

Class Warfare, Anarchy and the Future Society

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Is the Middle Class forging a Gramscian Counter-Hegemonic Bloc Worldwide? What are the Implications?

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Abstract

This paper analyses the mechanics and ramifications of a rise in social agitations worldwide. It combines pertinent scholarly works, anecdotes and contemporary news reports to inquire whether the global middle class is consolidating to lead a mass-based revolt within societies – as well as the ensuing implications. The case will be made that middle classes worldwide are forming an embryonic counter-hegemonic bloc against the accumulation of power and wealth by the so-called “privileged 1%.” Certain neo-Marxist scholarship have been studied and applied to understand the forces of revolt today.

Keywords: middle class, techno-politics, panopticon, transnational capitalist class; economic meltdown, class warfare

Introduction

The ongoing global economic meltdown is leading to unprecedented social tumult worldwide, marked by impassioned daily protests across major metropolises. Increasing poverty, unbridled wealth fractionation and class conflict are the putative causes ascribed to this mass-based development.

These agitations are redolent of similar tumults during the Great Depression, which, ultimately led to extreme ideological experimentations. Fascism and Marxism became the new governing templates to rejuvenate economically devastated societies. Nazi Germany touted

their Kraft durch Freude (KdF) model, the Soviets declassed society into collectives while the United States resorted to the New Deal. Mass coercion was applied to enable socio-economic reconstruction while airwaves carried the seductive lilt of a better “order.” (Hobsbaum, 1995).

A radical new order, however, is usually preceded by the brutal pacification of society, as myriad anti-monarchic (i.e. French), Fascist and Communist revolutions throughout modern history suggest. This paper argues that a similar meme is being repeated today, likely leading to forms of authoritarian rule worldwide. The decisive spark may be an imminent mass revolt, primarily fuelled by the grievances of a disenfranchised middle class.

This paper will incorporate Johan Galtung’s Center-Periphery Model as well as Gramscian ideas into its analysis, alongside contemporary news reports, to explore the trajectory and denouement of the current class-based discontent. It will also reference pertinent anti-establishment movements worldwide to provide empirical evidence of a growing, radicalized class consolidation across borders. Certain neo-Marxist scholarship were studied and applied to understand the forces of social revolt today. It will contextualize each development within a theoretical framework, and will build three possible futures using macrohistorical interrelationships between the past, present and future.

This paper begins with the enquiry: Is there a global proletarian-type revolt afoot, driven by middle-class rage?

Roots and Catalysts of Mass Discontent

With the onset of the Great Recession in 2007, violent protests have become a routine fare. What began as a backlash against corrupt banking practises in Europe and the sub-prime debacle in the United States, slowly morphed into an Arab Spring throughout much of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) before spawning an Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement in US cities, “tent cities” in Israel, anti-Putin protests in Russia and rumours of a Jasmine Revolution in China. These social forces carried enough momentum to overthrow several MENA regimes, precipitate civil wars in Libya, Mali and Syria and force several governments to initiate internal reforms. Previously ostracized states like Myanmar emerged from international isolation to experiment with Fabian democracy.

However, instead of the spring buds of democracy, the world seems to be staring at multi-seasonal meltdowns. Like the French, Bolshevik and Iranian revolutions earlier, the Arab Spring has turned headlong against its initial ideals. Instead of fundamental freedoms and democracy, restrictive Sharia laws have taken root. Will similar social agitations worldwide be subverted by the forces of religion (MENA), ethno-nationalism (Catalonia, Spain) and neo-Marxism (Maoist movements in Nepal and India)?

Paralleling the collapse of global Communism two decades earlier, the present upheavals are also facilitated by novel communication tools. While faxes, telexes, Xeroxes and clandestine radio networks were game-changers in the 1980s and 90s, today’s battleground lies in the cyberspace of Kellner’s (2005) “technopolitics.” Here is where the social media becomes the social agitator; where Facebook and Twitter form the cyber-tipped spearheads against the barbed wires of tyranny.

Utopian forecasts of theorists such as Fukuyama (1992) were ephemerally back in vogue. The Middle East – the last bastion of anachronistic despotism – was,

for a while, agitating towards the “evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xi). It proved short-lived as the agents of change were expediently re-categorized from being “liberating” to “subversive,” mimicking suspicions that accompanied earlier revolutions in printing, postal services and literacy levels which, in turn, led to various epochal revolutions throughout Europe. (Diebert, 1997). New communication tools may democratize repressed societies; they may also unleash repressed atavism.

The repressed began to cooperate across borders, under the rubric of One World, One Pain. Protestors in Cairo’s Tahrir Square ordered pizzas for counterparts who were concurrently besieging the Wisconsin State Capitol. Governor Scott Walker – paralleling knee-jerk reactions in the Middle East – contemplated mobilizing the National Guard. The signals were unmistakable. This was not a revolution of the lumpenproletariat; the global middle class was uniting in anger. (Maavak, 2011). They were even ordering take-outs sans borders. Are there historical underpinnings behind this otherwise novel phenomenon?

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle viewed the ideal form of society as one operating along three classes: the rich, the poor, and the middle element (i.e. the middle class). In his opus *Politika* (Politics), Aristotle asserted that “states in which the middle element is large, and stronger if possible than the other two together, or at any rate stronger than either of them” per se, “have every chance of having a well-run constitution.” (Aristotle, circa 350BC) The stability of the state and society was contingent upon a functional, productive and large middle class. Is the middle class today being marginalized, violating the Aristotelian ideal?

A Lost Generation

“2012 is likely to see increasing levels of civil unrest, calls for protectionism and other anti-globalization rhetoric as governments struggle to cope with multiplying problems with fewer resources.” – World Economic Forum’s Outlook on the Global Agenda 2012 (p.4)

Developed nations are experiencing disturbing middle class-related trends. British graduates are now more likely to work as postal workers, hotel porters and sanitation workers compared to a decade ago. According to the UK Office for National Statistics, the number of degree students working in low-skilled jobs had grown from 9% to 17% over a two-decade period. The employment prospects are similarly grim across Europe. (Maavak, 2011).

A superb education no longer guarantees social ascendancy. The travails of Italian graduate Francesca Esposito, who has a law degree and a master’s as well as proficiency in five languages, captures the middle class despondency: “I have every possible certificate. I have everything except a death certificate.” (Donadio, 2011).

The European middle class plight, however, is not even.

Table 1. *Sample European Youth Unemployment Figures (Oct 1, 2012)*

Country	Youth Unemployment (% of Population)	Total Unemployment (% of Population)
Ireland	34.7	15
United Kingdom	21	8.1
France	25.2	10.6
Portugal	35.9	15.9
Spain	52.9	25.1
Italy	34.5	10.7
Greece	55.4	24.4
Germany	8.1	5.5
Finland	18.2	7.9
Norway	8	3

Source: Eurostat (2012)

As Table 1 shows, Germany is bucking EU unemployment trends, despite increasing pressures borne on its export-dependent economy. Prior gloomy forecasts of Germany's economic future proved as faulty as official assessments over its supposedly non-innovative education system – at a time when British schools formed the golden yardstick, and the UK economy was regarded as highly dynamic. British graduates became so finicky that Indian teachers had to be recruited to “teach English to the English.” (Maavak, 2011).

The Teutonic obsession with machinery, tools and high technology ultimately paid off. While EU economies embraced the Anglo-American vision of a post-industrial offshored world, Berlin “in-shored” its workforce through flexible placement agencies, ultimately ensuring a zealously native hi-tech labour and product chain.

Berlin is now the undisputed capital of Europe – something Adolph Hitler failed via military means seven decades back. A weaker euro has helped German exports in a way a strong Deutsche mark would have not. What set Germany (as well as Scandinavia and Switzerland) apart from the sinking pack? Did the extraordinary powers vested with regional governments and local communities play a defining Aristotelian “middle element” role? (Maavak, 2011). Or were growth projections deliberately manipulated in “service-oriented” economies? As late as 2006, when the US housing crisis began to bite, top Federal Reserve officials treated the growing desperation of US homebuilders with disdain and mirth. (Appelbaum, 2012). More shockingly, the Congressional Budget Office in 2001 had predicted a budget surplus of \$5.6 trillion between 2001 and 2011. Instead, the US racked up \$6.1 trillion in deficits during the period. (Grier, 2012). The CBO's whopping miscalculation of \$11.7 trillion is almost equivalent to the annual US GDP.

Untenable Yolk for Gen Z

The world's largest economy is not faring much better to Europe. US unemployment rate hit 9.1% in September 2011 while the broader underemployment rate, which includes drifters and part-time employees, reached 16.2%. (Smith, 2011). If the figures on Table 2 are extrapolated globally, the total losses/debts incurred worldwide may surpass \$1 quadrillion.

Table 2. *Growing Financial Deficit Indicators*

Sampling of Losses/Debts Incurred	Total	GDP (2010) Comparison
Losses in global financial assets including stocks, bonds and currencies in 2008.	\$50 trillion	\$65 trillion (Global)
US real estate losses in 2007 and 2008.	\$6 trillion	\$14.7 trillion (US)
Fall in US household wealth from 2007 to 2009.	\$16.4 trillion	\$14.7 trillion (US)
US Government Debt in 2010	\$14 trillion	\$14.7 trillion (US)
Estimate of true US national debt as of 2011	\$211 trillion	\$14.7 trillion (US)

Source: (Maavak, 2011)

Nearly 15% of the US population, or 45.8 million people, relied on food stamps in May 2011. The global pension funds industry, which controls \$35 trillion or a third of global financial assets, is facing double-digit rises in funding deficits. Banking analysts are warning of looming crashes that might dwarf the 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers. This may tip many societies over the precipice. Hyperinflation, hyper-unemployment, food shortages and ultimately, martial law could be the result. How is the future going to be funded when the present is facing insolvency? If sound policies are hypothetically instituted today, it could take 30-40 years for younger Americans to repay US government debt. (Maavak, 2011).

Winners and Losers

With the onset of the 20th century, as trade became a global enterprise, major financial shocks were generally accompanied by wealth accumulation within a select group called the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC). The TCCs, who are annually feted in the Forbes 500 lists, form the backbone of global trade and national commerce and industry. Their fortunes are often inversely proportional to the fortunes of nations and peoples, and tend to aggregate during each financial crisis. For instance, during “the first nine months of 1998,” right after the onset of the East Asian Financial crisis, “transnational mergers and acquisitions topped \$383 billion, more than the total for 1997.” (Robinson & Harris, 2000, p.15). The TCC is a pervasive superstructure that usurps and fuses local production circuits into the main servers of global capital.

As each crises gets prolonged, capital accumulation further fractionates the privileged 1% into a “Super 1%.” The discarded surpluses, whose skills were ironically needed during the wealth fractionation process, fall through the cracks of the middle class strata. In 2011, a board director in the UK earned 69 times as much as his average employee while his Swedish counterpart earned in the multiplicity of 34. (Prosser, 2011). This may help explain the lack of anarchist undercurrents in Sweden at the time of writing.

Wealth fractionation transcends the borders of legal oversight. Loopholes in cross-border tax rules resulted in an astounding £13 trillion (\$21tn) in wealth stashed offshore – equivalent to the American and Japanese GDPs combined – according to the Tax Justice Network. Around “£6.3tn (\$10.2 trillion) of assets” – equivalent to 16% of global GDP – “is owned by only 92,000 people, or 0.001% of the world's population.” (Stewart, 2012). When the Super 1% category fractionates further in decimals, there emerges a microscopic class of the mega-rich who “have more in common with each other than those at the bottom of the income scale in their own

societies.” (Stewart, 2012).

The global middle class may therefore feel betrayed by the very system they helped sustain. Generation Z is now staring at financially-induced emasculation and a bleak, rudderless future. Once picky Western professionals are now seeking employment in “hardship postings” such as India, where, the middle class is experiencing robust growth. (Maavak, 2011).

A Simmering Global Middle Class

A 2007 report, compiled by the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), had uncannily predicted the likelihood of a global middle class revolt within the next 20 to 30 years – a rather sanguine timeline as evinced by the agitations of 2011-12. This spectre was partly attributed to “declining news quality” along with the rise of “internet-enabled, citizen-journalists” and the pressure to release stories “at the expense of facts.” (DCDC, 2007, p.51).

Hactivism is now the protest mode du jour. Techno-political blocs such as WikiLeaks and Anonymous are now meshing into a network-centric whistle-blowing hydra targeting corruption and misgovernance. Although WikiLeaks had shot into prominence by accessing 251,287 confidential cables from 274 US embassies around the world – spanning 1966 to 2010 – the ongoing proliferation of leaks point to a breakdown in social and employment morale. Sensing their expendability, the middle classes are fighting back.

Wikileaks: A Class-led Gramscian Counter-Hegemonic Bloc?

Do WikiLeaks and Anonymous resemble a Gramscian counter hegemonic bloc? Wikileaks’ contributors include highly mobile professionals who are intent on exposing government and corporate shenanigans. These individuals are akin to the Gramscian scholar-activist; an organic intellectual who “is a product of an emergent social class, which offers that class some self-consciousness in the cultural, political and economic fields” and forms the link between theory and labour, and who situates himself/herself as “the central unifying force that facilitates the development of an historic bloc.” (McNaughton, 2005, p.45). This role also fits Pratt’s (2004) description of counter-hegemony as “a creation of an alternative hegemony on the terrain of civil society in preparation for political change.” (p.332).

According to Ramos (2010), “organic intellectuals” are “key to challenging hegemony through the ideological-cultural struggle for the hearts and minds of ordinary people, thus enabling social transformation.” (p.51). The hacktivist therefore is a “techno-politician” a la Kellner (2005), reminiscent of the anti-war protestors of the 1960s. Techno-politicians see themselves as fulfilling “the needs and aspirations of the poor majority of humanity for whom global capitalism is nothing short of alienation, savagery, and dehumanisation.” (Robinson, 2005a, p.25)

The avant-garde techno-political bloc also fits Leslie Sklair’s vision of a “transitional path to a socialist globalisation through replacing the culture ideology of consumerism with a culture ideology of human rights.” (Ramos, p.52). Mass communications, in this context, will naturally precede mass activism. The speed of social contagion in the era of techno-politics is rapid. “Social media have made what took years of careful planning occur in weekends, accelerating the rate of change. Having a peer-to-peer organizational structure ensured that the arrest of one did not

lead to a closure of agency.” (Inayatullah, 2011, p.36).

While the relatively passive techno-politics resembles Gramsci’s War of Position, it forms a force multiplier with the War of Movement manifested by the street agitations of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. What links the Gramscian Wars of Position and Movement is the middle class.

Kleptocratic “System of Structures”: A Galtungian Perspective

Techno-politicians are now training their guns on major corporations, financial institutions and global media monopolies. High-profile whistle-blowers such as WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange, intent on exposing a pandemically corrupt “system of structures,” typify the nature of this counter-hegemony. This spectre is uniting otherwise irreconcilable nations, ideologies and interest groups. Here is where former US presidential hopeful Sarah Palin meets Zimbabwean strongman Robert Mugabe. “National security” imperatives were universally invoked to censor leaks. (Maavak, 2011).

This paradoxical confluence of interests fits the centre-periphery model of sociologist Johan Galtung where, the elite of the Periphery (i.e., the Third World) share symbiotic interests with the elite of the Centre (i.e., Developed World). What binds them is an instinctive need for self-preservation – an imperialism of the elite sans borders. “Imperialism” as defined by Galtung, “is a sophisticated type of dominance relations which cuts across nations, basing itself on a bridgehead which the center in the Center nation establishes in the center of the Periphery nation, for the joint benefit of both.” (Galtung, 1971, p.81).

The stability of centre-periphery dynamics is largely dependent on “less disharmony of interest in the Center than in the Periphery, so that *the total arrangement is largely in the interest of the periphery in the Centre.*” (Galtung, 1971, p.84). As long as the lower to upper middle classes in the Centre are pacified through material inducements and incremental career prospects, the structural integrity of the Centre can be sustained. Myths and metaphors are an important facet of this structural perpetuation as the middle classes in the Centre will see themselves as partners with the Centre, i.e., they are part of a superior society despite the inherent inequalities within it. “Only imperfect, amateurish imperialism needs weapons; professional imperialism is based on structural rather than direct violence.” (Galtung, 1971, p.91).

However, when the middle class wilts, the structural integrity of the Centre gets disjointed. In a wired world where discontentment overlaps, interacts and catalyses at the click of a mouse, a marginalized middle class may seek alliances within the borderless battle spaces of techno-politics (War of Position) before resorting to direct actions via protests, rallies and riots (War of Movement).

Are the forces of Wars of Position and Movement inversely proportional to the size and strength of the middle class? Can an approximate middle class dissatisfaction indicator be used as a barometer for impending trouble? The War of Movement, for one, has not taken off in India and China due to its expanding middle classes, who, tend to view themselves as co-participants in their Centres’ march towards superpower glory.

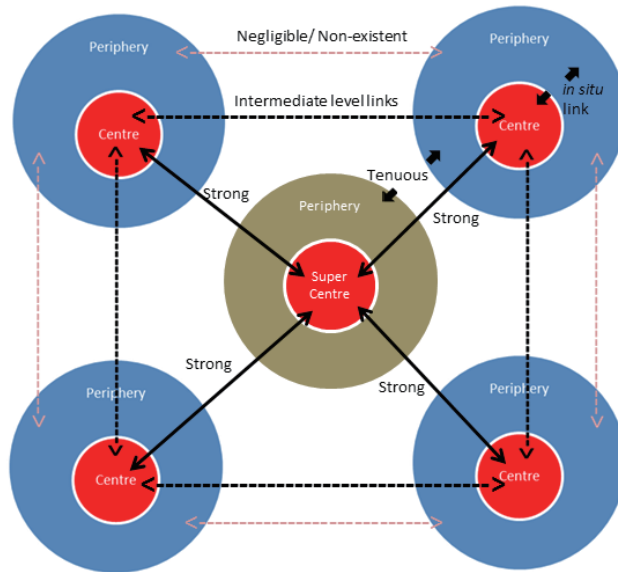


Figure 1. Graphical Adaptation of Galtung's Centre-Periphery Power Dynamics

Super Centre-Centre: Representing elitist nexuses between major powers and Developed/Developing/ Third World nations. Super Centres, represented by their respective seats of governments, may represent global or regional superpowers.

Examples of Super Centres: Washington (US); Paris-Berlin (EU); Moscow (CIS); Tokyo (Japan); Beijing (China); Canberra (Australia); London (UK); Singapore (ASEAN) and New Delhi (South Asia).

Examples of Centres: Representing cross-spectrum TCCs from Washington D.C. to Bamako (Mali).

Centre-Centre: Representing elitist ties between regional powers and their geographic bloc, or the Third World. Organizational examples include the OIC, South-South Cooperation, ASEAN, and the African Union.

Super Centre-(external) Periphery: Tenuous links representing aid and charity efforts, academic visits, missionary activities, backpacking, and tourism.

Centre-Periphery: Links representing limited-to-intense internal or regional economic engagement as well as cross-border civil society work, depending on *in situ* context.

Periphery-Periphery: Generally negligible or non-existent due to lack of global awareness, social and economic mobility, educational exchanges, and a common language.

The policies and actions of Centres are generally dictated to, or limited by, their respective Super Centres. "Using a Gramscian approach... the geographical centre of such a potential 'transnational' hegemony" – the Super Centre – "would be a group of capitalist countries led by the United States' and based on the 'organic' blocs that develop among nations." (Gill & Law, 1988, p.355).

A counter-hegemonic global middle class is perhaps the only entity that can link peripheries worldwide and mobilize them towards a War of Movement against the TCC.

TCCs and Class Subversion

The centripetal shaft of the Centre-Periphery dynamo would be the TCC located in the Super Centre, where, they are

“...comprised of the owners and managers of the transnational corporations and private financial institutions and other capitalists around the world who manage transnational capital. The bloc would also include the cadre, bureaucratic managers and technicians who administer the agencies of the TNS (transnational states), such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, other transnational forums, and the states of the North and the South. Also brought into the bloc would be an array of politicians and charismatic public figures, along with select organic intellectuals, who provide ideological legitimacy and technical solutions.”
(Robinson, 2005b, p.7)

The centre of the Centre expends much interest and resources to nurture a compatible centre in the Periphery through institutional and intellectual support. A TCC auxiliary within the centre of the Periphery sustains the global production and capital accumulation process and provides access to cheap labour and commodities in return for cross-sectoral support from the Centre.

Institutional instruments that promote TCC auxiliaries include established universities, think tanks and corporate houses in the Centre. This may not entail a strictly top-down, one-way flow but may include a more complex set of interactions based on the premise of *cui bono*. (Galtung, 1971, p.85). Established standards, best practises and principles can be compromised to suit TCC imperatives.

This was exemplified by the recent “shameless prostituting” of well-known British universities to major Arab donors. “Between 1995 and 2008, eight universities – Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, University College London, the LSE, Exeter, Dundee and City – accepted more than £233.5 million from Muslim rulers” and nations. (Pollard, 2011). The sum of £233.5 million does not include donations from non-Muslim sources. Annual donations from less or non-democratic sources may therefore remain incalculable. The implications here are enormous: The academia can be either influenced or bought for the benefit of Third World elites, and their TCC sponsors.

Instead of injecting fresh expertise and innovation into the Third World, such a nexus creates an artificially credentialed class and non-meritocratic hierarchies within the centre of the Periphery. When cable news networks began flashing bloody images of the 2011 Libyan revolt, the London School of Economics (LSE) – to whom Tripoli had pledged a £1.5 million research grant – was pressured to investigate plagiarism charges against the wilting dictatorship’s scion. Rather perversely, Saif-al-Islam Gaddafi’s PhD thesis was titled *The Role of Civil Society in the Democratization of Global Governance Institutions: From ‘Soft Power’ to Collective Decision-Making*. (Gaddafi, 2008)

The thesis was written with the help of Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Monitor Group, to whom Libya paid at least \$3 million to enlist luminaries such as former White House advisor Richard Perle and US academics such as Francis Fukuyama, Benjamin Barber, Joseph Nye and Robert Putnam to portray the Gaddafi regime in a positive light through various academic and political avenues.

(Pilkington, 2011)

To-date, Dr Gaddafi's thesis has not been rescinded though, on the other hand, intractable academic standards can delay or rubbish the journal submissions of TCC-defined non-entities. The Ivory Towers of the academia are no longer seen as eyries of impartiality and detachment, where scholarly pursuits form the ends and the means; rather they are viewed as diploma bazaars where business opportunities, bottom lines and student numbers are prioritized over learning, teaching and research. British universities, in fact, reap immense profit annually by rejecting tens of thousands of British teenagers in favour of less qualified foreign students who contribute more in terms of revenue. (Watt & Newell, 2012). Systemic corruption within the academia, where rules are routinely bent for profit, perpetuate an ever widening chasm between the haves and have-nots. With education costs escalating worldwide, the rich and the sub-par alien will be expressly fast-tracked into enrolment lists that were originally meant for meritorious natives.

Historically, class-based revolutionary forces had viewed the academia as a rubber stamp of the ruling elite, often with murderous consequences. According to Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky, Bolshevik-style revolutions generally resulted in the decimation of a "specific 10 percent" of the population, particularly of intellectuals and academics in order to re-engineer society from the bottom. (Snore & Valdnieks, 2008). The core logic was highly simplistic: If the erudite elite had diffused knowledge – and the accompanying individual empowerment – in a socially equitable manner, revolutions would not have been necessitated in the first place.

But historical lessons do not prevent the TCC from perpetuating contradictions between the egalitarian ideals of the Centre and the authoritarian realities of the Periphery. Robinson and Harris (2000) point out that "world class universities, transnationally oriented think tanks, the leading bourgeois foundations, such as Harvard's School of International Business, the Ford and the Carnegie Foundations, policy planning groups such as the Council on Foreign Relations, and so on" play an important role in "transnational class socialization." (p.11)

Nurturing TCC capillaries is integral to this process:

"Elite planning groups are important forums for integrating class groups, developing new initiatives, collective strategies, policies and projects of class rule, and forging consensus and a political culture around these projects. Since at least late in the last century the corporate elite has operated through political organizations...These peak business associations function as bodies that connect capital with other spheres (governments, organs of civil society, cultural forums, etc.) at numerous levels." (Robinson & Harris, 2000, pp.11-12)

These capillaries run deep through the Periphery's cul-de-sacs, where, even poverty eradication is defined by TCC interests. This has created a class of Centre-based "poverty barons" who routinely bag multimillion dollar empowerment projects in the Periphery. International aid has regressed into a pork-barrel of profligate projects such as a swanky holiday complex in Morocco; a hotel management program at billionaire playgrounds in Barbados; a scheme promoting tourism in Iceland's Katla national park; and a television project in Turkey. Russia, "with more than 100 billionaires, was given £40 million" in EU aid funds, "including

£240,000 for an arts project in St Petersburg.” The total consultancy fees alone for such international aid cost the British tax-payer £500 million in 2011. (Gilligan, A. 2012).

The ultimate losers of this compact is the periphery of the Periphery and, increasingly of late, the periphery of the Centre. Periphery states score poorly in the Human Development Index as its elites view fundamental freedoms and merit as existential threats. The social privileges of a minority depend on the level of suppression wielded, which can take the form of a brutal Tiananmen-style crackdown or a passive, systematic discrimination. The Periphery is ruled by and subjected to a blend of Galtung’s structural and direct violence, as opposed to the “soft-power” structural manipulations at the Centre.

The Periphery may also resemble a medieval limbo. Base ostentations of charity, fervid nationalism, and religious hysteria are some extreme Periphery hallmarks, as seen during the heydays of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. These overthrown tyrants should have heeded the words of the American philosopher Eric Hoffer: “People who bite the hand that feeds them usually lick the boot that kicks them.” (Hoffer, n.d.). Hierarchy-dictated social reductionism can still be seen in North Korea – the most fossilized Periphery nation today – and in the ongoing Sharia hysteria throughout much of the Islamic world.

As Galtung (1971) asserts, the level of disharmony within the Periphery – between a vast, marginalized underclass and a tiny super rich segment – is not enough to rock transnational Centre-Periphery dynamics. National failings within the periphery can be routinely externalized... to the imperialistic machinations of “foreign elements,” “Zionists” or the West. Status quo is fixed by a *panem et circenses* pantomime. Such tactics were successfully employed in the post-Arab Spring world, where, democratic agitations were subverted in favour of “divinely-ordained” Sharia laws. Within a year, the West, including its middle class who contributed to the Arab Spring in terms of publicity, funding and communications tools, were vilified as being the agents of sacrilege and moral licentiousness. Islamic leaders, who invoked fundamental freedoms when they were battling dictators months earlier, speedily advocated censoring the very Internet that facilitated their rise to power. An amateurish internet video clip called the *Innocence of Muslims*, one among thousands online, was conveniently chosen as the focal point of Islamic rage throughout much of the world beginning September 2012. Islamist leaders, spawns of the Arab Spring themselves, are not backing down until the international community passes universal legislation to curtail the flow of “blasphemous” information.

Religion was not the only card played up by authoritarian governments during this period. Chinese authorities in Beijing concurrently whipped up anti-Japanese hysteria over a chain of territorially disputed uninhabited islands in the East China Sea. This happened against the backdrop of a Sept. 23 labour riot at a factory owned by Foxconn, which manufactures products for Sony, Nintendo and Apple, the world’s largest company by market capitalization. Beijing, incidentally, had routinely overlooked instances of worker suicides, industrial accidents and allegations of poor working conditions at Foxconn.

Were governments in China and MENA trying to externalize the inequalities and rage of its underprivileged? Any apparent civilizational angle, such as the West vs Islam narrative, gets blurred by the concurrence of protests in Spain, Greece and

much of southern Europe. Can such intentional civilizational distractions gloss over the underlying cause of global rage – the impoverishment of the bottom 99% of society?

According to Galtung’s model, permanent change may only occur when disharmony grips the Centre before rippling out to the periphery. It is therefore a *sine quo non* for the Arab Spring to be preceded and sustained by social turmoil in Europe and the United States, when the middle class situates itself as the agents of change in the Centre. The 2007 financial crisis had created concentrically larger peripheral pools within the Centres as middle class wealth plunged. This, in turn, impacted middle classes in the Periphery through the meshing of techno-politics, inducing class awareness and conflict across borders. The outer Bedouins, as Ibn Khaldun would have put it, were now besieging their sheikhdoms. (Inayatullah, 2011).

The ripples are now rolling back from the Periphery to batter the citadels of the Centre, via the bridgeheads of Computer Mediated Communications (CMC). The CMC therefore is the pivot upon which global class consolidation succeeds or fails – a fact not lost on TCCs in the Centre and Periphery (Islamist, authoritarian or otherwise). Which brings us to the question: Were there pre-emptive attempts to subvert the media?

Democracy’s Subversion

The UK MOD’s warning over “declining news quality” at the expense of facts” along with the rise of “internet-enabled, citizen-journalists” materialized sooner rather than the originally envisioned post-2020 period. (DCDC, 2007, p.51) Ironically, Britain led the way.

It began with a clandestine phone hacking operation initiated by executives from News International, a subsidiary of media behemoth News Corp. Left unchecked – despite official complaints dating back a decade and investigations by the London Metropolitan Service’s Counter Terrorism Command – News International’s industrial-scale hackings tapped up to 5,000 landlines and 4,000 mobile numbers. Victims included celebrities, the UK Royal Family and former Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Two senior News International employees were even insinuated into the offices of the Prime Minister and the London Metropolitan Police. Security vetting was either exempted or laxed while concurrent salaries were drawn from the taxpayer and News International. Such double standards were part of a larger web of corruption that pervaded Britain’s public edifices. (Maavak, 2011). Confidence in British politicians finally plunged beyond the threshold of tolerance. London erupted in an orgy of anarchist violence in March 2011, followed by a larger convulsion of looting and rioting across several English towns from Aug 6 and 10. (Grice, 2011)

Citizens were not just losing faith in their politicians; they were losing faith in democracy itself. While the Third World rallied for Western-style fundamental freedoms and democracy, the West rallied against a democracy that could be purchased at will. Democracy was becoming a corporate-vetted Hobson’s choice, not Fukuyama’s utopia. The US democratic process, with its \$6 billion Congressional and Presidential electoral tab in 2012, was satirically described by the economist Joseph Stiglitz as government “of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%.” (Sainath, 2012)

Paul Collier, an Oxford economist, predicts more social turmoil ahead based

on data collated since 1960. Prospering democracies, it seems, were statistically less prone to political unrest than economically-thriving autocracies. For instance, there were 180,000 protests and riots in China in 2010, reflecting a 100% rise even as its GDP grew. “The Arab uprising broke out in the most economically successful model autocracy in Africa.” (Anderlini, 2011). But did prosperity actually trickle down to the middle and lower classes in booming economies? Inefficiencies and corruption were generally tolerated until middle class livelihoods suffered, exactly as hypothesized by Aristotle, Galtung and Gramsci.

Where Class Agitation Leads

Middle class discontent is beginning to debilitate developed nations in ways that transcend protests and rallies. In the United States, the militia movement is ominously gaining traction (Gellman, 2010) and may likely attract a portion of the disgruntled middle class. This may encourage fringe movements in the US and similar ones elsewhere to adopt a War of Movement, instead of the passive War of Position advocated by the likes of OWS.

The UK MOD report foresaw this possibility. The growing gap between the middle class

...“and a small number of highly visible super-rich individuals might fuel disillusion with meritocracy, while the growing urban under-classes are likely to pose an increasing threat to social order and stability, as the burden of acquired debt and the failure of pension provision begins to bite. Faced by these twin challenges, the world’s middle-classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest.” (DCDC, 2007, p.80).

Rise of the Panopticon

The social media, initially hailed as a liberator during the Arab Spring, is now viewed as a subversive tool, even by the democratic Centres. UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s warning, after the urban riots of August 2011, was particularly revealing: “When people are using social media for violence we need to stop them.” A Syrian activist replied: “Cameron ‘will now be the most cited reference by all despots clamping down on social media.’” (Friedman, 2011). The Islamic world, with their calls for universal anti-blasphemy legislation, must have taken notice.

There are other forces militating against fundamental freedoms. Terrorist attacks on 9/11 prompted governments worldwide to introduce a variety of surveillance countermeasures. Cross-border cooperation rose dramatically. The electronic All-Seeing-Eye emerging today could be trained on a restive global middle class tomorrow. It is a classic function creep. Future surveillance systems will be both anticipatory in nature, and real time in function. The surveillance grid is getting smarter, smaller, and tighter. Facial and behavioural recognition software will anticipate intentions via street CCTVs before a crowd swells up. Police forces worldwide are increasingly using surveillance drones over high-risk urban areas; iris and fingerprint scans may be mandatory for transactions, applications and entry into premises; and brain implants may reveal thoughts and real-time locations. Powerful

satellites will be technologically enhanced to eavesdrop on conversations and uncover hideouts. The US Department of Homeland Security is already compiling individual histories, actions and personality traits for predictive behavioural projections. Artificial Intelligence will think a few steps ahead of surveillance targets. A supercomputer had in fact predicted the overthrow of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Osama bin Laden's Pakistani hideout by analysing a complex set of wired databases. Hypothetically, if the Arab Spring was delayed by three or four years, its key proponents may have been pacified in advance. (Maavak, 2011).

The US Information Awareness Office (IAO)'s Futures Markets Applied to Prediction (FutureMAP) program exemplifies the demand for predictive technology. FutureMAP was created to simulate and predict market-based trading patterns, political instability, threats to national security and other disruptive events. Effectively, this made FutureMAP a betting portal on probable terrorist attacks, with the Federal government acting as the book-keeper. (Starr, 2003).

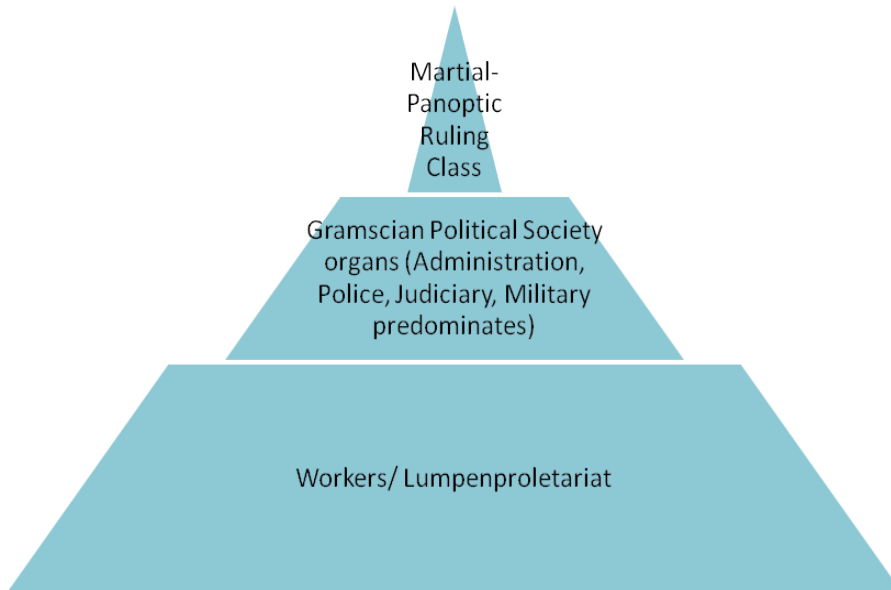
Ultimately, a global middle class revolt may have greater ramifications than demands over fundamental freedoms. The mobs in Cairo, Tunis, Athens and London may have actually pre-empted or hastened the emergence of a Total Surveillance Society. Much depends on how events transpire within the next few months or years. If chaos triumphs over political concession, then governments have the means to tackle them. This is the legacy of 9/11.

The US government, for one, has reportedly drawn up a CONPLAN 3501 and 3502 to deal with such exigencies. "Tasks performed by military forces may include joint patrolling with law enforcement officers; securing key buildings, memorials, intersections and bridges; and acting as a quick reaction force." (Hudson, 2011). Contingency management forces worldwide are considering the possibility of Tahrir Square-type contagions. What then does the future hold?

Three Alternative Futures

Future 1: The Martial-Panoptic Society

If the global middle class fails to extract equitable concessions, security imperatives may override fundamental liberties. This will aggravate social ataxia and pandemonium, necessitating a drastic solution in the form of a Martial-Panoptic Society. Sociologists in the near future may view this new order as yet another totalitarian experiment represented by a minimalist, three-tiered social hierarchy outlined below:



Future 2. The Martial-Panoptic Society

Population control would be aided by artificial intelligence and intelligent foresight. Access to food, pharmaceuticals, utilities and other basic necessities may be electronically monitored and controlled via highly sensitive network-centric spigots. Middle class techno-politics may be shorted by Internet kill-switches and biometric access keys. Without access to information and network to form a counter-hegemonic bloc, a dissenting middle class may vanish or be co-opted into a Gramscian Political Society. Societies that mushroomed between the Great Depression and WWII were variants of this authoritarian social structure.

Historically, Political Societies co-existed with each other in a state of ideological contradiction. Fascism could not reconcile itself to Communism. Therefore, future Martial-Panoptic Societies may clash, though they may initially cooperate with each other, as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union did until Operation Barbarossa in 1941 (Davies, 1998).

The centre of Centres in these societies would be an amalgam of the martial and capitalist classes, with real power wielded by the former. The martial class would dictate ideology and the means of productions, as was the case between 1933 and 1945 in much of the world (and beyond, in the case of the Communist bloc).

There are, however, certain pre-conditions for Martial-Panoptic Societies to emerge: They are:

1. Internal social turmoil and/ or an existential threat to the Centre, necessitating a New Order.
2. Untenably high national, business and personal debts that require a New Order to reset basic human activity. (Food shortages, after all, had triggered the Arab Spring).
3. Availability and technological maturity of a panopticon, where, dissent can be electronically cleaved and sanitized from the public domain – in real time.
4. Sophistication of propaganda, pacification and mobilization machineries.

5. Extent of STI and economic development that can be nurtured by the martial hierarchy. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union – and to some extent, present-day China – are the prototypical Martial-Panoptic Societies. The Soviet Union even had dedicated *sharaska* (prison labs) camps for scientists who successfully designed weapons. (Applebaum, 2003).

As Inayatullah (2011), using Sarkar’s macrohistorical perspective, writes: “Each era organically leads to the next, until the capitalist era dominates, and all classes find the heightening inequity unbearable. Since the needs of the other social classes are not met, a chaotic worker revolution or evolution results which is then followed by the discipline of the warrior-based state.” (pp.36-41). Galtung (1971) refers to this as “military imperialism,” one which is activated when “economic and political imperialism” show “important cracks in the (state) structure,” (pp.81-91).

This development mirrors the “politics of exclusion” outlined by Robinson and Harris:

“There is a shift from the social welfare state to the social control (police) state, replete with the dramatic expansion of public and private security forces, the mass incarceration of the excluded population (disproportionately minorities), new forms of social apartheid maintained through complex social control technologies, repressive anti-immigration legislation, and so on.” (2000, p.25)

If a Martial-Panoptic Society emerges, it would initially be adopted by Developed Nations as they meet the key technological and social pre-conditions. The centre of Centre would be comprised of the warrior class. Aligned Periphery nations might be ruled through a military presence from the Centre to prevent an influx of “outer barbarians” such as refugees, and to ensure a steady supply of raw materials until the panopticon gets concentrically wider to cover respective Peripheries.

Can such Martial-Panoptic Societies succeed? Warring empires like Rome thrived for more than five centuries. The Mongols succeeded in overrunning much of the Eurasian landmass before ossifying or assimilating into their newly conquered areas. The big unknown here will be the panopticon. Is innovation possible under an All-Seeing-Eye? How will people think, innovate, debate and ideate under such intense, real-time scrutiny? Under certain circumstances, the panopticon may be introduced as a Total Resource Management tool that promises innovation, efficiency and merit. If the panopticon is introduced as such, replete with comprehensive datasets, it can acquire a more sinister function creep in due course.

Future 2: A “Unipolar Regionalism”

Due to its very nature, the Martial-Panoptic Society will threaten the pre-eminence of the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC). The future TCC would be reduced to being traders and merchants, serving a neo-feudal aristocracy. Once the Panopticon is controlled by the Martial Class, TCCs will be unable to form counter-hegemonies as the control of capital would be vested with the former. Money may likely become an electronic assignation that cannot be printed, hoarded, speculated or commoditized. Traders and merchants may have to wait until the Martial-Panoptic Society collapses by the weight of its own internal contradictions or effeteness – a process that could take centuries – or pre-empt its emergence. (This tussle between

a Martial-Panoptic Society and the trading class was incidentally outlined in the first of Isaac Asimov's futuristic *Foundation* trilogy).

To prevent the rise of a Martial-Panoptic Society, the TCC would have to subvert their respective major Centres from within and simultaneously diffuse power from a unipolar to bi-polar and finally multipolar geopolitical compact. The illusion of a multipolar balance of power between governments and/or regions will mask the real unipolar power wielded by the global TCC. Hence, the paradoxical term of "unipolar regionalism" to describe this contradiction.

Is there any historical trend or evidence to back the theory of "unipolar regionalism?" The 20th century began with a unipolar defined world, when a quarter of the planet was ruled by the British Empire until its pyrrhic victory in WWI. The United States took over as the sole superpower until WWII. Thereupon, global power was contested between the Free World and the Communist Bloc. Now, regional power has diffused to China, India, Japan, Brazil and even Israel.

The TCC and its predecessors have always found the diffusion of power, even to hostile blocs, vital to its survival. The Krupps of Germany were barely penalized for their role in rebuilding national sinews of war, in contravention of the Treaty of Versailles, and for constructing and operating concentration camps. This was attributable to the classic corporate-over-national interest phenomenon; in this case including an agreement that honoured all patents between the Krupps, UK armourers Vickers and the French Schneiders for weapons that killed their own countrymen in WWI. Krupp capital, technology and industries were inevitably needed to counter the new Communist threat, post-WWII. (Manchester, 1968).

It is ironic that many anti-capitalist movements today, such the OWS, have the full backing of multibillionaires like George Soros. The ramparts of major Centres are gradually being dislodged by their own TCC bulwarks, which have continually outsourced technology, skills and capital to rival blocs. TCC capital flows are able to destabilize economies, decimate middle classes and fractionate wealth until governments accept its diktat.

TCC-induced economic mismanagement in the United States, Europe and Japan has only hastened this diffusion process. The primary recipients are the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) nations. Mumbai alone had more multibillionaires than Paris, Berlin, Geneva or Zurich in 2010. According to a 2010 Forbes' list, Moscow took second spot with 50 billionaires. (PTI, 2010).

With the United States overstretched militarily and economically and Europe facing mammoth sovereign fund deficits, geo-economic power will devolve to emerging regional superpowers to keep the global production and wealth accumulation circuitries running. These nations, especially the BRICS, also possess a robust middle class buffer to keep essential production lines running until social convulsions in major Centres reach a point of panoptic denouement.

Control of the global monetary system will be paramount to the future of "unipolar regionalism." The 2012 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos had recommended the creation of a multipolar monetary system to anchor a keeling global economy by spreading financial and currency risks. As economic risks cannot be spread without devolving geopolitical risks, this effort will require a harmonization of policy at the global and regional levels.

"Liquidity provision" will be contingent upon "surveillance among groups

of collaborating countries.” (WEF, 2012, p5-7). The WEF predicts that “2012 will witness consolidation of trends that challenge the state-centred model of the world, with the United States and allies at the centre of global power. As the year unfolds, influence will move away from the traditional state powers to regional hegemony, such as China, South Africa and Brazil, and from United Nations-centric systems to regional or decentralized cooperation mechanisms. Geography may encourage a new organizational paradigm.” (WEF, 2012, pp.5-7)

More ominously, the WEF asks:

“To what extent can new regional architecture maintain a voluntary approach, and when are coercive measures necessary to keep countries in line? If coalitions operate on a purely voluntary basis, how can nations ensure longer-term strategies and outcomes? How can coalitions be called to account if the results of their cooperation are suboptimal?” (WEF, 2012, p8)

Geo-economic function creeps may ultimately morph into geopolitical mission creeps. Regional devolution is already underway. Within the emerging regional framework, anchor states may be assigned to govern geographically proximate regions, entailing the exercise of political, economic and military overlordship.

Table 3 briefly outlines the possible form and structure of future regional delineation.

Table 3. *Delineation of Regions and its Anchor Nations*

Region	Anchor Nations
North America	United States
Western Europe	Germany, France (possibly UK in the future)
Orthodox Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Eurasia	Russia
Middle East	Uncertain
South Asia	India
North and Sub Saharan Africa	Uncertain
Southern Africa	South Africa
Southeast Asia, Australasia and South Pacific	Australia
East Asia	To be decided between China, Japan and South Korea.
South and Central America	Brazil, Argentina

Regions without anchor nations (North Africa and the Middle East) may be subjugated, with the spoils distributed under the supervision of the TCC. Increasing volatility in MENA and the threat it poses to global energy security may precipitate transnational military action. Another uncertainty is the fate of Southeast Asia, which does not have an anchor nation, either militarily, culturally, or economically. (Huntington, 1998). The responsibility of carving out zones of influence here may be undertaken by Australia, the United States, China and Japan, through a compromise

formula of controlled expansionism (i.e., division of oil-rich Spratly Islands) instead of territorial revanchism – generally at the expense of Southeast Asia.

Future 3: Scattered Futures, Different Worlds

If neither the Martial-Panoptic Society nor the TCC prevail in imposing universal governance, the future global society may be an amalgam of Failed States, Martial-Panoptic States and Progressive States co-existing uneasily.

What constitutes a future Progressive State? It may follow elements of the current Scandinavian model, where socialism and capitalism are carefully balanced to maintain growth, innovation and social equitability. It may be geopolitically neutral and may draw strength from contiguity, though Switzerland has shown that under capable leadership, a nation can remain an oasis of stability in the midst of war, i.e., during WWII. The external dealings of a Progressive State would be limited to trade and finance while its internal priorities would be defined by an independence-centred ethos. Various forms of ring-fencing may be applied, from strict environmental standards to highly restrictive immigration policies. Citizenship may be defined by one's identification with the state; not birth.

A Progressive State will maintain a powerful and inclusive military, drawn from a population that sees itself as fellow participants in nation-building. Military pacts may be restricted to protecting mutual neutralities. Again, one is looking at an extrapolation of present day Scandinavia and Switzerland to infer the form and nature of future Progressive States. The European Union (EU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), North and South America and Southern Africa are potential Progressive State blocs.

There is one prerequisite for the Progressive State to succeed, however: They will need a rejuvenated middle class to play the traditional enterprise and buffer role as articulated by Aristotle.

Conclusion

This paper has provided evidence to support the assertion that a middle class-led global revolt may be imminent. Scholarly contentions and contemporary developments point in this direction, with current social trajectories indicating three possible futures. Of the two, the Martial-Panoptic Society and Unipolar Regionalism are the models most likely to compete and succeed, unless of course, a new social contract is drawn up for middle classes worldwide.

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