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# The power of emotion: examining the self-immolation of Mohamad Bouazizi, the Arab revolution and international politics

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## Abstract

This paper argues that Mohamad Bouazizi's self-immolation was a Pragmatic Act aimed at escaping Biopower formulated by the authoritarian Tunisian regime for the purpose of securitizing Structural Violence. It is a sensational form of suicide that awakens emotions and inspires resistance. Human emotions, not technological innovation, had the power to change regimes. Twitter and Facebook are methods of communication that helped transmit this rage, but did not cause these revolutions. Passions, lit by Bouazizi's flame, diffused naturally by human interface and may have occurred without such technological advances. This paper is divided into three main parts. The first is to theorize the act of self-immolation. The second theorizes about the power human emotion has on the international arena. Lastly, it highlights the discursive power of scholarship. Fundamentally, this paper seeks to illuminate these thoughts on Bouazizi's self-immolation, as well pursue self-reflexivity that exemplifies the subjectivity of intellectuality. It presents a novel argument as it describes what dominant theories of International Relations omit: how ordinary people influence the international politics. The Arab Revolutions were caused not solely by the emergence of social networks or news media, but by emotional diffusion. Raw human anger forms the uniting force that assembles and organizes oppressed populations. By using these concepts and describing this and other cases of self-immolation, one discovers a pattern: self-immolation is an extraordinary method of suicide that persons without agency use to securitize structural violence by means of human emotion. As such, emotions are an integral, but understudied part of International Relations.

## Keywords

Securitization, biopower, orientalism, Arab revolutions, political suicide

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## Introduction

The Middle East is on fire. Mohamad Bouazizi, a Tunisian fruit vendor, used himself as the igniting spark to bring attention to his predicament. He had no power over his own life dominated by an authoritarian state. Worn-out from ostracism and degradation, he declared independence from this regime through self-immolation. Self-immolation is a sensational form of suicide that awakens emotions and inspires resistance. It was a Pragmatic Act aimed at escaping Biopower formulated by the authoritarian Tunisian regime for the purpose of gaining Agency to securitize Structural Violence. His death enraged and assembled the oppressed populations of the Middle East; their emotions lit by Bouazizi's flame spread to their very core and into the streets.

To illuminate this and other instances of self-immolation and suicide, one must define three main concepts found within International Relations Theory: Biopower, Pragmatic Act and Agency. Biopower is a Post-Modern concept defined by the Michel Foucault, Pragmatic Act belongs to the Constructivist perspective, more specifically, the Copenhagen School of Securitization theory, while Agency is taken from the Critical School. Using these concepts and other cases of self-immolation,

one discovers a pattern: self-immolation is an extraordinary method of suicide that persons without agency use to securitize, and bring attention to, Structural Violence. Through self-immolation, the Pragmatic act, Bouazizi controlled his death, escaping Biopower, gaining the Agency needed to illustrate his plight to securitize the way Structural Violence controlled his life and limited his emancipation. Those in a similar position were affected profoundly by his final act. Rage spilled over borders and onto the streets of the Middle East. Here, emotions as an integral part of human social interaction had the power to change entire nations and construct the world.

This paper presents a novel argument as it describes what dominant theories of International Relations omit: the power of emotion. Furthermore, the paper aims to proliferate discursive Agency to construct new forms of Biopower that serves marginalized interests. However, this argument becomes problematic for two reasons. The first is expressed by Jef Huysmans and his notion of the Normative Dilemma. Second, one must ask: is this argument the event's true reflection? I did not witness the event and I cannot alter my perceptions to fit into another society. Am I simply interpreting the event as I like? By employing

the Post-Colonial concept Orientalism, formulated by Edward Said, I illustrate how scholars employ their own interpretations onto a society, influencing perceptions and policy. Therefore, I argue that Orientalism is itself a form of Biopower that defines life. From this, I investigate whether Orientalism can be divorced from its negative and imperialist affinities. By doing so, I focus on the productive capacities of discourse and the pursuit of emancipation rather than Occidental domination. It seeks to perpetuate new forms of control that respects the sovereignty of the individual, rather than preserving the security of a scholar's home nation. In other words, scholars have the power to alter governing structures. However, herein lays an inherent danger. Discourse may result in the substitution of one form of oppression for another. Scholars therefore should limit their involvement, only supporting the oppressed right to speak for, and govern, themselves. Hence, this paper can be divided into three main parts. This paper is divided into three main parts. The first is to theorize the act of self-immolation. The second theorizes about the power human emotion has on the interna-

tional arena. Lastly, it highlights the discursive power of scholarship.

### **Narrative: Tunisia, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and Mohammad Bouazizi**

After decades of French colonialism, Tunisia gained its independence in 1956. Since then, like many newly independent nations, Tunisia faced internal difficulties and developmental complications. Christopher Alexander divides Tunisia's modern history into three distinct periods. The first period marks the move from mass based populism to the Pro-Western yet authoritarian rule of Habib Bourguiba. The second is defined by resistance to this regime. Mounting Islamist sentiment fermented by such hostility presented the most staid danger to the governing regime. This fear of an Islamist takeover led then Prime Minister Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali to launch a bloodless coup against the aging Bourguiba in 1987, ushering in the third period.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, Ben Ali's regime enacted reforms to coalesce the divided nation. He wanted a multi-party system, free elections, equal rights for women, individual rights and liberties, freedom of speech

1 C. Alexander, *Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 37

and the rule of law.<sup>2</sup> He freed political prisoners and legalized their parties. However, Ben Ali was not building a democratic nation. These acts and sentiments were simply to establish citizen consent toward a ‘consensual democracy’- a political order that allowed a bit more freedom to express opinions and to organize within the boundaries drawn and defended by the state.”<sup>3</sup> Debate could take place, but only within a certain framework defined by Ben Ali’s party apparatus. In Ben Ali’s own words: “the state fixes the fundamental framework, creates the climate and provides the fundamental necessities for competition and dialogue. Civil society should accept these and oppose any acts that go against the national consensus.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, Ben Ali formulated a regime under the guise of freedom to install an authoritarian seat of power. By 1989, Tunisians understood this reality with the regime’s crackdowns on opposition parties, more specifically, the Islamist parties. There were arbitrary arrests and torture. Throughout his rule, he had browbeaten the threat of Islamic fundamentalist attacks to

justify his action.<sup>5</sup> In the 1990’s and 2000’s, fear of Al-Qaeda legitimized much of Ben Ali’s moves.<sup>6</sup> 9/11 gave him his evidence.

More economically, Tunisia had grown significantly. Recently, in 2000, the World Bank declared that Tunisia had “sustained the best economic performance in the Middle East and North Africa region since the late 1980’s by maintaining a stable macroeconomic framework and placing strong emphasis on social achievements.”<sup>7</sup> Between 2002 and 2005, Tunisian per capita income increased by 40%. With this, Tunisia became a model for Middle Eastern stability and development. However, even with this progress, important difficulties persisted. Insistent high unemployment of 14% of the working population marred human enjoyment.

Governmental corruption was another matter that plagued the ordinary citizen. In the previous era, Bourguiba’s corruption aimed to maintain political control. Conversely, Ben Ali’s rule was defined by his sleaze; he and his technocrats were simply bleeding the nation

2 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 5

3 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 53

4 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 53

5 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 62

6 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 61

7 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 85

8 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 65

dry for personal gain.<sup>8</sup> These problems, combined with the gross human rights abuses, set the stage for the unrest that would fundamentally change the face of Tunisia, the Middle East, and the international system.

To understand Bouazizi's act, one must first understand Bouazizi's life and the act that precipitated sudden unrest in the Middle East. From what we know from news sources, Bouazizi's father died when he was very young making him the family's sole source of income. Consequently, he failed to complete his secondary education. Instead he worked full-time as a fruit vendor. He attempted on many occasions to find new sources of employment, but was denied any chance of advancement.<sup>9</sup> He felt himself tied down by the condition of his very existence. In addition, he suffered from regular, almost daily persecution and degradation from police and security forces. His friend relates: "since he was a child, they [the police] were mistreating him. He was used to it...I

saw him humiliated."<sup>10</sup> On December 17th, Bouazizi decided to fight back. After being publically embarrassed by the police, he went to a local governor's office to demand justice. He was told: "There's nothing you can do about it."<sup>11</sup> He was at the end of his tether; he needed to be heard. However, they dismissed him and as they did, he presented an ultimatum: "If you don't see me, I'll burn myself!"<sup>12</sup> Again, he was denied justice. Before the hour was through, he had drenched himself with gasoline. His family says he never intended to injure himself, but did this only to gain attention. Nevertheless, this act set Tunisia and the entire Middle East aflame.

### Self-immolation suicide: escaping biopower

Primarily, this paper seeks to understand this incident. I believe the Post-Modern concept of Biopower speaks volumes on the subject. Biopower, a Foucauldian

8 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 65

9 Ryan, J. Al Jazeera, "The Tragic Life of a Street Vendor." Last modified 20 Jan 2011. Accessed February 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/features/2011/01/201111684242518839.html>

10 Ryan, J. Al Jazeera, "The Tragic Life of a Street Vendor"

11 E. Byrne, "Death of a Street Seller that Set off an Uprising." Financial Times. (16 Jan 2010). <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6ed028a2-21a2-11e0-9e3b-00144feab49a.html#axzz1EhfSWB9A>, (accessed February 2011)

12 Sharrock, D, J Shenker, and H Paul. The Guardian, "Egypt: how the people span the wheel of their country's history." Last modified February 12, 2011. Accessed March, 2011. <http://www.ongo.com/v/397368/-1/C0661E6590E474FF/egypt-how-the-people-span-the-wheel-of-their-countrys-history>.

concept, denotes power, not as the sovereign's power over death, but rather, its power over life.<sup>13</sup> Foucault developed this concept in 1978 with the publication of "The History of Sexuality". In it, he illustrates the evolution of state power. First, it was used to punish persons and groups who presented an existential threat to the sovereign's territory. Now: "One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death".<sup>14</sup> Biopower is not made manifest through physical strength, but via an omnipresent, self-reproducing discourse that defines and redefines what is acceptable and unacceptable. Mitchell Dean breaks this down further:

"Biopower is concerned with matters of life and death...the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions under which humans live, procreate, become ill, maintain health or become healthy and die...[It] is concerned with family, with housing, living and working conditions...it is concerned with the bio-sphere in which humans dwell."<sup>15</sup>

From this definition of Biopower, one gets the sense that there is an overwhelming force that defines the very structures of human existence. This force creates life and all aspects of living, until one ceases to exist. It does violence against a person's self-autonomy and the capacity to live one's own life."

Self-immolation is an extreme and public act of resistance that conveys a message of violence against the Tunisian regime and their form of entrapment: Biopower. Accordingly, Biopower is the cause of Bouazizi's final act. This concept illustrates how self-immolation and other forms of suicide are used to escape structures of power that define the livelihood of individuals. As mentioned, Biopower defines human behaviour by declaring how to live. In Bouazizi's case, Biopower is the dire, immobile economic and political position he found himself. This Biopower was the political apparatus set up by the Ben Ali regime, fertilized by corruption, authoritarianism and a fundamental lack of human liberty. Bouazizi was effectively barricaded by Ben Ali's regime. He could

13 M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 139

14 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 138

15 Selby, J. "Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and the Limits of Foucauldian IR." *International Relations*. 21. no. 3 (2007): 333

not advance himself and his family. It severely limited his movement and happiness. Self-immolation presented him with a chance to reject this authoritarianism and while he could not control his own life, he was determined to define his own death.

There are many reasons that support this argument. People whose life has been defined for them, who suffer from illness, depression, betrayal, adultery and a lost sense of purpose, take their own lives to express resistance to reality.<sup>16</sup> Death reinstates their power to be agents of their own destiny.<sup>17</sup> To further understand this, suicide notes, detailing reasons for ending life must be explored. A woman called K leaves her husband a final note:

“I never went out or treated myself – everything was for the children...I’d been looking forward to having sex for the first time, and I knew it would give me an orgasm. But you just taking me in a drunken state were disgusting. I got nothing out of the sex, and I’d hated it ever since...don’t force your wife to have sex if she doesn’t want to...don’t go into debt again...I’m too weak and too dependent on you...If I’d had at least one person to help me and look

after the children every now and then, I’d have fought to the end”.<sup>18</sup>

This letter expresses the frustration of a woman trapped in a financially difficult and emotionally unsatisfied marriage. She saw suicide as a way out of her overwhelming existence defined for her, not by her. In this sense, suicide becomes a liberating method of protest that rejects Biopower’s crushing control over one’s life.

Biopower shines additional light on the reasons for suicide. Subsequently, Foucault forwards his own understanding of suicide as a breaking away from Biopower:

“It is not surprising that suicide – once a crime, since it was a way to usurp the power of death which the sovereign alone, whether the one here below or the Lord above, had the right to exercise – became, in the course of the nineteenth century, one of the first conducts to enter the sphere or sociological analysis; it testified to the individual and the private right to die, at the borders and in the interstices of power that was exercised over life”.<sup>19</sup>

Suicide presents an escape from Biopower for those encased within a reality not of their making.

16 U. Grashoff, *Let me Finish*. (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2004), 27

17 Grashoff, *Let Me Finish*, 27

18 Grashoff, *Let Me Finish*, 45

19 M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 139

For: “Wherever there is power, there is resistance.”<sup>20</sup> Simply put, suicide is an act of resistance against Biopower.

Self-immolation is a regrettable form of protest, but it is a result of authoritarianism that enforces a certain way of living, or Biopower. It presents persons with the ability to escape their life defined by others. In addition to this, the act of self-immolation conveys a cogent message to autocratic regimes that this, and other acts of suicide, will occur if some degree of self-autonomy is not realized. It is the most lucid and extraordinary of communicative devices. It is a Pragmatic Act that securitized the Structural Violence in Tunisia.

### Gaining agency: self-immolation as a pragmatic act

The term Pragmatic Act belongs to the Constructivist perspective, more specifically, the Copenhagen School of Securitization theory. Thierry Balzacq in his article “The Three Faces of Agency: Political Agency, Audience and Context”, he discusses the power of discourse in terms of securitization. Securitization

“...is premised on one main assumption: the enunciation of security itself creates a new social order wherein ‘normal politics’ is bracketed”.<sup>21</sup> This new social order is the reordering of life conducive to the enunciator’s objectives. The very act of speech, expressing oneself, shapes the world. Balzacq redefines this with the notion of a Pragmatic Act. A Pragmatic Act: “operates at the level of persuasion and uses various artefacts (metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, gestures, silence and even lies) to reach its goals”.<sup>22</sup> It aims to gain an audience’s attention by any means. This is done to convince the audience that something needs immediate attention due to the threat it presents to life and livelihoods. Something must be said or done to gain this attention to convey such ideas. Fundamentally, such an act seeks to persuade those receiving the message that what they say is truth.<sup>23</sup>

Balzacq breaks down the Pragmatic Act into three stages: the locutionary, the utterance; illocutionary, the performative act; and perlocutionary, the effects and responses of the target audience.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the speaker, or the agent, conveys a message that

20 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95

21 T. Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context.” *European Journal of International Relations*. 11. no. 2 (2005): 171

22 Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization,” 172

23 Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization,” 173

24 Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization,” 175



impacts the structure, profoundly altering that structure and those within it. The environment being influenced will no longer remain the same before the Pragmatic Act. This is acutely related to the concept of Agency, the capability to change structures, discussed next.

Agency is the ability to act to influence and change structures. It is the “temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environment... which through the interplay of habit, imagination and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the programs posed by changing historical situation.”<sup>25</sup> It is the potential power of states and individuals to form the world’s political structure, not simply through material means, but through the use of social norms, meanings and interactions.<sup>26</sup> In other words, Agency is the capacity actors possess to act independently to gain societal transformation.<sup>27</sup> The aim of Agency in this case is to challenge orthodoxy to enforce change. Further, Agency, as a Critical School concept, describes local actions and its global effects. Agency the power of the counter he-

gemony: it can be used to take action by actively imagining and seeking alternatives to the neoliberal globalization project. This resistance is defined by pluralism as it transcends borders, genders, cultures, religions and classes. It forwards new platforms in the spirit of counter hegemony.<sup>28</sup> Gill cites the World Social Forum and other ‘globalization from below’ movements as a representation of agency. This agency may eventually take form as a post-modern transnational political party.<sup>29</sup> Essentially, agency is the power of the counter-hegemony that desires to create a new world with the interest of the world’s marginalized masses at the forefront of the movement. For the Critical School, Agency is necessary to bring about emancipation from oppression. Used together, the concepts of Pragmatic Act and Agency are vital to elucidating self-immolation. Initially, it would seem that Bouazizi and his compatriots lacked Agency. However, I argue that Pragmatic Acts can be done to gain, or regain, Agency, especially when done in ways that elicit emotion in such a spontaneous way.

25 Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization,” 190

26 F. M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 61

27 Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization,” 171

28 S. Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 81

29 Gill, *Power and Resistance*, 241

Seeing these concepts, let us now explore the ideas behind self-immolation. Self-immolation has been used by marginalized persons throughout history to gain attention and escape control. It exists fundamentally as a norm that demonstrates liberation from oppression: "It has been used...as an exploit of protest and sacrifice, as an accepted religious deed, as a proclamation of rage and as a dramatic literary device".<sup>30</sup> The *Journal of Burn Care and Research* cite several examples of people seeking liberation from overpowering and inescapable domination thusly. For example, women, in ultra-conservative environments such as Afghanistan, set their bodies on fire to escape social compulsions like forced marriages.<sup>31</sup>

From this, one can argue that self-immolation is an expression of freedom from all-encompassing tyranny. In the case of Bouazizi, the state, the patriarchal force behind his enslavement, hindered his self-determination. According to the Weberian conceptualism, the state is "...an organization possessing sovereignty and a territorial monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence".<sup>32</sup>

The state performs two organizational and securitization functions: external defence and internal order. Organized violence is used to ensure this security. It is the coordinated use of deadly force by a group represented by the state.<sup>33</sup> This violence can be deadly, but also all encompassing, modelling how individuals live. This is the Biopower of Structural Violence and the reality for many disenfranchised persons, taking the form of poverty, racism, injustice and oppression.<sup>34</sup> It was this Structural Violence stemming from the corrupt Tunisian state that led Bouazizi to commit self-immolation. Essentially, Bouazizi brought attention, or securitized, Tunisian Structural Violence through his decisive Pragmatic Act of self-immolation. This allowed him to gain the Agency necessary to securitize this issue (Structural Violence) by bracketing and rejecting its normality to begin the creation of a new social order. Choosing how to die is essential to achieve this goal as the state ceases to be the sole proprietor of the monopoly of organized violence. This Agency is equivalent to the power of the state's monopoly on the use of organized violence.

30 Romm, S, H Combs, and B,K Klein, "Self-Immolation: Cause and Culture." *Journal of Burn Care and Research*. 29. no. 6 (2008): 991

31 Romm et al "Self-Immolation," 989

32 A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 199

33 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 204

34 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 204

As a competitor to this monopoly, a person gains Agency. This Agency seeks to change the structure of Tunisian politics. Michel Foucault forwards a similar argument. He said “where there is power, there is resistance”.<sup>35</sup> This highlights the act of self-immolation as a public display of violent resistance against the state. Ultimately, Bouazizi’s Pragmatic Act served to securitize the issue of Structural Violence that exists in Tunisia. From these analyses, it can be argued that the act of self-immolation is a sensational declaration of independence against tyrannical rule. One becomes a literal city on a hill, securitizing, while simultaneously sacrificing oneself. The desire is to inspire others to reject the status quo and to formulate their own paths to freedom and independence. This is the quintessential Pragmatic Act that lifts a marginalized individual, an actor with little Agency, to that of the protuberant state.

Further, Thomas Szasz, premier scholar of Suicidology, identifies with this argument. He writes: “...the right to kill oneself is the supreme symbol of personal autonomy and that we are deprived of this elemental right by the authority of psychiatry combined with the

power of the state.”<sup>36</sup> The victim of self-immolation becomes a competitor to the state’s authority and its monopoly of organized violence. Bouazizi, and other like him, use their own lives to securitize issues because their voices are silenced by overwhelming forces of control. Self-immolation and suicide “... may symbolize capture...control of one’s own destiny by taking power from other humans, nature or a deity and assuming the control of fate.”<sup>37</sup> By losing life in such a sensational public act, persons gain the Agency needed to bracket normal politics, or securitize their position, to inspire change. This Agency is equivalent to the power of the state’s monopoly on the use of organized violence. Therefore, by choosing death, a person robs the state of their monopoly and gains equality with the state.

### Emotion, pragmatic acts and agency

What makes it possible for Pragmatic Acts to successfully gain Agency? Why did the Arab Revolutions spread so rapidly? The answer is emotion. Emotion is a necessary tool for those without a position of power to gain attention. Emotions are universal: human beings the

35 I. Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 226

36 T. Szasz, *Fatal Freedom: the Ethics and Politics of Suicide* (Westport: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 1

37 Szasz “Fatal Freedom,” 1

world over are connected by this immaterial substance. We respond in similar manners to circumstances: we all express fear, hate, dread, shock, grief, joy, anxiety, pride, and so forth. They are an integral part of what makes us human and form a vital part of our social interactions. Importantly, they help us channel action.<sup>38</sup> Most palpable, emotions play a large role in the formation of social movements and political protest. For example, activists must be able to turn feelings of insecurity into rage to illustrate a particular policy's unpopularity.<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, emotions play an integral part in society, especially in politics.

First, Pragmatic Acts gain success by summoning emotion. Citing Securitization literature, in Buzan, Waever and Wilde's book "Security: A New Framework of Analysis," two facilitating conditions/categories must be present to ensure an effective speech act. The first is the internal, linguistic-grammatical - to follow the rules of the act, and second, the external, contextual and social - to hold a position from which the act can be made.<sup>40</sup> I will focus on the second condition. Ac-

ording to this framework, the enunciator must own some social capital and be speaking from a position of authority. Thus, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers of Defence and so forth, are able to refer to security objects, state security, to effectively securitize. However, what if, as in Bouazizi's case, the enunciator does not speak from a position of authority? What then? According to Balzacq's definition, emotions are fundamental to the Pragmatic Act's success, as it "operates at the level of persuasion and uses various artefacts (metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, gestures, silence and even lies) to reach its goals".<sup>41</sup> I submit that in order for a regular person to securitize, he/she must commit a Pragmatic Act that summons the emotion of the receivers and gains this authority.

Second, the self-immolation of Bouazizi caused protests in Tunisia and surrounding nations because of emotion. Emotions are no respecter of borders. Middle Easterners, first in Tunisia, then Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, etc., saw the reasons behind Bouazizi's self-immolation: injustice stemming from corrupt authoritarian regimes. Their

39 Goodwin et al, *Passionate Politics*, 16

40 B Buzan, O Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 32

41 T. Balzacq, "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context." *European Journal of International Relations*. 11. no. 2 (2005): 172

shock quickly turned into anger against their own dictatorial regimes. It took an act that was so unbelievable to turn people against their governments. Those compassionate to our emotions, our issues and our causes, will relate and sympathize with us. They will then respond to, and act upon, these feelings. Moreover, the Arab Revolutions were caused not solely by the emergence of social networks or news media, but because of emotion. Twitter and Facebook are methods of communication which helped transmit rage. Here, human emotions, not technological innovation, changed regimes and the world.

To fully understand how Pragmatic Acts use emotions to convince an audience, a brief description of another organized and well documented self-immolation must be mentioned. On June 11, 1963, Thich Quang Duc, a Buddhist monk from Vietnam committed such an act at a busy intersection in downtown Saigon, Vietnam. He, along with other Buddhist monks performed their Pragmatic Act in a highly organized and practical manner to end the brutal and cruel acts of the Catholic Diem regime of South Vietnam. They wanted the administration to

lift its ban on the Buddhist religion to grant it the same rights and freedoms of Catholicism.<sup>42</sup> They planned every aspect of the Pragmatic act, even conducting experiments with different types of fuel. On the day of sacrifice, monks and nuns gathered en masse to ensure their plan's success. Monks and nuns blocked fire engines with their own bodies, preventing movement. Additionally, there was a monk on a loudspeaker declaring "A Buddhist priest burns himself for five requests".<sup>43</sup> Others monks distributed Quang Duc's final declaration, in English, outlining his reasons for the act. To ensure international attention, journalists were called in beforehand to witness the event. There was much done to safeguard that this Pragmatic Act was done to gain the world's attention.

Consider a step-by-step analysis of this Pragmatic Act. Quang Duc's last moments were documented in by the Associated Press and preserved on youtube.com. In the film, one notices Quang Duc's peaceful disposition. He sits in the Buddhist lotus kneeling position, even as gasoline is being poured all over his person. Police officers work crowd control, constraining the crowd and

42 M. Biggs, "Dying without Killing: Self-Immolations, 1963-2002," in *Making Sense of the Suicide Mission*, ed. by Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 180

43 Biggs, *Dying without Killing*, 180

preventing injuries to onlookers. There is a significant amount of space between the crowd and the monk, I estimate about fifty feet. There seems to be some sort of fuse that separates the monk from the facilitator. As the flame travels, the crowd struggles to see. Then, the monk explodes in flames. The police, struggling to fight the crowd, stop and turn around to witness the sacrifice as it burns. The crowd simultaneously settles down. Everyone watches. It is at this very moment that the Silent speak, using Shock and Awe, gaining attention and agency through the ultimate and final Pragmatic Act. The monk sits quietly as smoke fills the airspace above him. The crowd's attention, and even that of the police, is fixed on the sight. No one moves. How could one not watch? He has gained the desired attention by commandeering the world's emotion and sympathy. The world now knows the Buddhist's plight and many will begin work to end their oppression. Once without Agency, the monk, and his cause, has received through self-immolation, one final, tragic, but necessary Pragmatic Act.<sup>44</sup>

Suicide, the act of killing oneself, is a morbidly mysterious and irrefutably emotional act that must

force persons to ask "why?" Why would someone choose to take their own life? People will demand to know why this act was committed. In hearing Bouazizi's case, people's sadness turned into days of rage. Thus, emotion becomes the weapon of the weak to rally the hearts and minds of people to converge on issues that needs dire attention. Emotion can rally the people through, songs, poems, art, music, speeches and of course, acts of violence done upon bodies, whether inflicted by opposing forces or self-inflicted. Emotions are a necessary force that can bring together and divide entire nations. Speech Acts gain attention because they are spoken from a position of power.<sup>45</sup> Without a position of power, other tactics must be employed to gain the attention necessary to securitize. Therefore, emotion is needed for a Pragmatic Act to compete with those in positions of power. It is one weapon that can be readily wielded to institute change within a given socio-political order. Bouazizi's final act was one of protest against the authoritarian regime. Like the Buddhist monk who went on before him, Bouazizi, encased in the reality of his own existence desired escape. Heart-breaking as it seems, the Prag-

44 ironclaw "buddhist monk - self-immolation," youtube.com, 6 Oct 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E37cMtCrKoA>, accessed March 2011.

45 Buzan et al, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 32

matic Act must contain emotion, wrapped up in spectacle that cannot be trumped by the comforts of apathy and inaction.

## Why suicide? Two supplemental cases

### Case 1: Suicide bombing

“Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah” the Islamic Resistance Movement, also known as Hamas, was founded to destroy Israel and create an Islamic state in its place.<sup>46</sup> Known for their own acts of suicide, Hamas frames itself within Islamic grandiloquence, focusing on violent conceptions of jihad, or struggle, against Israel.<sup>47</sup> This is part of their *dawa*, or, the call to God. Article 12 of the Hamas Charter reads:

“Nationalism, from the point of view of Islamic Resistance Movement, is part of the religious creed. Nothing in nationalism is more significant or deeper than in the case of when an enemy should treat Muslim land. Resisting and quelling the ene-

my become the individual duty of every Muslim, male or female”.<sup>48</sup>

Hamas is an organization dedicated to the destruction of Israel and its subsequent formation into an Islamic state.<sup>49</sup> Since its inception, Hamas has been responsible for many acts of violence against military and civilian targets. In February 1994, they launched their first suicide attack as a response to Jewish radical Dr. Baruch Goldstein’s suicide mission.<sup>50</sup> Since then, until March 2004, Hamas performed a total of 64 suicide bombings (425 terrorist attacks since its inception), killing 377 people and wounding 2076.<sup>51</sup> These operations target Israeli civilians in Israel, sometimes on a daily basis.

These acts of martyrdom, suicide bombings, focus on communication. Nawaf Takruri, a cleric for Hezbollah, documents what he thinks are the main benefits of suicide bombing. Here are the most important in terms of the message suicide bombing hopes to pass on:

46 M. Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 8

47 Levitt, *Hamas*, 11

48 Pape, R. and K,F James. *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide and Terrorism and How to Stop it* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 233

49 Pape et al, *Cutting the Fuse*, 224

50 D. Cook, and O Allison. *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 29

51 M. Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 12

- They cause the most terror to Jews
- These operations make the Jews think a thousand times before carrying out a massacre or an extermination operation on the Palestinian civilians, since these types of operations are what the Jews can expect in return
- The one who carries out these attacks, if his action is one devoted to God, intends to terrorize enemies and to uplift the world of God (Qu'ran 9:41) as a method of causing fear to aggressors and to weaken them, and to bring happiness and a return of resolve to the hearts' of the Muslims...he has attained the rank of the martyrs
- These operations spread the spirit of the love of jihad and the martyrdom throughout the [Muslim] community – which its enemies fear and make every attempt to abort from the community
- They cause many non-Muslims throughout the world to know the true creed of Islam<sup>52</sup>

From this, Takruri demonstrates that Suicide bombing is intended

to be, primarily, a communicative device: a Pragmatic Act that is an ultimate rejection of Israeli Biopower.

Israeli Biopower over Palestinians is characterized by the security barrier littered across the Palestinian territories. The act of suicide bombing concurrently renounces Israeli Biopower by attempting to gain power and Agency through indiscriminate acts of violence. Check-points, used to stop and search for weapons, contraband and so forth, constructs how the average Palestinian spends their day. What would normally be a five minute drive can last five hours. The World Bank recognizes the problems that arise due to the security barrier in a report entitled: "Movement and Access Restrictions in the West Bank: Uncertainty and Inefficiency in the Palestinian Economy." The report estimates that up to 50% of all the West Bank is restricted. This not only disturbs human movement, but interrupts businesses and access to medical services.<sup>53</sup> The report further states quite cogently that the security barrier contradicts past agreements, such as the Oslo Accords and the Road Map: that Palestinian movement would go unimpeded. Hamas sees suicide bombing as its

52 D. Cook, and O. Allison. *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 33

53 World Bank Technical Team. *Movement and Access Restrictions in the West Bank: Uncertainty and Inefficiency in the Palestinian Economy* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2009), 1



way of fighting to express rejection of this Biopower. Thus, as seen, suicide bombings are indeed Pragmatic Acts that perform communicative functions which reject Israeli Biopower

### Case II: Ignati Grinevitsky and the assassination of Tsar Alexander II

Before closing, I believe it important to introduce, albeit briefly, an instance of suicide bombing outside of the Middle East to further illuminate this hypothesis. In 1881, Tsarist Russia was ruled by Alexander II, a modernizer who was considered by many to be a benevolent leader. However, many like Ignati Grinevitsky thought differently. He, along with a team of assassins aimed to commit regicide by suicide bombing. The purpose of the murder was to incite the masses to rise up against the Tsarist regime and liberate the suffering underclass.<sup>54</sup> Grinevitsky, in his last will and testament, writes: “Alexander II must die. His days are numbered. He will die and we, his enemies, his killers will die with him...History will show that the luxuriant tree of freedom demands human sacrifices...Fate has doomed me to an early death, and

I will not see victory. I will not live a single day, a single hour in the radiant time of triumph...But I believe that with my death I will have done everything I had to do, and no one in the entire world can demand more of me”.<sup>55</sup> Thus, this suicide act intended to inspire a following. He wanted to set the ultimate example: that if he could give up his life for the freedom of Russia, others could also. The first bomb was thrown under the Tsar’s carriage and this caused major damage. However, the Tsar got out of the cart, unhurt, and began assisting the injured and dying. This proved fatal as Grinevitsky took this as his golden opportunity. He set off his bomb and he and the Tsar were mortally wounded by the ensuing blast. What followed was a security crackdown and five people were hanged. There was no revolution. The new Tsar, Alexander III, ceased all of Alexander II’s reforms and strengthened his own power. He vowed to “...put an end to the lousy liberals” in Russia.<sup>56</sup> He aborted the Constitution’s creation that aimed to democratize Russia. From that day on, anyone who dared to lift a hand against the Tsarist regime was executed.

The suicide attack carried out here was a Pragmatic Act that rejec-

54 Radzinsky, E. *Alexander II: The Last Great Tsar* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 423

55 Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, 406

56 Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, 426

ted Tsarist Biopower. Grinsevitsky and his compatriots wanted to convey a message to all who witnessed the bombing. They wanted to destroy the ruling class' subjugation of the lower classes. According to Grinsevitsky, the Pragmatic Act was done to encourage others in the same economic position to revolt. This would in effect replace one Biopower, one standard of life, with another. However, a message such as this was not acceptable to the ruling class. Alexander II was considered a benevolent leader by many. Instead, to ensure the regime's stability, the ruling class became more intolerable, more authoritarian and more unfriendly to subordinate classes. Alexander III took the death of his predecessor as an act of war. He disposed of Alexander II's moves toward democratization and modernization and neglected the needs of the lower classes. He further consolidated his authoritarian rule all the while suppressing any opposition movements. Grinsevitsky's original message, to securitize Structural Violence, goes unheard and Huysmans' Normative Dilemma was Tsarist Russia's response to his violence.

## Normative dilemmas: destroying pragmatic acts

Huysmans argues that Pragmatic Acts like Bouazizi's are subject to the Normative Dilemma. This can be defined as the problem faced by those who seek to securitize human issues: "the desire to transform always risks further securitizing an area because of the security formation simultaneously constrains and empowers the authors to make serious security statements."<sup>57</sup> In other words, even though Pragmatic Acts can be used to gain Agency to forward human security issues, the same can be done by a ruling party to further securitize an already tyrannical system. It describes how the interpretation of Pragmatic Acts can potentially be controlled and countered by those in established positions of power. The ruling party could potentially be more successful in their goals because of their position in power. This was unsuccessfully attempted in Tunisia by Ben Ali and his Communications Minister Samir Laabidi. Staying true to their *raison d'être*, they blamed religious and leftist extremist groups for the violence. Laabidi states: "religious extremist movements and extremist movements from the left"<sup>58</sup> were be-

57 J. Huysmans, "Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: the Normative Dilemma of Writing Security." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. 27. (2002): 47

58 BBC News, "Tunisia Protests: Fresh Clashes in Tunis." Last modified January 12, 2011. Accessed March, 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12168175>.

hind it. This statement seeks to gain legitimacy to squash protests. Indeed, it was a last ditch effort to save his thirty year old regime. Theoretically, this case highlights the difficulties those without power must tackle while engaging in Pragmatic Acts. Scholars and activists cannot escape this Normative Dilemma. There are bound to be ramifications and the results may not be what one expected or hoped for.<sup>59</sup>

### Anarchy is what emotions make of it: the importance of emotion and the myth of structural realism

Emotions are ignored by Structural Realism, although they do influence the decision-making process of states. This is due to Structural Realism's dedication to its ontological centre of gravity, the international system, used to locate causality. This denies agency to non-state actors such as NGO's and individuals. The reason for this is Structural Realism, like all theories, is subject to the agent-structure problem of having to choose between structure

and the agent.<sup>60</sup> To Kenneth Waltz, the founder of Structural Realism, a system holds importance and is defined as a set of interacting units. A system consists of a structure, and "...the structure is the systems-level component that makes it possible to think of the units as forming a set as distinct from a mere collection".<sup>61</sup> This structure is defined by three factors. First, by anarchy, that is the absence of an overarching authority. Second, by the functions and third, the capabilities of interacting units, more specifically, states.<sup>62</sup> This is power for Waltz and can be defined "...in terms of the distribution of capabilities".<sup>63</sup> Structural Realism claims that capabilities can be economic, military and other factors like: size of population and territory, political stability and competence. States must use this capability in order to ensure their survival. In this environment, states seek to survive by any means, either through war or isolation. Nothing can alter the state's behaviour unless the system itself transforms.<sup>64</sup> Until then, Waltz sees the world as afflicted by the

59 J. Huysmans, "Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: the Normative Dilemma of Writing Security." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. 27. (2002): 47

60 Wendt, A. "The agent-structure problem in international relations theory." *International Organization*, no. 41 (1987): 335

61 K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1979), 49

62 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 88

63 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 192

64 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 100

overwhelming structure of anarchy that cannot be mitigated.

Regardless, emotions are a relevant object when focusing on world politics. Consider Waltz's first level of analysis, the 'man' in "Man, The State and War." Emotions brought Hitler (the statesman) to power and the world to war. Explicitly, emotions made World War II possible through the effective utilization of the Fascist philosophical concept of Irrationalism. According to Carl Cohen, Irrationalism substitutes rationality for the non-intellectual belief in myths rooted in emotional action.<sup>65</sup> Myths are constructed to inspire people to act and create reality.<sup>66</sup> George Sorel illustrates an example of this with Marxism. Marxism, he argues, is a myth in that it does not have to be factual: it simply serves as a rallying cry to convince the working class to act. Myths need not be rooted in truth, only emotion; they are not "descriptions of things, but determinations to act".<sup>67</sup> Since emotion is involved, myths cannot be easily destroyed. Sorel illustrates this: "A myth cannot be refuted, since it is, at bottom, identical with the

convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement..."<sup>68</sup> Here, politics and struggle are not based upon fact or rationality, but are instead rooted in terms of emotion and lies for the purpose of survival, no matter how bare, animalistic and unsophisticated. Action is not dependent on truth, but on what the actor perceives as truth. This is the base of the Fascist philosophical concept of Irrationalism, but must be studied by scholars to understand the fundamental interworking's of human behaviour.

This Irrationalism serves as the foundation for Structural Realism and its underlying assumptions. Structural Realism can be considered a myth because actors believe, act and depend on it for survival. States, even friendly ones, are continually sizing up and comparing themselves to each other. Additionally, Waltz argues that cooperation may take place amongst states, but will be more interested in relative gains rather than absolute gains: "They are compelled to ask 'Who will gain more?' rather than 'Will both of us gain?'"<sup>69</sup> Ins-

65 C. Cohen, *Communism, Fascism and Democracy: The Theoretical Foundations* (New York: Random House, 1967), 320

66 Cohen, *Communism, Fascism and Democracy*, 320

67 Cohen, *Communism, Fascism and Democracy*, 320

68 Cohen, *Communism, Fascism and Democracy*, 324

69 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105

titutions that promote cooperation and interdependence will degenerate (because of this structure of anarchy) into a struggle to accumulate capabilities because of concerns about intentions. These concerns are rooted in fear: fear that a state may have more nuclear missiles than another; fear that one nation is gaining too much from trade than another; and so on. State A may be a 'friend' to state B today, but they may become 'enemies' tomorrow. State A must always bear these concerns and fears, in mind. Jervis focused on these notions in his book "Perceptions and Misperceptions." Perceptions of states deviate from reality prejudiced by immediate concerns as well as by deeply rooted expectations. These expectations are founded on emotion and the fear of violent death that lead persons to ignore information, encourage paranoia while discouraging alternative courses of action.<sup>70</sup> This in turn limits rationality and thus influences state behaviour. With this in mind, states are constantly prioritizing threats and studying warfare. Through emotional attachment (since we rely on this theory for survival) to the theory, it becomes a reality.

To further expand, take the concept of the Security Dilemma. Since we believe (as part of the Structural Realist myth) the system to be inherently anarchical, states operate as self-interested actors who act based on their best interests at the expense of others.<sup>71</sup> States become concerned when their neighbours amass troops on mutual borders. Any action taken by a state to strengthen itself would lead other states to perceive it as a threat. Neighbouring states would then increase their investment in weapons. The primary state sees this action taken by the neighbouring state as a threat and again increases its military capability. This further develops into an action-reaction arms race spiral which is costly, and in fact fails to guarantee security. Instead it increases tensions between the competing countries as well as the probability of war. This scenario is referred to as the security dilemma. It is a 'dilemma' in its purest sense because of its essential Irrationality, depending on perceptions, determined by an emotion of fear. Fear creates worries about intentions of others. These worries formulate action and subsequent reactions. Anxieties about intentions create a

70 R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.62

71 P. Tetlock, "The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence." *Behaviour, Society and Nuclear War*. 1. (1989): 224

reactionary policy of hysteria, eventually setting off an arms race and eventual war. Once the downward spiral of the arms race begins it is hard to break the momentum.<sup>72</sup> The dilemma is possible because of emotion and Irrational beliefs in fleeting security.

Hence, fear is an integral human emotion that serves as the basis of action. It is the middleman that Structural Realists overlook in their analysis. While they try to objectively explain the world system and answer how questions, they neglect to ask why questions. Without asking why questions, we accept the assumptions as totally true and inescapable: we place our faith into these beliefs. Like the Fascist principle of Irrationalism, we make Structural Realism true because we act according to it. Thus, according to the myth, states fear one another and anarchy cannot be mitigated. Since this is so, states need to arm. Thus, politics should be determined not only by scientific analysis, but rather through the development and defence of myths and subsequent emotional reaction to events. Anarchy may be what states make of it but a state's behaviour is what emotion makes of it; it is the first turn of the wheel and the overlooked structure that shapes

state behaviour within the international realm. In this sense, anarchy is what emotions make of it.

Essentially, emotion, more specifically, fear, is an integral variable that influences the behaviour of human beings. It is an important part of the social interactions that shape anarchy and the international order. This fact is omitted by Structural Realists in their quest to create a simplistic theory of International Relations, staying true to their ontological foundation. This theory is of course important to comprehend the complexities of war and peace. However, emotion, more specifically, fear, has the power to transform states. I encourage scholars to engage in such discourse for the betterment of the field.

### My gramscian inventory of self

While these concepts fit neatly into Bouazizi's narrative and my hypotheses, I must be self-aware and self-reflective. The ideas presented are simply a product of my own understanding, experiences, beliefs and perceptions of that society. My existence is worlds away from Bouazizi's. Unlike Bouazizi, I was born to a middle-class family. I live in a democracy, where everyone can

72 Tetlock "The Causes of War," 226

peacefully express dissent, subject not to a ruler, but to the rule of law. Further, I have never met Bouazizi or his family. Neither have I visited Tunisia nor spoken with a Tunisian. I simply read a few news articles that at times reported the wrong facts (Bouazizi was not a university graduate as newspapers reported). How then can I truly perceive Tunisian circumstances? Am I simply taking the Tunisian situation and applying some concepts to advance my scholarly career? How could I or anyone outside of Tunisia for that matter responsibly say they understand these affairs and, not to mention, provide recommendations? Are my previous thoughts an example of Orientalism in that it may not be a correct representation of reality and the reasons for Bouazizi's self-immolation.

The Post-Colonial concept of Orientalism defined by Said describes how realities can be constructed through discourse by scholars that exist outside studied realms. They, even with best of intentions, employ their own understandings, biases, prejudices and beliefs upon the studied that do not reflect truth. For: "No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact

of his involvement with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society."<sup>73</sup> He nullifies any concept of objectivity within scholarship:

"For it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality; that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, and an individual second...that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient...".<sup>74</sup>

This exposes the genealogy of how cultures are constructed through discourse. False observations are created and documented by European scholars and this creates identities that separate the Occident and the Orient.<sup>75</sup> The false narrative is then used, not only to define the Orient, but to reify and rectify the Occident. This formulates contradictory dichotomies between geographical areas that are then used to influence foreign policy. These dichotomies were that of superior

73 E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 10

74 Said "Orientalism," 11

75 Said "Orientalism," 12

and inferior, masculine and feminine and civilized and uncivilized.<sup>76</sup> This in turn was used to validate Western strategies of supremacy in the Middle East. Since the Middle East is uncivilized, then it was up to the West to show them the way. This of course enforces a historical relationship between the West and the Middle East defined by colonialism, imperialism and intervention.

Consequently, it can be argued that this paper fails to understand Bouazizi's decision and its resulting events in the Middle East. I see what I want to, committing the act of Orientalism. However, and in my defence, I am not an Orientalist in Said's traditional and imperialist sense. I did not paint Bouazizi or Tunisians in a negative light, in the traditionally Orientalist sense; neither did I victimize anyone. Rather, I portrayed Bouazizi as the hero of Tunisian emancipation. I have no interest in dominating the Middle East. In my own way, using discourse, I am supporting the actions of Bouazizi and his followers. It is type of constructive Orientalism, as it aims to

promote the freedom of the Tunisian people through discourse.<sup>77</sup> Hence, writing discourse may possess potential productive capacities. At best, it can help implement some individual autonomy and promote an end to Structural Violence. It demonstrates the power of scholars to influence and shape human life. If this is so, can we argue that discourse promotes emancipation through discursive constructions of Biopower?

To answer this, I will employ Oded Löwenheim article entitled "Examining the State: A Foucauldian perspective on International 'Governance Indicators.'" This article discusses the power economic indicators have on state behaviour. International actors like international governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) create indices that measure political corruption, civil liberties, gender equality, human rights, etc. This helps determine whether a country is investment worthy.<sup>78</sup> These indices are part of Western governmentality that nurtures global actors. Governmentality is a disciplining

76 Said "Orientalism," 5

77 Barrington Moore in his book "Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy" adopts what he considered the best parts of Marxism, the theoretical structure, and disposed of the politicized grandiloquence. I attempt to do the same here: divorce the negative conveyance of Orientalism and focus more on discursive abilities to construct reality

78 O. Löwenheim, "Examining the State: A Foucauldian Perspective on International 'Governance Indicators.'" *Third World Quarterly*. 29. no. 2 (2008): 256

79 Löwenheim "Examining the State," 258



mechanism that trains, surveys' and punishes actors' conduct to ensure actors behave within a Western liberal system.<sup>79</sup> In turn, this creates, influences and maintains life within nations: it constructs Biopower. If states ignore these indices or refuse inspection, they may suffer negative consequences, such denial of economic aid. From this, one can make two arguments. Firstly, powerful states continue their hegemonic domination through economic indicators as it serves their interests. Secondly and conversely, this governmentality assists in producing a productive form of Biopower that promotes a democratic civil society. From the conclusion, Löwenheim seems to understand the constructive power of his discourse: "The aim of this paper was not to criticize the practice of rating and ranking as such. In some cases examinations may help to promote positive values such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law and accountable governance".<sup>80</sup> Hence, although regrettably, we live in a hierarchical world where stronger powers dominate weaker ones, there are certain spaces that allow for some individual self-autonomy. There is potential for discourse to shape Biopower in favour of emancipation.

## Contributions to international relations and security discourse

Seeing this, one gets the sense that these concepts hold great explanatory power. The concept of Biopower shines light on the reasons for self-immolation. Self-immolation is a regrettable form of protest, but it is a result of authoritarianism that enforces a certain way of living, or Biopower. It presents persons with the ability to escape their life defined by others. This paper conveys a cogent message to autocratic regimes that this, and other acts of suicide, will occur if some degree of self-autonomy is not realized. Further, it describes how the domestic acts of everyday people have the potential to influence the international politics. These concepts underline how emotions produce identities and define roles through acts of communication, creating and recreating our reality. This illuminates radical and rapid political change. Dominant theories, like the Realisms and Neoliberal Institutionalism, fail to adequately explain possibilities of non-state action and Agency. Their ontology is limited to the state and all other objects are ignored. This is inherently flawed. Steve Smith in his address to the International Studies Association further highlights these

80 Löwenheim "Examining the State," 271

issues. He argues that these theories, because of their statist ontology, ignore individuals and their lack of human security stemming from Structural Violence. This ontology is left for internal politics, a matter for local laws and other disciplines. Disregarding such violence is simply irresponsible as it breeds further violence.<sup>81</sup> To add, these theories failed to predict or explain this current situation. This is not the first time. These theories could not explain the end of the Cold War, when social protest movements, responding to Structural Violence, quickly brought down the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup>

Further, this paper itself promotes scholars' agency and discursive ability to influence and change structures that shape the world and alter Biopower. It is a Pragmatic Act that aims to raise the Agency of the marginalized. It challenges the state to respect human life. These concepts assist in reshaping the world in the interests of the downtrodden; instead of perpetuating the interests of states that at times exacerbate Structural Violence. Therefore, the two described concepts of Pragmatic Act and Agency effectively explain and promote a more equal and secu-

re society. This is the strength of the Copenhagen and Critical Schools of International Relations. Of course, it is also a form of Orientalism, but Orientalism divorced from its negative connotations. It is discourse, and a form of Biopower, that influences and shapes human life. It possesses great power to influence society in a 'positive' light if the writer imagines it so. It may not promote complete emancipation, or reflect reality, but can lead to some self-autonomy. Thus, scholars must recognize their discursive powers and use it to search, not for an ultimate good or an objective truth, but a subjective and acceptable evil that allows for some forms of independence for all.

The Post-Modern/Post-Colonial concepts also generate ethical concerns. If discourse creates Biopower, then there is the danger of replacing one system of domination for another. This further victimizes and reduces the agency of people who scholars are apparently speaking for. Can people not speak for themselves? Are we not confident enough to let people live their own lives? Or are we, like our forefathers unable to do so because of our own insecurities? Do we think of the margina-

81 S. Smith, "Singing our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11." *Presidential Address to the ISA*, Portland, 2003. 48. No. 3 (2004): 13

82 J. Sterling-Folker, *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 115

lized other as an "...agitator [who] wishes to raise difficulties..."<sup>83</sup> Tunisians, like many oppressed people suffer and die to gain the right to speak: "Maori people struggle to gain a voice, struggle to be heard from the margins to have our stories heard, to have our descriptions of ourselves validated, to have access to the domain within which we can control..."<sup>84</sup> By speaking for others, we risk reducing their Agency, further destroying their voice. However, even though these issues are intrinsic, one must recognize the benefits of speaking out against Structural Violence. Discourse could act a launching pad toward a more productive situation. I recognize my biases and limited myself to writing about the securitization of Structural Violence. It is now up to Tunisians, and the rest of the Middle East, to continue to fight for their self-autonomy and end Structural Violence.

### Normative ethical considerations

There are many ethical concerns about labelling suicide as a Pragmatic Act that rejects Biopower and promotes Agency. Suicide is a regrettable form of activism and I regret having to write on such a solemn

and intense matter. No one should have to take their own life. Whether as a Pragmatic Act or as a rejection of power, having lost a love, or suffering from depression or physical ailment, I submit that taking one's live cannot be considered a viable option. Structures and mechanisms must be mounted to avoid such drastic and permanent choices from being made. Much can be done to promote self-autonomy and human happiness, I am fully aware of this. I believe my upbringing dictates that humanity must work toward a social environment that actively promotes human happiness. I understand that state survival is #1 on the priority list, but human life is also precious and must be protected from Structural Violence.

### Conclusion

On December 17th 2010, one man changed the structure of the world. On December 17th 2010, Mohamad Bouazizi ceased to be Mohamad Bouazizi the person; he became Mohamad Bouazizi, the very expression and culture of freedom. Tunisia was transformed by his act and emotional reactions created solidarity among many people suffering from Structural Violence in

83 E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 33

84 L.T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 2010),

neighbouring states. Using concepts from the Copenhagen School's Securitization literature and the Critical School (Pragmatic Act and Agency respectively), one is able to fully explain this phenomenon in a most skilful way. From this analysis, scholars can explain the reasons behind the riots in the Middle East and the rapid changes that are taking place in that region. Tragically, these issues, like the existence of Structural Violence, are continually ignored by dominant theories of International Relations. However, in Tunisia, and the wider Middle East, the Pragmatic Act of one individual, changed the face of the world through emotion. This should dramatically restructure the study of International Relations and the way we conceptualize the world. If it does not, we would be doing a disservice to the field and to the many people who lose their life and limb fighting for freedom. Assuming no absolute truth exists, academics write about what they consider beneficial. They construct meanings derived from their own experience and sometimes force world events to fit their beliefs. No scholar is able to escape this and I am living proof of the inability to objectively represent reality. Scholars must therefore walk a tight-rope: if we write, we must first be critical of ourselves. If not, then we may commit the sins of the

past and become new oppressors. We cannot win emancipation for others, but we may be able to use our discursive power to encourage an environment friendly to it. This is the scholar's place in society: he/she can do no more.

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