1% GM in any ingredient and food intended for immediate consumption escape the mandated labeling regime, in fact, up to 70% of food are not labeled (Wong 2003: 16). However, compared to other national mandatory GM food labeling regulations, Australia’s is “one of the more rigorous” (Roush & Tribe 2012).

## United States

As an early adopter of biotechnology, the United States established regulatory oversight of GM food products far in advance of most countries in the world (MacKenzie 2000). For the same reason, United States relied on existing laws governing conventional products, instead of developing a unique set of legislation to govern GM foods (Acosta 2014). Hence, no single statute or federal agency governs biotechnology in the United States. Mandated by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), three federal agencies primarily oversee the Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology (the Framework) in the United States – the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (Obama Whitehouse 2017). The FDA “is responsible for protecting the public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy, and security of human and veterinary drugs, biological products, and medical devices; and by ensuring the safety of [...] food supply, cosmetics, and products that emit radiation” (FDA 2018). It is also directly responsible for the enforcement of labeling laws. However, the safety of food and food additives are under the preview of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) empowered by the *Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act* (Wong 2003).

The framework was published in 1986 and from the onset; it favored the innovation, development, and use of biotechnology to bring products in to the consumers market (Acosta 2014). It was revised in 1992 and 2015 to bolster public confidence, yet the main objective of the reforms was to reduce “barriers to future innovation and competitiveness” (Obama Whitehouse 2017: 1). The first revision was largely a result of the first comprehensive scientific review of a GM product in the United States. Calgene Inc., bringing a “transgenic tomato” into the market, initiated the FDA’s review early that year (MacKenzie 2000). This review determined that the GM tomato “was substantially equivalent to, and as safe to eat as other tomatoes currently on the market” (MacKenzie 2000: 39-40). As a result, the FDA released a policy statement in the *Federal Register* on May 29, 1992 publishing that “producers are not required to seek FDA pre-market approval or apply a special label for a new variety of food if it is substantially equivalent to existing varieties already on the market” (MacKenzie 2000: 39-40). Therefore, the biotechnology industry

in the United States largely monitors itself (Wong 2003). In accommodation of commercial fairness and transparency advocates, the FDA established a voluntary GM food-labeling regime, which was only overturned in 2016 (Borges et al 2018).

In 2016, Congress mandated a policy change. This legislated decision required the development of a National Bioengineered Disclosure in order to harmonize an increasingly fragmented GM food labeling system in the United States (Borges et al 2018). As a result, the USDA was directed to develop “a national standard containing requirements for labeling of human food products derived from biotechnology” (Borges et al 2018: 6). Consumers in the United States will see the disclosure of GM ingredients via text, symbol, or an RQ code in January of 2020 (Haigh 2018). However, foods with less than 5% GM in any ingredient, food intended for immediate consumption, and small foodstuff manufacturers - with annual revenue of under \$2.5 million – will escape the newly mandated labeling regime (Conrow 2018).

## **Canada**

In Canada, the regulation of biotechnology has parallels to both Australia and the United States. Similar to the United States, biotechnology is regulated through a Federal Regulatory Framework for Biotechnology (the Canadian Framework) established prior to international frameworks, in 1993. The Canadian Framework relies on existing agencies and legislation, which govern food safety in Canada, thus two primary agencies oversee the regulation of GM food - Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) (Borges et al 2018). Health Canada and the CFIA hold joint responsibility for national food labeling policies. Health Canada develops health and safety related policies, which guide food labeling in Canada, and the CFIA applies and enforces them while ensuring consumer rights protection within the regime (Borges et al. 2018). Canada requires labelling of “all foods, including genetically modified foods, where safety concerns such as allergenicity and compositional or nutritional changes are identified” and mitigated through labeling (Health Canada 2018). GM or non-GM food labeling is permitted on a voluntary basis so long as the information presented on the product is not misleading (Health Canada 2018). While, the similarity of the regulatory framework structure and time of establishment amount to converging voluntary GM food labeling policies in Canada and the United States (prior to 2016), Canada is the only country in the Global North that has not converted to a mandatory GM food labeling regime to date. Government of Canada justifies the lack of mandatory GM food labeling with the superb quality of the Health Canada pre-market assessment of all ‘novel’ food - similar to the pre-market assessment process in Australia but established much earlier.

The *Novel Food Act, 1999*, a subset of the *Food and Drug Act, 1985* mandates Health Canada to evaluate the safety of all food and novel food before it becomes available on the market (Du 2014; Health Canada 2018). Health Canada defines ‘novel’ foods “as products that have never been used as a food; foods which result from a process that has not previously been used for food; or, foods that have been modified by genetic manipulation” (Health Canada 2018). Hence, if it has been scientifically established that a food may pose risks to consumer health without the possibility of mitigating effects through labeling, the food will not be permitted into the Canadian market. The present pre-market assessment process follows guidelines developed in 1994, and while the 2006 revision did take into account international norms it mostly focused on “the advancement of

methods and knowledge regarding product review” versus consumers right to know of what is in their foodstuff (Health Canada 2018). Therefore, even though Canada was an active supporter of most international frameworks for biotechnology its approach seeks to promote public confidence while minimizing barriers to future innovation and competitiveness as in the United States. Also, while Canada is a supporter of World Health Organization (WHO), the FAO, the Codex, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) it actively resisted the unified mandatory international labeling proposals of the Codex Committee on Food Labeling (CCFL) between 1993 and 2011.

### ***Policy Analysis:***

Policy trajectories of the Gene Revolution have developed differently around the world due to varying levels of public sector involvement, both nationally and internationally. As demonstrated in the previous section, even comparatively similar countries such as Australia, United States, and Canada have taken divergent approaches. This section will provide an analysis of why institutionally and ideologically similar countries vary on a spectrum of voluntary to mandatory GM food labeling regimes, and how this variation is guided by specific interests that trump institutional and ideological factors contributing to policymaking. This section will demonstrate that a revolutionary process allows for specific interests to penetrate established patterns of social, political, and economic behavior funneling into domestic public policy. However, as interests converge with ideas characterizing the revolutionary process the perception of normative considerations plays a definitive role as well.

At the core, the policy responses within the domain of biotechnology in Australia, United States and Canada are guided by structural power - resembling a natural accommodation of industry interests by policy frameworks within a given state. Bell S. (2012) explains that structural power in modern industry is a result of progress supported by global capital mobility which “radically increased the power of business and financial interests and markedly reduced the policy discretion of national governments admits the scramble to secure investment by promoting business friendly policies” (Bell 2012: 661). According to Dibden et al. (2013), biotechnology falls into the discourse of ‘progress’ and “is equated with technological innovation and economic competitiveness” (Dibden et al. 2013: 60). Hence - industry involved in progress receives accommodations that will generally support its development within the regulatory frameworks of a state, new or existing. Therefore, policies which govern modern progress are dictated by structural power because “the ideas of market-based management and scientific progress are so entrenched that it is difficult to muster the discursive resources to challenge them” (Dibden et al. 2013: 60).

The level of ‘acceptable risk’ associated with a particular development “depends on social, cultural, and ethical considerations which tend to differ between countries” (Dibden et al. 2013: 61). Therefore, risks involved in progress have a normative dimension. Borges et al. (2018) argues that the consumers’ desire for mandatory “labeling requirements may extend beyond what is reasonable and necessary” (Borges et al. 2018: 7). Hence, the state may or may not support these desires, depending on its normative position of what is *reasonable*. Ideas about what is *reasonable*

“have a casual force in the service of power” (Bell 2012: 662). The narrative of ‘progress’, coupled with the narrative of ‘risk’ are reflected in the norms unfolding within a revolutionary development. In the context of biotechnology, the political dimension of risk received international attention due to its global commercialization. Therefore, the time of biotechnology adoption influenced the socialized normative position of how GM food would be regulated domestically. Early adopters were guided by risk-based approaches to policy frameworks incentivizing the expansion of the industry. The early majority on the other hand, was more risk-averse influenced by the precautionary international discourse.

All regulatory frameworks for biotechnology are rooted in evidence-based policymaking, supported by definitive long-term studies demonstrating GM foods to be safe and comparable to non-GM counterparts (Smyth 2014). Yet, public opinion polls reflect strong public interest in the mandatory labeling of GM food in , Australia (2012 - 85 per cent), United States (2015 - 89 per cent) and Canada (2017 - 83 per cent) (Agnus Reid Institute 2017; Centre for Food Safety 2019; Roush & Tribe 2012). Industry interests are against mandatory GM labeling regulations, as they have been argued to increase implementation, management, and distribution costs (Vigani, Raimondi & Olper 2010; Borges, et al. 2018). Therefore, governments may lack agency to implement a mandatory labeling regime in a GM producing country where economic interests of production outweigh the consumers’ interests to know what they consume.

Both the United States and Canada commercialized GM foods prior to international frameworks taking shape and their regimes fell into existing domestic frameworks established for food safety. Since, neither the FDA nor Health Canada established concern to anticipate a direct threat to consumers by the GM foods entering the market, neither of the countries found it necessary to inform consumers of the potential future unknowns. Such unknowns could have created unnecessary consumer pushback disincentivizing the growth of the industry domestically. In contrast to the United States and Canada, Australia stepped into the market with the early majority. At that time, the international discourse was deliberating the governance of both progress and risks. Hence, Australia was influenced by international norms to grow its competitiveness when developing its regime in accordance with the precautionary approach of the CBD, the Codex, and the TBT Agreement.

Canada had an established mandatory premarket approval process imbedded into its frameworks for food quality and safety ahead of international frameworks; Australia developed a mandatory premarket approval process in line with international frameworks; while the United States did not. This specific divergence prevented the United States from ratifying international regulations, as showing support would subject its industry to consumer scrutiny and turbulence. Even Australia and Canada were in active opposition to a stringent international labeling policy. The Canadian and Australian GM food labeling policies did remain relatively stable after enforcement. Until 2016, policymakers within the FDA and Health Canada continued to support the growth of the GM food market domestically, “mostly praising its safety and benefits” despite proposed regulatory adjustments to decrease consumer skepticism (Wohlers 2016: 31). The regulatory system in the United States was reviewed in 2016 for political interest to label or not to label GM foods domestically, and triggered a similar review in Canada for potential interest in alignment.

Strassheim and Kettunen (2014) argue that “scientifically approved facts are value-free, only to be ignored” when “what counts as evidence is defined by institutionally and discursively established conventions that differ between countries and policies” (Strassheim and Kettunen 2014: 260). Hence, lobbying groups at the state level - or mainly international environmental groups and citizen groups framing their commercial and transparency arguments with selective environmental, legal, and health rational against GM foodstuff - were instrumental to the review of the regulatory system for biotechnology in the United States, causing an atypical policy change (Hoffman 2014; Yang & Chen 2015; Smyth 2014). Strassheim and Kettunen (2014) argue that consumer push back is reasonable for “‘wicked problems’ like GMO, which notoriously lack a clear definition and an optimal solution” (Strassheim and Kettunen 2014: 260). The lack of consumer awareness pertinent to what is biotechnology and how its safety is regulated - heightened by the extreme precautionary approach adopted and advocated for by the EU - resulted in oppositional public mobilization. The growing public interest in labeling, however, did not have a significant impact on the fate of the relaxed GM food labeling policies in either United States or Canada, even though the United State crossed over to a mandatory labeling system.

A policy window opened in United States in 2012, when the state of California proposed a GM food labeling policy addressing the issue of food misbranding as non-GM and GM within its state. However, California efforts were short lived - only to be stopped by a group of industry leading producers, including Monsanto and Pepsi (Bloch 2018). In 2013 Connecticut, Maine in 2014 and Vermont in 2016 passed GM food labeling laws, responding to their own lobbying pressures. In 2016, 29 other states were tabling similar bills. As a result, in 2016 the domestic GM food labeling policies of the United States were on the verge of becoming fragmented. As a response, United States Congress – guided once again by economic interests - legislated a national mandatory GM food labelling regime with the intent to harmonize domestic trade and commerce. Still, guided by structural power - accommodating industry interests and outweighing the consumers’ right to information - the new regulations for GM labelling in the United States will be far less restrictive than the GM food labeling requirements in Austria.

In Canada the NDP have tabled a GM food-labeling bill in 2016 and 2017, following the adoption of the mandatory GM food-labeling regime in the United States. On May 17, 2017, Bill C-291 - an Act to amend the *Food and Drugs Act* to include mandatory labelling of GM food in Canada -failed after its second reading. During the debate, the NDP advocated with left leaning arguments for the consumers’ right to know, influenced by the policy window in the United States (Library of Parliament 2017). Opponents – or the Liberal and Conservative coalition -argued that the mandatory labelling of GM foods “could have the unintended effect of reinforcing the notion that foods bearing a GM label are not as safe and nutritious as their non-GM counterparts” (Library of Parliament 2017). Without a majority vote - 67 to 216 - political interest of the Canadian federal government upheld the existing voluntary labeling regime that minimizes barriers to future innovation and competitiveness, reinforced by food quality and safety standards which promote public confidence with their “consistent enforcement of clear rules” (Library of Parliament 2017).

### ***Conclusion:***

There is no escape from development. Advances in the field of genetics have fostered widespread changes in social and economic landscapes of our society. As a result of the Gene

Revolution, policymakers who are fronted with unavoidable progress must interpret ethical, social, economic, and legal implications to inform a policy path. The policy choice will reflect a unique combination of interest, ideas, and institutions of a given state. Therefore, policy paths between states may diverge even in seemingly similar settings. Reflecting on this divergence, this research paper has presented a comparative analysis of GM food labeling policies in Australia, United States, and Canada.

The research presented in this paper focused on isolating an explanatory factor for the domestic GM food labeling policy choices in Australia, United States and Canada. After reviewing the divergent GM food labeling policies in the three countries of interest and the applicable international regulatory frameworks, this paper presented an argument for how structural power guides the development of GM food labeling policy in the three states; and how the diffusion of international norms accounts for the initial divergence of GM food labeling policies in Australia from that of the United States and Canada. Relying on a case analysis, this paper argued that the Gene Revolution has allowed for industry interests to guide the policy development process of GM food labeling in all three states, while ideas shaped the initial perception of normative considerations.

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# The Disability Rights Movement

Elizabeth Santamaria

Post WWII was an era, which witnessed an uproar of social movements formed by socially-marginalized groups fighting for the human rights of social inclusion and equity. The American civil rights movement in the 1960s revolutionised social movement mobilization strategies, demonstrating the successful impacts of direct-action tactics and framing structures in overcoming social injustices. Racial segregation was overthrown through the powerful means of protests, freedom rides, boycotts and sit-ins. This achievement created new opportunities for future social movements to arise. In turn, the Disabilities Rights Movement (DRM) was able to capitalize on the civil rights movement's methods to seek empowerment. During the rise of the civil rights movement, the DRM challenged the social order of oppression and isolation of persons with disabilities. Disabilities rights activists used collective action framing to portray that it was society that was disabling individuals living with disabilities through the absence of equal public access and civil rights. This collective framing contributed to the recruitment and establishment of several disability movement organizations building a collective identity among the disabled community. Their protests, sit-ins and obstruction towards inaccessible businesses and federal buildings gained political attention which helped further mobilize the DRM. As a result, new legislation was passed by congress favoring the DRM's goals to obtain equity for persons living with disabilities. However, unlike race-based social movements, disability is challenged by its heterogeneity (Wappett 2002). The injustices faced by those living with disabilities are subjective to the individual's limitations and are not always visible to society. Disabilities can consist of a variety of hardships such as mental, physical, social and emotional. Thus, the DRM continues to require multiple reforms post mobilization, hoping to overcome the many existing social and physical barriers. Due to the ambiguousness surrounding the comprehension of a disability, the DRM's mobilization was highly dependant on its utilization of the civil rights movement's collective action framing and direct-action tactics, whose outcomes unfortunately fell short at accommodating for its diversity.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Aligning with the collective behavior theory, the social oppression and deprivation of basic civil rights for individuals living with disabilities provoked the DRM's emergence. Collective behavior theorist believe that emergence of revolutionary crowds is inevitable during periods of social breakdowns and despair (Staggenborg and Ramos 2016). During and prior to the 1960s, individuals living with a disability were deemed incompetent and many were confined to institutions and care homes. Social supports, accessibility and accommodations were non-existent and therefore they were often rejected by society and excluded from workplaces and education systems (Munyi 2012). Disabled WWII veterans who had recently become impaired during their military service, were one of the first collective groups to bring attention to the social isolation faced by individuals living with a disability. Through protest, disabled veterans demanded rehabilitation programs and additional social services from the government (Winter 2003). The veteran's activism towards the state created a platform for contentious action, motivating others who were affected by a disability to fight for equity. However, the sustainability and framing of a disability social movement was problematic due to a lack of collective identity caused by the diversity within the disability community. Before the 1960s, several of disability communities attempted action towards the State but were unsuccessful (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Thus, individuals living with disabilities remained in social isolation until the 1960's civil rights movement paved the path for them. They were living without access to public transportation, buildings, washrooms or even pay phones (Anti-Defamation League, 2018). The civil rights movement's collective action and solidarity model provided the disability community with the framing structure and direct-actions tactics needed in order to materialize. By the late 1960s, the disability community, particularly parents of children with disabilities, formed a "broadly based cross-disability social movement" (Scotch 1989:387) which became known as the DRM.

## FRAMING DISABILITY AS A PUBLIC CONCERN

By the 1970s the DRM had gained momentum and the public's attention by using collective action framing. Collective action frames are a key motivator to a movement's success as the leaders or organizers can frame critical issues to have cultural meaning amongst the public. The DRM was able to extend the same framing structure of basic civil rights that was established by the civil rights movement towards the disability community's oppression. The civil rights framing provided the DRM with a predetermined sense of legitimacy and justification among the public. Their use of familiar framing tactics emphasizing the social injustices already resonated with the public, which indirectly assisted with the recruitment of participants and bystanders support (Staggenborg and Ramos 2016). However, unlike the sturdy collectiveness of the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, the DRM faced conflict with establishing a strong collective consciousness throughout their framing process. The DRM operated as a grass-roots movement without strong leadership which resulted in a conflicting interest and confusion within the movement. The physical impairments of one individual did not necessarily relate to another individual's impairment, challenging the collective identity of the movement (Polletta & Jasper 2001). Rather, the movement's minimal collectiveness came from a bond of joined suffrage from society's oppression for living with an impairment. Utilizing the civil right framing overcompensated for the lack of solidarity within the DRM, as its collective action framing created precedented boundaries of "us" verses "them" for socially marginalized individuals, framing the State as the culprit. This framing transformed the understanding of disability from an internal issue of medical illness to an external issue of institutionalized social barriers. Society's understanding of disability issues went from a perception of "personal tragedy to social oppression" (Little 2010:5). Thus, similar to the civil rights movement, the DRM was motivating their movement by framing that the personal issues of the disabled community as political and citizen action in need of reformation. As a result, the DRM mobilized several grass-roots organizations was formed, such as the Disabled in Action (DIA). DIA was founded by disability rights activist Judy Heumann, who filed a publicized lawsuit concerning her personal experience of being rejected from educational institutions due to her disability. Heumann was successful at framing her social hardship as a public concern resulting in an assembly of participants and bystander support (Scotch 1989). The DRM's framing demonstrates how social movements are more likely to mobilize when made meaningful to persons outside the movement (Benford and Snow 2000).

## EFFECTS OF CRITICAL EVENTS AND DIRECT-ACTION TACTICS

Disability activists embraced the civil rights movement's direct-action tactics, which created political opportunity for the DRM's mobilization. The DRM used direct-action strategies of nonviolent protests, marches and sit-ins in order to express and build awareness of the disability injustices caused by the State. As seen with the civil rights movement, direct-action tactics are often successful at contributing to a movement's mobilization (Staggenborg and Ramos 2016). An example of the DRM's protests success is during the 1973 uproar against President Nixon's veto for the Rehabilitation Act, which would provide civil rights and federally regulated anti-discrimination laws against people living with a disability. The veto was a pivotal event as it showcased to the public the injustices towards the disability community held by the State, which offered "the ability to garner widespread response...and in turn demand engagement from bystander communities" (Staggenborg and Ramos 2016:83). The power of the DRM protests and sit-ins due to the veto caused many disruptions to public services and institutions which placed pressured on the State. As a result, the disruptions forced State's attention to resolve the matter, which in turn contributed to the signing of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act by congress a few months later (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). However, Section 504 in the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, which regulated laws concerning social integration, consisted of very vague language causing havoc amongst the Disability community. This uproar became know as the 504 Sit-In. During the 504 Sit-In protests, the DRM capitalized on civil rights movements symbolism's by singing the same songs which were sung by African American protesters in the 1960s and obtained collective support from several other organizations such civil rights activists the Black Panthers (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). The DRM organizations also used civil rights movement's leader Martin Luther

King's slogan of "I have a dream" during the Deaf President Now's protest on Capitol Hill, which in turn led to the first deaf president at the Gallaudet University (Scotch 1989). The use of these direct-action tactics was very effective as it led to the success of the 1977 Rehabilitation Act Amendment.

During this period in the 1970s, students living with disabilities that were attending the University of Berkeley found themselves without essential accommodations on campus. Fortunately, many of them were already activists from previous social movements, including the civil rights movement, and were able to utilize their knowledge of direct confrontation to revolt against the University. This led to the first independent living centre in the United States, Berkeley Centre for Independent Living (Scotch 1989). Shortly after, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) passed, allowing for equal entree into educational systems (Winter 2003). Thus, by aligning themselves with prior civil rights direct-action tactics, the DRM was successful at placing its movement on the political agenda, resulting in the passing of multiple disability legislation.

#### CONTENTIOUS ACTION POST-REHABILITATION ACT

The mobilization from the 1970 DRM's direct-action tactics provided the disability community with similar anti-discrimination and civil rights as the African American community, however it was soon realized that inclusiveness alone would not solve their injustices. In order to overcome discrimination of physical and structural barriers the disabled community would require accessibility accommodations to be enforced by the State. This shortfall in legislation was primarily due to the diversity surrounding the identity of disability as "nobody else understood what civil rights could possibly mean when it came to disabled people" (Johnson 2007:138). The accessibility accommodations from the success of the Berkeley University's movement, led by disability rights activist Ed Roberts, demonstrated that only the individual living with the disability would know what the best accommodation would be to overcome the barriers (Scotch 1989). Furthermore, once the disabled community was granted inclusiveness by the 1977 Rehabilitation Act Amendment, their differences in social movement objectives would become more pronounced as they integrated into the social systems. Tensions grew within the movement over divergent interests as it became more evident that one individual with a disability may require different accessibility accommodations than another individual with a different disability. Naturally, the lack of solidarity would decrease the DRM's ongoing efforts as a cross-disability movement (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Fortunately, the DRM's existing mobilization platform allowed for disability activists to expand into several single-issue organizations to advocate for accessibility requirements. Using similar direct-action tactics as the civil rights movement, the American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (ADAPT) held protests and sit-ins. While fighting for a fully accessible transportation system, ADAPT activists chained themselves to buses, refusing to move (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Furthermore, the DRM's new founded platform provided disability activists with the resources to lobby through political channels as opposed to resorting to direct-action tactics. Disability activists joined together with race and gender-based movement organizations to bring attention to the issues of ongoing social discrimination, establishing the 1988 Civil Rights Restoration Act (Scotch 1989).

#### THE PASSAGE OF THE AMERICAN DISABILITY ACT

The 1980s saw a wave of disability activism from strongly unified single-issue organizations that continued to utilize civil rights framing tactics to gain mobilization resources which successfully resulted in the passing of the 1990 American Disability Act (ADA). The ADA is legislation that prohibits discrimination against individuals living with disabilities, and to mandate equal treatment and access to public services and employment (Anti-Defamation League, 2018). Aligning with resource mobilization theory, the group of single-issue organizations who drafted the ADA bill still required support from pre-existing social mobilization organizations to bring the bill into congress. The civil rights organization Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) provided adequate support by representing the ADA bill as a disability version to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The LCCR's ability to extend the civil rights framing to the ADA was essential for the passing of the ADA (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Moreover, the media

attention and framing from the single-issue organization's direct-action tactics in public spaces had a critical impact on the passing of the ADA. During the 1988 Deaf President Now protest, which largely embraced the civil rights movement symbolism, it attracted high levels of media attention, extending the framing of civil rights to the disability community (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Furthermore, the ADAPT's dramatic action tactics during the ADA protests mirrored the civil right movement's Freedom Riders' efforts in its ability to secure persuasive media attention to force political change. ADAPT, along with other disability activists, protested at Capitol Hill by abandoning their wheelchairs and physical aids to crawl up the steps of the US capital (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Reporters were able to capture a young girl with disabilities crawling up the steps portraying her vulnerability to the public. This media coverage in turn gained both immense sympathy from bystanders and political attention (Staggenborg and Ramos 2016). As a result, a finalized version of the ADA was signed into legislation approximately three months later by George H.W. Bush (Winter 2003). The ADA is believed to be the most significant achievement of the DRM, as it provided enforceable legislation to end the discrimination faced by the disability community (Winter 2003). Moreover, the framing of civil rights was now extended to individuals with disabilities, forever changing the way society portrayed them. The passing of the ADA demonstrates how strong collective action tactics and media framing are powerful at influencing a movement's mobilization.

#### MAINTENANCE AND GROWTH POST-ADA MOBILIZATION

Similar to the shortfalls of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, the ADA's legislation suffered from unfavorable ambiguities surrounding the protections of individuals living with a disability, resulting in the DRM's ongoing preservation against the continued discrimination. Although the ADA created enforcement provisions against discrimination of individuals with disabilities, they would only be enforceable through litigation. In addition, unlike the 1964 Civil Rights Act, if a disability lawsuit was successful, monetary compensation was not permitted. This was to protect commercial business's financial stability from the influx of lawsuits for potentially not meeting a spectrum of accessible requirements vaguely specified in the ADA (Johnson 2007). These parameters made it difficult for the disability community to rectify ongoing discrimination as individuals living with a disability have limited financial resources (Wappett 2002). Congress's incorporation of unjust parameters into the ADA created additional resistance between the disability community and the State, resulting in the DRM's ongoing collective action post-mobilization. Furthermore, the ADA language addressing employment regulations consisted of vague terminology such as "undue hardship" and "reasonable accommodation" (Johnson 2007:123), providing employers with advantages to decline accommodations for an employee with a disability. Therefore, the ADA indirectly created justifiable cause within its policy for circumstantial discrimination, favoring the employer's economic well-being over the individual requiring an accommodation for inclusive opportunity (Johnson 2007:123) states the ADA is a "product of an era in which public discourse centered on economics and not the moral imperatives of the civil rights era...". This implied discrimination became a recipe for subsequent contentious action by disability rights activists. As a result, an increase of new disability organizations was established post-ADA mobilization continued the growth of the DRM movement. Not only did the new-found disability organizations protest for ADA amendments, they also advocated for discriminatory matters not covered in the ADA. This consisted of issues outside the civil rights frames such as assisted suicide and forced medication (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). Furthermore, some existing disability organizations such as ADAPT, who's demands were already met by the ADA, changed their name and focus to advocated for inclusiveness to social programs (Barnartt and Scotch 2001). The continued advocacy and ongoing maintenance from the old and new DRM organizations strengthened the DRM's sustainability which continues to be as relevant today.

#### THE BARRIER-FREE MOVEMENT A MODERN REVOLUTION

The DRM evidently proved that it is society who is disabling the individual from being functional and not the other way. The building without an elevator, a broken curbside or the classroom without reading

aids are prime examples of how an individual's limitation exists relevant to the context of their environments. Although the ADA provided a basis for equity, it failed to describe or educate how society should implement the spectrum of necessary accommodations. Thus, the movement towards a country free from social and physical barriers for individuals living with disabilities continues today. Disability advocates are working with governments to address policy and procedure discrepancies but has shown minimal progress of integrating the solutions into society (Deppen, 2018). Furthermore, since the Trump administration has taken office and removed important sections of the Affordable Care Act the frustration within the disability community has escalated to extreme upraising. Many of the members of the disability community requires adequate access to affordable medical resources to function day-to-day as members of society. In 2017, over fifty disability rights activist people living with disabilities stormed into the U.S. Capital Rotunda protesting the changes. The protests led to police having to physically carry out activists screaming "no cuts to Medicare Save our Liberty," and many arrests were also made (Abrams 2018). It has been 29 years since the ADA and the disability community continues to be suppressed by a non adaptable society which is complemented by a very ineffective government. The Trump era has resurfaced a social movement culture that we have not seen in America since the 1960s. The current large waves of protests have begun and creating a platform and opportunity for the DRM to resurface and revolt for equal rights as American citizens.

## CONCLUSION

Although the DRM was able to overcome its weakened solidarity and mobilize the ADA by capitalizing on the civil rights movement's direct-action tactics and collective action framing, the implementation of the new policies among society did not share in the same success. The heterogeneity of individuals living with a disability created a challenge for the disability community and resulted in insufficient accessibility accommodations in order to end disability discrimination. Disability activism continues to encounter conflicts with defining a disability in contemporary society and remains subjective to interpretation. However, with increasing forms of assisted technology, such as electronic voice to screen email, closed captioning and handsfree telephones, the DRM can expand its network of participants in a more efficient and accessible manner. In addition, e-mail and the World Wide Web's media coverage has contributed to disability activists' ability to spread awareness and unite world-wide disability movements. Furthermore, like gender and racial studies, disability studies are becoming integrated into the education system. Disability scholars imply that the DRM has not yet reached its peak, as developing knowledge, new technology and emerging issues surrounding disabilities will be "escalated to contentious political action" (Barnartt and Scotch 2001:214).

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# Conflict Lines and International Security: the case of China

Jacobo Matta Gallego

International relations following the Cold War could be described as a period of unprecedented peace. The hegemonic rule of the United States gave birth to a new liberal world order that was structured and enforced through international institutions and the collective use of state coercion against transgressors, state or otherwise. Yet, the rise of China as a global power is threatening a disruption of the status quo, creating a conflict of ideas and interests with the United States that could threaten international security. China's adoption of economic nationalism - in contrast with the US' policy of neoliberalism - has created tensions among the two powers, resulting in a trade conflict as well as heightened competition for influence among other nations and continents. A fundamental conflict of interest in the South China Sea has resulted in a warming geo-political conflict line, as China expands its territorial interests in opposition to the US sphere of influence and their respective allies in the area who feel threatened. This essay will argue that rising tensions between the United States and China over a conflict of trade and territory could threaten international security.

International security as conceptualized after World War I<sup>11</sup> focuses on conflict. Traditional security scholars focused on interstate conflicts, but contemporary scholars are shifting their focus to new security threats. From a realist perspective, international security centers on the control, threat, and use of military power. It focuses on what conditions lead to a heightened risk of states using force as well as the policies that states adopt in order to avert, prepare for, and engage in conflict.<sup>12</sup> Major themes when studying international security include the balance of power, strategy, and deterrence. The field of study has abandoned its singular approach to conflict, looking beyond interstate conflicts to study areas previously neglected.<sup>13</sup> Where scholars used to ignore a state's domestic policies, they now recognize areas such as economic policies as having potential for conflict.

Trade competition and conflict between China and the United States poses a threat to international security due to the opposing ideological nature of the powers and how this has played out in the international arena. Economic nationalism can be described as a combination of popular opinion combined with state policies that pursue an enhanced and protected national economy for the sole purpose of maintaining economic sovereignty. Under economic nationalism, a state's core focus is on tariffs and trade because of the competitive nature of the global economy. Oftentimes, proponents believe state interference is necessary to protect domestic producers and consumers.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, neoliberalism is a firm belief that the state should not interfere in the free market and the private wealth within the nation. It is characterized by deregulation and its American formulation is popularly known as

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<sup>11</sup> Nigel J. Young, "What is International Security?," *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Gerald Hallowell, "Economic Nationalism," *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2004).

“Reaganomics”.<sup>15</sup> In order to contextualize current conflicts, one must look at why China practices economic nationalism?

China’s economic policy is cemented in a nationalist perspective, largely the result of the Communist party’s efforts as well as a vivid national history framed by the abuse and exploitation China suffered at the hands of the West. The central foundation of China’s foreign policy comes from a period known as the “Century of Humiliation” (1839 - 1949). This period began with the First Opium War in 1839, where Britain attempted to open up an “insular empire” for trade by using force.<sup>16</sup> Following the violation of their sovereignty, there was a period of chaos and state weakness. China’s 1000-year-old imperial system was destroyed, and the 100-year period was characterized by uprisings, civil wars, and foreign invasion. The victory of the Chinese Communist Party in the civil war ended this era in 1949.<sup>17</sup>

The century of humiliation has led Chinese policymakers to three major conclusions, all sharing the belief that the modern international system has not changed since the 19th century. The first conclusion among Chinese policy makers and intelligentsia was that the international system continues to prioritize Western interests. The second argument is that China, now a major player in the world order, should ensure the survival of the system and should encourage others to do so as well. Lastly, China’s power coupled with knowledge of the century of humiliation led to the country having a vision for a new world order and how it should be conducted.<sup>18</sup> In all three cases, they are reflective of China’s past experience with the world order. The state’s impetus for developing the economy has been to address the weakness of the army and a lack of “spirit” in the nation, which were both identified as causes for China’s exploitation and humiliation at the hand of foreign powers.<sup>19</sup>

This competitive mindset is reflective of China’s current trade practices and policies around the globe. One such example of China’s expanding influence is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). China has invested more than \$62 billion dollars into Pakistan’s infrastructure and economy in sectors ranging from agriculture, energy, Information and Technology systems.<sup>20</sup> A public letter, written by David A. Perdue and fifteen other senators, discussed the dangers of Chinese debt in Pakistan, “These financial crisis illustrates the dangers of China's debt-trap diplomacy and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to developing countries, as well as the national security threat they pose to the United States.”<sup>21</sup> This quotation has made it clear that the United States considers China’s aggressive economic expansion as a threat to their own national security. When the hegemonic power feels threatened, the risk to international security becomes apparent as conflict lines over trade forms. Debt-trap diplomacy has also emerged in African countries. China has offered billions in development loans across the continent on the

<sup>15</sup> Trischa Mann, “Neoliberalism,” *Australian Law Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Yue Du, review of *Merchants of War and Peace: British knowledge of China in the making of the Opium War*, by Song-Chuan, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 4 (2018): 1067.

<sup>17</sup> Alison Adcock Kaufman, “The ‘century of humiliation,’ then and now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order,” *Pacific Focus* 25, no. 1 (2010): 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Unger, *Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 184.

<sup>20</sup> “CPEC Vision and Mission,” China Pakistan Economic Corridor, accessed February 22, 2019, <http://cpec.gov.pk/vision-mission/3>.

<sup>21</sup> Sourav Ganguly, China-Pak Economic Corridor May Lead to Debt Distress in Pak: US Senators,” NDTV, published 4 September 2018, accessed 22 February, 2019, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/china-pak-economic-corridor-may-lead-to-debt-distress-in-pak-us-senators-1910798>.

condition that should a country fail to pay it back, China can take ownership over national assets.<sup>22</sup> In 2015, Sri Lanka used a \$6 billion-dollar loan to build a massive port. When Sri Lanka failed to pay it back, the Chinese government requisitioned 70% of its ownership.<sup>23</sup> But what does US liberalism have to do with China's economic nationalism?

In the face of economic competition from China, the United States has pursued a policy of 'rebalancing,' which has led to increased competition; most recently in the form of an outright trade war. In 2015, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter declared,

"In terms of our rebalance in the broadest sense, passing TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership] is as important to me as another aircraft carrier. [The TPP would] 'deepen our alliances and partnerships abroad and underscore our lasting commitment to the Asia-Pacific. And it would help us promote a global order that reflects both our interests and our values.'"<sup>24</sup>

Carter's words made it clear that the United States considers China's aggressive economic expansion, labelled as "debt-trap diplomacy" as a threat to their own national security. In this regard, the Obama administration pursued neoliberal trade policies in hopes of combating Chinese influence. This culminated in the development of the TPP, which was an attempt to massively expand free trade and in the words of US Trade Representative Michael Forman, use the trade deal as "one of our most important tools for dealing with one of this century's greatest challenges, [which is to] revitalize the rules-based order and to do so at a time when there are competing visions for the global economy."<sup>25</sup>

Donald Trump pulled out of the deal in January 2017, which went on to be signed by 11 countries anyways.<sup>26</sup> Pursuing a more aggressive tactic, Donald Trump initiated a trade war with China for several reasons. First, he wished to address China's trade surplus, which was seen as the reason for reduced job creation in the US. The United States also wished to address China's illegal acquisition of U.S. technology. Furthermore, the conflict was triggered due to US fears that China was attempting to weaken U.S. national security and its international standing through trade.<sup>27</sup> While the trade war contradicts neoliberal policies, it remains an overall symptom of a threatened United States. Aside from the economy, there is also an emerging conflict line over interests in the South China Sea.

China and the United States have a conflict of interest in the South China Sea, as China is expanding its territorial claims, much to the detriment of the US and their allies who feel threatened. The South China sea is one of the most important trade hubs in the world. More than half of the planet's maritime trade crosses the area, half of the world's liquified gas and one third of its crude oil; it is

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew Collier, *China Buys the World* (Singapore, Palgrave Pivot: 2018), 69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70.

<sup>24</sup> Bates Gill, "The United States and Asia in 2015: Across the region, US-China competition intensifies," *Asian Survey* 56, no. 1 (2016): 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Katie Lobosco, "Trump pulled out of a massive trade deal. Now 11 countries are going ahead without the US," CNN, published 29 December, Accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/29/politics/tpp-trade-trump/index.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Tao Liu and Wing Thye Woo, "Understanding the U.S.-China Trade War," *China Economic Journal* 11, no. 3 (2019): 319.

apparent why there is a conflict of interest in the area.<sup>28</sup> In total, six countries have territorial disputes in the sea, but China's claims are the most ambitious.<sup>29</sup> Since the 1950's, China has continuously asserted its claims in the South China Sea, occupying islands such as the Spratly Islands in 1987-8.<sup>30</sup> At times conflict appeared apparent, such as when China forcefully attempted to take Scarborough Shoal in 2012, leading to a naval standoff against the Philippines.<sup>31</sup> Nationalist memory over the 'century of humiliation' has pushed the government to pursue 'historic' claims aggressively.<sup>32</sup>

The United States has responded to China's expansion by advancing its strategic alliances in the area and assuaging their concerns. Obama's administration accomplished this by visiting several regional partners and allies, notably Japan when in 2015, a summit between the countries overlapped with the release of a new US-Japan defense guideline in response to "regional security threats."<sup>33</sup> Another key visit was with Indian Prime Minister Modi of India, which expanded military cooperation and emphasized an agreed goal of keeping the South China Sea a neutral shipping region.<sup>34</sup> Of all of China's claims, Taiwan has proven to be the most confrontational with the United States.

China's interest in Taiwan is nationalist in nature - it sees the country as a province that must be reunited with the mainland.<sup>35</sup> Professor Shirk's argument in *China: A Fragile Superpower* centers around regime survival in China. She believes that since the party has distanced itself from a socialist framework, its legitimacy now relies on nationalist sentiment.<sup>36</sup> In her study of Taiwan, she has identified dual interests from the United States and China as a very dangerous source of possible conflict. For China, the survival of the regime would be in danger if the state failed to live up to any threats it has declared over a possible crisis in Taiwan. The very nationalist nature of China serves to tether their foreign policy towards an unassailable course.<sup>37</sup>

The United States is equally tethered strategically to Taiwan, in such a way that a crisis could result in a war with China. The Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 "requires the President to view any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a threat to the peace and security."<sup>38</sup> While not directly implying a military alliance, any military invasion by China would be a direct challenge to the United States and would probably flare up overall tensions across the South China Sea, to say the very least. The Act is an attempt to balance against Chinese intervention while also preventing Taiwan from declaring independence and starting a war.<sup>39</sup> Recently, the United States has failed to curb the continuously more aggressive language used by Taiwanese presidents, who have advocated independence to spur popular support.<sup>40</sup> In any case, a

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<sup>28</sup> Bill Hayton, *The South China Sea: The struggle for Power in Asia* (London, Yale University Press: 2014), XVI.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>33</sup> Gill, "The United States and Asia in 2015," 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 187.

<sup>36</sup> Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 187.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 266

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

retired US military general said that as of 2018, a war with China is likely in the next fifteen years.<sup>41</sup> The United States cannot abandon Taiwan unless it wishes to lose credibility in South Asia,<sup>42</sup> and China could hypothetically not avoid a confrontation over Taiwan, due to the outrage this would cause with the Chinese public. It is evident that the conflict of interest over Taiwan is a possible relations-bomb waiting to explode.

In this essay, I have argued that a conflict of interests and a conflict of ideas has led China and the United States to form new conflict lines over trade and territory. China's aggressive trade expansion under its nationalist framework has been met with fear and opposition from the United States, who sees its world order under threat. Territorially, China's expanding control of the South China Sea and its desires to control Taiwan has put both countries on a course of potential military conflict, threatening international security. In writing this essay, it would appear that there are many real dangers for international security as new conflict lines form between the two strongest countries on the planet. The implications for this are in my opinion clear: US hegemony for the first time in its history has a powerful contender. This is no short-term setback for the United States as China's growing influence around the globe shows no sign of abating. While one can only speculate on how the international system may change over the next fifty years, one thing appears certain: *change* is on the horizon.

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<sup>41</sup> Vanessa Gera, "US war with China likely in 15 years, retired general says," *Military Times*, published 24 October, 2018, Accessed February 21, 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/10/24/us-war-with-china-is-likely-in-15-years-retired-general-says/>.

<sup>42</sup> Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 266.

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THE FORUM



**LITERATURE  
REVIEW**

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# The Myth of Human Centrality: Paul Kingsnorth's “Crisis of Bigness” in *Station Eleven*

Aysha Ashfaq

According to writer and self-proclaimed recovering environmentalist Paul Kingsnorth, the world is experiencing a crisis of growth. Kingsnorth presents the ideas of Leopold Kohr, an economic and political theorist who stated that when something is wrong, something is too big. Kohr theorized that the problem with big institutions and regimes is their bigness. Kingsnorth explains that institutions that grow too big and unaccountable threaten to collapse in on themselves with the weight of their reach and responsibilities (Confessions 10). The perpetrator of this crisis of bigness is human will.

Humans are the inciters of growth. According to Kingsnorth, humans believe myths about human centrality and their separation from nature and they have forgotten that these are myths (Confessions 283). Humans believe that the Earth exists to service them or that their centrality allows them full jurisdiction over it and thus they enforce their wills on the Earth. Big regimes, institutions, traditions, practices, beliefs, and establishments owe their inception to the will of humans shaping the world according to their own desires and judgements. The crux of the issue of bigness lies in the collapse that follows it.

For centuries, scholars from all disciplines have been interested in collapse and how it effects society's established structures. As far back as the 19th century, Jonathon Swift wrote about the means through which change in society might occur. In his famous novel, *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift suggests that humans must accept their filthiness and have the courage to use their reason to bring about real change (Gray). For economic theorist Naomi Klein, collapse serves as the cause for real change in her theory detailing “shock therapy”. According to Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*, significant and real change comes about only as a result of a large catastrophe or collapse (Bolus-Reichert).

This theory—while developed as a political commentary—contributes to Kingsnorth's crisis of growth because it suggests that this collapse of bigness will bring about significant change. Klein positions America's war on Iraq to suggest that this conflict was used by the American government to pass controversial policies while the nation was distracted and distraught by the shock of the war. In the context of Kingsnorth's environmental collapse, this theory asserts that the collapse of bigness will cause significant change—good or bad—and the moments right after the collapse will obstruct human will. As the world collapses in on itself, as big structures dissolve, humans will be unable to act according to their wills and thus there will be a small period of peace in which the world exists without human influence.

This small period of peace can be found in Kohr's theory. According to Kingsnorth's reiteration of Kohr's ideas, “‘between the intellectual ice ages of great-power domination’, the world would become ‘little and free once more’” (Confessions 13). Kingsnorth explains that after the collapse of one big idea and before the growth of another, the world experiences a blip of smallness and freedom; freedom from the influence of human will. Before some humans are given an opportunity to reestablish their presence in the world, the Earth and other humans will

be allowed a period in which to exist outside the bounds of a world restricted and regulated by human will. However, this period of peace will be short lived because humans acting on their wills is inevitable.

According to Kingsnorth, humans will most definitely attempt to grow their big institutions and ideas again and therefore this little and free world will be limited in time. This notion is furthered by famous poet William Butler Yeats in his poem, “The Second Coming”. Kingsnorth analyzes this poem and pays particular attention to Yeats’ “gyres”. According to Kingsnorth, “gyres” are spirals of chaos that grow and collapse over a two thousand year period (“A Storm Blown From Paradise”). Chaos is most prominent when the gyre is at it’s widest point. At the height of a gyres size, a small seed of hope is planted that will bring about a new order after the collapse of this gyre. This new order will begin a new gyre that will grow to its widest expanse and will also ultimately collapse and join in an infinite procession of gyres. Thus, growth driven by human will (contingent on the survival of humans after a collapse) will inevitably occur as a part of this infinite procession.

Kingsnorth and Kohr’s ideas about bigness when coupled with Klein’s “shock therapy” and Yeats’ gyres assert that (a) big establishments collapse in on themselves due to unmanageability of their size, (b) this collapse brings about real change—good or bad, (c) there will be a little a free world that exists after this collapse and before growth occurs again, and (d) growth will definitely occur again. The origin of big establishments and ideas in the world lies in the wills of human beings. Humans manipulate the land and other humans according to their own will and therefore we must look to the little and free world that exists between the collapse and growth of big establishments. The wills of human beings have been obstructed in this little and free world by the collapse. Humans that desire growth again must wait to recover and recollect their bearings before venturing for growth. This period of limbo allows breathing room for the Earth and other humans not obsessed with growth. A world that exists unperturbed by human will is a world that thrives for both the land and the people that do not wish to rebuild big things. This is the world we must tell stories of.

According to Paul Kingsnorth, we weave our reality through the stories we tell (Confessions 283). Storytelling influences how we feel and think about our existence and therefore we must tell stories that undermine the notion that the Earth lives to serve humans as much as they will for it to. As mentioned earlier, the myths of human centrality and separation from nature are merely myths. Humans are in fact connected to the Earth and yet we have been seduced by our advancements in “civilization” to believe otherwise. Humans need stories about a peaceful world that exists in which humans do not overpower the Earth. This narrative exists in Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station Eleven*.

*Station Eleven* demonstrates that a world undisturbed by human will thrives. Mandel eliminates the majority of the world’s population with a viral epidemic called the Georgia Flu in her post-apocalyptic novel that charts the lives of several unwittingly connected characters. A lack of human population in the world means a lack of human will. The epidemic leaves a world with so few people that the big human establishments of government and transportation and technology are nullified. In a single chapter dedicated to the losses the world suffers as a result of this epidemic, Mandel lists the end of experiences as personal as social media posts to establishments as large as countries (Mandel 31-32). She completes this list with the eerie reminder that this is a world with no more avatars meaning this is a world in which humans can

no longer hide their true selves behind fabrications and thus is a world in which humans are forced to face their real selves. What is left is a scarce human population unable to manipulate the Earth according to their wills as they once did and thus forced to learn to live with the Earth.

We must tell the stories of the characters in *Station Eleven* in relation to the collapse. When examined in light of Yeats' gyres, Arthur's extraordinary celebrity lifestyle is the height of chaos in one gyre. His death and the Georgia Flu symbolize the collapse of the gyre. The twenty years that follow this collapse are the little free world that Kohr describes in which *The Travelling Symphony* thrives. The rise of the Prophet's influence and the reemergence of electricity are the beginning of a new gyre. The seed planted during the height of the first gyre can refer to Tyler who is born amidst the chaos of Arthur's celebrity lifestyle, divorce from his second wife, and threat of exposure from an old friend he wrote unfiltered letters to. This seed can also be Kirsten, the child on stage during the chaos of Arthur's death who spends her childhood on screen and stage and ultimately grows to aid in defeating the threat of the Prophet. Interestingly enough, both of these children receive a copy of "*Station Eleven*" the comic from Arthur which becomes the crucial focus of their climatic interaction at the end of the novel.

The lives of Arthur Leander, Jeevan Chaudhary, Kirsten Raymonde, and the Prophet demonstrate the ultimate failure of humans that attempt to inflict their wills on the Earth as opposed to others who learn to adapt to the new world. These characters can be divided into two categories. Arthur and Jeevan can be grouped as the two that live long lives in the world before the epidemic. Kirsten and the Prophet live the majority of their lives in the world after the collapse. Both sets of characters contain one character that sacrifices their will to their circumstances and another than attempts to conquer the world with their will. While Jeevan and Kirsten survive the epidemic and the Prophet's scourge to live happy lives in union with the people and land around them, Arthur and the Prophet cease to exist in the world each attempts to conquer with his will. Therefore, in relation to this small world that exists after the epidemic, the stories of Arthur, Jeevan, the Prophet, and Kirsten serve as apt new myths that undermine the myths of human centrality and separation from nature.

Beginning before the epidemic, Arthur Leander is a famous actor whose existence is so large that he connects every character in this novel. Arthur is the big entity that Kingsnorth and Kohr suggest will collapse in on himself. Arthur's celebrity life is the height of his gyre that Yeats writes will ultimately come to an end. Arthur's life transpires almost exactly according to the predictions of these theorists. Arthur begins his life as a student in the large city of Toronto who arrives from a small island off the coast of British Columbia. Almost immediately, Arthur abandons school to pursue acting and for a decade he floats from Toronto to New York City to Hollywood, letting himself become a part of the colossal guild of Hollywood actors (Mandel 74-76). Eventually, Arthur becomes so wrapped up in the machine of Hollywood that his best friend Clark is unable to discern any authenticity in his character when they reunite for lunch after many years (Mandel 110-112). After becoming a famous actor, three divorces, a son that lives half way across the world, the printing of a book that includes his innermost thoughts and opinions, and many other chaotic events, Arthur finally realizes in the fifth decade of his life that he does not wish to be a part of his big and chaotic world anymore.

Arthur resolves to abandon his life as an actor after one last gig on stage as *King Lear* to go and live with his son in Israel and establish a small life for himself. However, even though Arthur finally desires change, he is so entrenched within his big world that he is unable to

achieve it. Arthur's thoughts during this period of his life differ greatly from those of his letters to his old friend and his interview with Jeevan before his second divorce. Arthur notices the little details of the world around him like the pigeons by a hotdog stand. Arthur finally begins to realize the scale of his immense love for his son. Before his last performance—during which he dies of a heart attack—Arthur calls his son Tyler to hear his voice; however, Arthur's role as an actor gets in the way as he is repeatedly interrupted by announcements that he is required on stage (Mandel 323-325). This broken conversation is the result of Arthur's lifetime spent running from the little island he grew up on and the little life he had before stardom. Arthur is so far removed from that land and his relationships that try as he might, he cannot return to them and ultimately dies without being able to do so. Arthur's inability to live a little and free life after spending decades as a celebrity complicit to his separation from his land and people demonstrates the collapse that Kingsnorth, Kohr, and Yeats theorize. The gyre of his life ends after it achieves a maximum level of chaos. Arthur grows so big that he ultimately collapses in on himself, symbolically collapsing on stage in the very city that served as his initial escape from his small island. Arthur's inability to return to a small and free life as a result of his will to become a famous actor demonstrates that human will causes growth that becomes too big and collapses in on itself thus exposing the myth of human centrality and separation from nature. We must tell Arthur's story to remind ourselves of the crisis of bigness and its inevitable collapse.

Another actor that lives much of his life before the Georgia Flu is Jeevan. Much like Arthur, Jeevan begins his career hungry for money and success and so he takes a job as paparazzi. Jeevan is quite successful with this job considering he gets a photo of Arthur Leander's first wife stressed and smoking a cigarette during the night, shortly before her divorce from Arthur (Mandel 101-104). Furthermore, Jeevan is the first reporter that Arthur speaks to about separating from his second wife, even before he tells her that he will be leaving her. Arthur even mentions the infant son his soon-to-be-ex-wife just gave birth to (Mandel 169-173). All things considered, Jeevan is successful at his job as a reporter though this job can only lead to chaos as a result of the secrets he uncovers. Before Jeevan is carried away with the bigness and chaos of being a successful celebrity reporter, he leaves to become a paramedic. Jeevan—unlike Arthur—does not remain stubbornly attached to growth in his life. Jeevan's education as a paramedic allows him to quickly identify Arthur's symptoms on stage and rush to help him. Jeevan abandons growth towards bigness to help people and thus when the epidemic strikes, he suffers but he does fail. After his brother commits suicide and his rations run out, Jeevan is forced to enter the world that is left after the epidemic (Mandel 189). After much time on the road, Jeevan's skills as a paramedic eventually gain him entrance into a settlement where he makes a place for himself as a healer. In this settlement, Jeevan meets his wife Dahlia and they love on happily in the new world with two children (Mandel 269-275). Even though Jeevan was once a part of the same big Hollywood industry that Arthur spends his life as a part of, Jeevan leaves of his own accord before the bigness of it all consumes his life. Jeevan's decision to study to become a paramedic and thus heal the people around him and join his community through this allows him to thrive in the new world. Jeevan abandons his will to adapt to his circumstances. He is an example of a character who lived a long life before the epidemic with many opportunities to descend into chaos yet did not pursue them in favour of returning to his community to serve his people. Therefore, Jeevan's success as a result of his decision to be a healer allows him to adapt and thrive in the new world, demonstrating that abandoning the myth of human centrality and separation from nature allows for humans to thrive.

The Prophet is a character whose life develops mostly after the Georgia Flu and therefore in the new world. The Prophet's name is Tyler Leander and he is the son of famous actor Arthur Leander and his second wife, Elizabeth Colton. After the epidemic leaves him with just his mother as family and person of influence, Tyler's young age causes him to believe her reasoning that everything happens for a reason (Mandel 253). Due to the misinterpreted Biblical teachings of his mother and his young interpretation of the comic "Station Eleven", Tyler develops his own ideals about a new world order (Mandel 259-261). He develops these beliefs to suit his own desires and judgements and begins a cult in which his followers act according to his will. He calls himself the Prophet, indicates the women he wishes to marry, marks the people that disobey him, and runs an overall totalitarian regime based on large-scale misinterpretations of the Bible and the comic book. At the climax of the novel, Kirsten recognizes pieces of the Prophet's speech before he plans to execute her and she recites the words of the comic that she herself has memorized. This crucial scene sees the Prophet insist on enforcing he will one last time before he is assassinated by one of his own followers (Mandel 302). The Prophet's stubborn desire to rule the land and people according to his will and refusal to adapt to the circumstances of the new world lead to his demise, proving much like Arthur's death does that human centrality and separation from nature are myths. The Prophet's will to grow his power and dominate the new world ultimately fails him as he collapses in on himself when one of his own followers is the one to ultimately kill him. This assassination reinstates that big regimes driven by human will ultimately collapse in on themselves. The Prophet's death finally allows for Kirsten and the Travelling Symphony to reunite in the little and free world of the Severn City Airport.

Kirsten Raymonde is the ultimate example of a character whose dedication to the people and land around her allows her to adapt to the new world and eventually thrive in it. Kirsten is very young when the Georgia Flu kills her parents and eventually her brother, so young that she does not remember much of anything about her life before the epidemic (Mandel 113-115). Kirsten takes a different approach than the Prophet in how she treats the past world and her role in the new one. Kirsten enjoys collecting artifacts like magazine clippings and pictures that help her weave the story of Arthur Leander's life (Mandel 39-41). Arthur was a patronly figure in her childhood. As a child, she played Arthur's daughter in an on-stage rendition of William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Arthur gave Kirsten her beloved copy of "Station Eleven" and it is through Arthur that she also receives a paperweight. Kirsten holds onto the memory of Arthur through her many mementos but she does not attempt to reinforce the past in this life as the Prophet does. She too has a copy of "Station Eleven" the comic but she enjoys it as a piece of the past, not as a manifesto for how to create a future. In her life with the Travelling Symphony, Kirsten learns how to survive and accepts the nature of this new world void of old world institutions and technology. In her climatic encounter with the Prophet, Kirsten uses her knowledge of "Station Eleven" to appeal to the Prophet who plans to execute her (Mandel 302). She uses pieces of the past to attempt to connect with him unlike the Prophet who uses this comic from the past to justify enforcing his will. Kirsten's choice to hold onto the past but not reinstate it demonstrates her willingness to adapt to this world that exists after the collapse. Kirsten does not attempt to inflict her will on the world. Her resolve to protect her friends in the Travelling Symphony to the best of her ability and her attempt to connect with the corrupt Prophet undermine the myths of human centrality and separation from nature. Kirsten's actions clearly show that she does not believe that the Earth exists to serve her. Kirsten's ability to adapt to this new world by not enforcing her own will on the Earth or the people around her allows her

to find success by reuniting with her caravan and also by meeting Clark who can answer her questions about Arthur.

In conclusion, *Station Eleven* as a new myth demonstrates Paul Kingsnorth's assertion that a little and free world exists in the time between the gyres or the collapse and reemergence of big establishments. In this novel, the characters that learn to adapt to the little and free world that exists after the effects of the Georgia Flu are the ones that ultimately survive and thrive. Moving forward, Paul Kingsnorth and Dougald Hines' "Principles of Uncivilization" mention key ideas that align with this type of storytelling. First and foremost, both writers acknowledge and emphasize the important role of storytelling in shaping the reality of a society (*Confessions* 284). We need to change the stories we tell. We need to tell stories that demonstrate how a human's will damages the Earth and other humans, much like in *Station Eleven*. We need myths in which humans coexist with the Earth rather than those of humans bending the Earth to their will.

According to Jennifer Baichwal, one of the creators of the Anthropocene film and project, the solutions for issues of human separation from nature lie in the stories and accounts of Indigenous peoples (Begay). Baichwal believes in looking to the past for answers about how to reestablish a relationship with the Earth. Baichwal herself represents her ideas about the relationships between humans and the Earth alongside Edward Burtynsky in *Anthropocene*, a film and gallery experience that immerses the audience in images of the Earth ravaged by human activity. The title of this project refers to a proposed dating system in which the Earth is dated according to its interactions with human beings. Dating the Earth with human interactions is proposed because humans enforcing their will on the Earth is what causes the Earth to change in the first place. The graphics of this project are meant to evoke an affective response to the problems the Earth is facing due to human activity and this attempt parallels Johnathan Swift's assertion that humans must face their filth so that they can change (Gray). At the end of the day, the third and fourth principles of Kingsnorth and Hines' "Principles of Uncivilization" combine to state that we must use stories to challenge myths about human centrality and separation from nature and thus tell stories that detail human adaptation to and a relationship with the Earth. These new stories will be the hope that "[leads] to the unknown world ahead of us" (*Confessions* 283-284).

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