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**The Hare and the Tortoise:
The Dialectics of Resistance and Uniformity in the Race to
Capitalist Civilization**

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WORKING PAPER

The dissemination of sovereignty to formerly colonised territories is often posited as a point of interruption in the inequitable Global North/South relationship and co-constitutive discourses. This paper aims to go below the surface of such interruption and into its internal realities. It will do so by focusing on discursive and institutional forms of power that both preserve and modify their colonial progenitor. Within this power framework, the interactions between the transnational and national will be considered, as will the blurring of boundaries that enables the constitution of the global in the local. These dynamics will be examined through two case studies of neoliberal interventions and contestation: China's foreign investment infrastructure and Tunisia's "post-colonial" social and economic development, in particular in light of the 2011 uprisings. Despite differences in trajectories of state development, as well as political, social, cultural and economic formations, China and Tunisia share a recent history of uneven incorporation into the neoliberal global structure. A comparative analysis also reveals the various facets of the power and resistance dynamic that animate neoliberal governance.

Introduction

Aesop's famous fable tells the story of a tortoise who, ridiculed by the hare for being slow, challenges it to a race. The hare soon leaves the tortoise behind and, confident of winning, takes a nap midway. Upon awakening, he finds that his competitor, crawling slowly but steadily, has arrived before him. It is thus, that at the moment of challenge and encounter, power was transferred and, an apparently predetermined outcome was inversed - strength became weakness, weakness transformed into strength, and a derided attribute, when coupled with steadfastness, produced a win.

Transporting this tale to the realm of the political, this article will explore the operation of power in the international system, its impulse for endurance through innovations, and the spaces for resistance produced in consequence. Temporally, it will focus on the post-colonial order, when organised liberation movements engendered an apparent shift in the interstate dynamic of power. Sovereignty was disseminated to formerly colonised territories, delivering a cascade of states, the supreme jurisdiction of which was to be protected by the doctrine of non-interference. This shift is often posited as a point of interruption in the continuum of inequitable Global North/South relationship.

Our aim is to go below the surface of such interruption and into its internal realities. For the new states, the fact of their sovereignty represented a hard-won gain. It was understood to have conferred on them real power and equality, both political and economic. The desirability of western-oriented teleological notion of development was generally accepted. However, the path to development required that the relationship between former colonised and former coloniser be transformed. By contrast, for the former coloniser the dissemination of sovereignty signified the triumph of a European construct, universalised and institutionalized so as to ensure Europe's historical place atop a hierarchical world order. A new power constellation called for new devices. Overt power having been marginalised and at least, formally outlawed, it would be replaced by more subtle and obscure forms.

Among these, the language of liberal governance assumed an increasingly important role in the salience and endurance of institutional design. Being a productive form of power, its overriding aim is the forging of subjectivities. Being a bio-power, it intervenes at the level of "life chances" of populations through expressions of concern for the security, development and capacity building of peripheral states. Liberal governance is presented as a uniform prescription, the sole path for political and economic empowerment. It penetrates the undergrowth of formal sovereign equality so as to create a new global calculation, in which the whole surface of the earth is to be brought within the realm of market-based economic imperatives. Formally sovereign but in practice subjugated states and people must join the race to sameness or risk being expelled.

Against the thematic backdrop of continuities and inflections, this article will consider the way the language of liberal governance, in both its discursive

and institutional forms, operate to normalise external dictates. The focus is on the interactions between the transnational and national, and the blurring of boundaries that enables the constitution of the global in the local. We will demonstrate how tropes such as “development”, “rule of law”, and “democracy promotion” have come to perform a similar function to the “civilising mission” of the colonial era. As such, Western interventions in the form of “technical advice” and “capacity building” often replace the physical violence of colonial penetration with institutional and structural impositions. These serve to ensure the West's self-appointed position as materially, culturally and civilizationally superior, as well as the global uniformity from which perceived impediments to the free spatial movement of capital have been removed.

The productive and institutional power-resistance dynamic that marks the global-local neoliberal topography will be examined through two case studies: neoliberal interventions and contestation in China's foreign investment infrastructure, and in Tunisia's post-colonial social and economic development, focusing in particular on the period following the 2011 uprisings. Despite differences in trajectories of state development, as well as political, social, cultural and economic formations, China and Tunisia share a recent history of uneven incorporation into the neoliberal global structure. Both states have also exhibited some resistance to neoliberal governance. The specificities of China's power, size and historical evolution mean that the state has been capable of presenting different levels of resistance at various times. By contrast, resistance in Tunisia has often taken a societal form. The Tunisian state, it seems, has been unwilling or incapable of accommodating and/or reflecting such resistance. This is at least in part due, as this article will argue, to its structural location within the international system. Regardless of these differences, arguably, both states appear to be traversing a path to deeper incorporation into what we will describe below as “capitalist civilization.”

The case of neoliberal intervention in Chinese foreign investment infrastructure will be explored through the lens of International Investment Agreements (IIAs). Investment in particular functions to penetrate the interior of societies with a view to effect institutional, structural and cultural adaptation to a Westerncentric notion of progress. Discourse of equality and reciprocity masks IIAs' essential nature as colonial type power instruments that serve to impregnate the national with the transnational, and impose global uniformity. The case of neoliberal intervention in Tunisia will focus on the post 2011 uprising period, when a grassroots revolt against the national/global order initiated a (albeit unfulfilled) move towards interruption and change. Yet, externally dictated drive for state capacity building seeks to truncate this undertaking. The interaction of domestic and transnational imperatives will be examined through the lens of the “technical” reforms advocated by international financial institutions (IFIs), most recently in the realm of higher education - an institution that increasingly concerns itself with the capitalist/neoliberal socialisation of students.

This article advances a theoretical view of power and resistance as forming part of a dialectical dynamic. It will conclude by considering different forms of resistance to global neoliberal governance that have emerged in dialectical relation to the types of power with which they are confronted, both at the state and international levels. It will also consider the limitations of such resistance in the face of an exceedingly adaptive and persistent power.

From the Use of Force to Capitalist Civilization: the Construction and Maintenance of Hierarchies

The modern era saw immense changes in both Europe and the rest of the world. Most prominently, this included the development and consolidation of capitalism as a world system. Social, political and economic structures had to be dismantled in a process that entailed various forms of exploitation and violence - from slavery, to colonial rule, to the dispossession of people. For Hannah Arendt, the concerted breakdown of nascent representative institutions and long-standing social fabrics of 19th century Europe spawned a society no longer bound together by a sense of community, concern, and mercy.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt explains how power came to be disconnected from the “political community it should serve” (Arendt, 1968, p. 19). Its accumulation and privatisation became the “fundamental passion of man” with zero-sum competition a natural outcome. In what she conceptualises as a Hobbesian capitalist state, “security” and “law” transform into a function of the “power monopoly of the state” rather than “human right and wrong” (ibid). The “unlucky and unsuccessful” are robbed of virtue and excluded from “competition, which is the life of society” (ibid, p. 22). The economist Karl Polanyi describes the transformative force unleashed by the singular logic of market liberalism as economic “disembedding”— society’s detachment from economic imperatives and its subordination to the hegemony of self-regulating markets.

Thus, capitalism represented a radical break from past social relations, a qualitative rupture that introduced new rationality, to be distinguished from preceding vertical (historical) and horizontal (cross-cultural) continua of similarities and differences. Further, from the outset, expansion proved a key drive and an existential impulse. Unlike what Giovanni Arrighi (2010) identifies as “territorial” logic of power, the capitalist logic of power dictated that conquests be not only endless, but that conquered territories be prized open and transformed. Ontologically constructed racial and civilizational hierarchies provided the discursive rationalisation for this compulsion. European civilisation was naturalised as superior, while colonised peoples were denied historical and cultural agency.

Colonial/imperial power came to be exerted not simply as a material project that profited from subject peoples and land, but also as a disciplinary project of knowledge-production. This project was not without its inflections – from religious and law of nature to secular and science-based arguments; from orientalism to scientific racism to universalism. However, all served to legitimise the aim of integrating much of the non-Western world into an international capitalist system at a subordinate level, while continuing to regulate lasting structural inequalities between regions. In the process, the coloniser constructed itself as it attempted, albeit never without resistance, to construct the colonised. Colonial rule and the exploitation of the land and people of the non-Western world were instrumental to the ideational and material development of capitalist Europe. As Fanon put it: “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World” (Fanon, 1968, p. 102).

This hierarchical construct of the world order was challenged in the 20th century, with resistance forcing the diffusion of sovereignty to colonised people. If the colonial encounter took place between sovereign European states and subjugated non-European states, now international relations were to play out between equally sovereign nation-states. Or, were they? A contest erupted, in which new states’ attempts at innovation was met with discursively and institutionally inventive power responses, all aimed at maintaining existing hierarchies and removing the threat of reduced access to resources and markets.

Central to these responses was international law (IL) – itself designed to regulate engagements between colonial power and anti-colonial resistance in favour of the former. A set of newly crystallised, covertly coercive legal norms would come to govern relations between apparently equally sovereign nation-states and other international institutions. Stephen Krasner (1999) has delineated four principal features of sovereignty: “domestic” which refers to the nature of and control by domestic structures; “interdependence”, which describes a state’s ability to control trans-border movements; “international legal”, which refers to the process of mutual recognition; and “Westphalian sovereignty” which entails “the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority configurations” i.e. autonomy. Bilateral investment treaties (BITs), which emerged as part of the concerted move to limit sovereignty through the formulation of new sources of IL, may have a reductive effect on all but the third.

Equally central to these responses is the language of equality and reciprocity. For it serves to make invisible a hierarchical reality of on-going territorial and civilizational incursions, in which certain states have maintained both the capacity and legitimacy to employ violence in the international system, while states with subordinate status have not. In the book *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, John Hobson (2012, p. 118) refers to this structural inequality as “gradated sovereignty”. It ranges from European colonial “*hyper sovereignty*” of overt intervention in non-Western states, to “*full state sovereignty*” in the West and “*qualified sovereignty*”, or “sovereignty-

by-*default*” in the South/East. The latter is attributed to the era of global liberal governance, when hierarchy took on a “subliminal/informal modality”.

The developments recounted above may be summarised as the dialectic dynamic of capitalist, imperial movement that spurns an anti-movement of resistance. This in turn triggers another capitalist movement of recalibrated strategies, and so on. The movement is planned and designed – design being one of the hallmarks of empire. The anti-movement may be organised, yet remains essentially spontaneous.

With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that our account does not end here.

The rise and influence of socialism, and the emergence of post-colonial strong states with divergent visions meant that new strategies of linguistic and institutional subterfuge did not reduce defiance to an acceptable level. In Europe, German national- socialism and the British Keynesian state raised the spectre of constraints to the free movement of capital. And so, in 1947, the Mont Pelerin Society, a think-tank established by Freidrich Hayek, founding father of the neoliberal movement, declared capitalism to be at risk. “The central values of civilization are in danger” it stated (The Mont Pelerin Society, 1947). The “war aim”, recalls Ralph (Lord) Harris, was to establish a class-wide propaganda organisation “to reverse the tide of collectivism sweeping from the Soviet Union westward across Europe” (Miller, 2010, p. 26). Hayek identified the need for an initial process of creating a neoliberal persona by shaping commonly held political and social beliefs through a top-down dissemination of ideas (Hayek, 2006, pp. 97-99).

And so, the new strategy was to go beyond institutions to the level of populations – the forging of subjectivities that adhere to what we call a capitalist civilisation. The definition of civilisation employed here is borrowed from Robert Cox (2002) and entails “a correspondence between material conditions of existence” and “socially produced meanings” (p. 4). This includes both a world vision as well as a coherent set of political, social and economic institutions, through which this vision may be realized. As with all civilisations, the capitalist one entails a set of norms that must be institutionalised.

Our understanding of capitalist civilisation is linked to a process that other scholars have described as “new imperialism”. Associated with the US hegemonic cycle, it denotes a new calculation in Western governmental practice, where power is predominately expressed through economic rather than military means. It is designed to bring about the integration of disparate nation-states into a unified global order that is forged by the metropolis, and which serves to enrich it and its corporate elite. As well as capital and debt bondage, the dynamics of new imperialism also include what David Harvey

terms “accumulation by dispossession” – the continuity within neoliberal capitalism of Marxist primitive accumulation through for example, land grabbing and privatization. Saskia Sassen (2014) refers to subterranean processes of “expulsion”, whereby people and the environment are increasingly expelled from an ever-shrinking economy.

Most central to the diffusion of capitalist civilisation is what Michel Foucault described in *The History of Sexuality* as “bio-power”, entailing a move away from sovereign “power of death” to a more diffuse kind of “life-administrating power”, whose target is the “biological existence of a population”. By “dividing people into those who must live and those who must die” (Foucault, 1978, pp 136-137), and by enabling rather than disciplining populations, this new form of power is easily harnessed by political projects, aimed at constructing and/or maintaining racial or civilizational hierarchies, and eliminating resistance.

Like disciplinary power, bio-power interventions require violence, but at the same time obscure their authorship of such violence (Mullin and Patel, 2014). They operate on the level of the “life chances” of populations, including “humanitarian intervention”, “capacity building” and “development”. Their emissaries are “persuasion centres” in forms such as think-tanks and academic bodies, international financial institutions and corporations. The first two bear the gift of liberal governance micro-practices, newly constructed legalities, and inevitability of acceptance. Corporations then bring back tributes in the form of surplus transfer.

This progression is not altogether devoid of historical repetitions. Formal colonial processes and informal imperialism of free trade interchanged throughout to create the illusion of withdrawal. In *Necropolitics*, Achille Mbembe (2003) reminds us that the institution of slavery should be seen as “one of the first instances of bio-political experimentation” (p. 21). Yet, the dialectic dynamic of movements and counter-movements necessitates the production of new features. These may be found in developments such as Sassen’s processes of expulsions, the denationalisation of the national, and the de-territorialisation of authority. The public and the private, the national and the international flow into each other to form a global order that is marked by what Arendt considers the most tyrannical of all forms of domination – rule by nobody. No one is left to answer for what is being done.

China – on being the same but different

BITs, we recall, came about as a tactical response to the enlargement of the interstate system - capital was perceived as in need of protection from the vagaries of a new non-Western sovereignty of dubious civilizational pedigree. At a time when the colonial use of force was being contested, treatification and its hallmark of sovereign consent provided a suitable mechanism for the fragmentation of Global South solidarity, and the masking of coercive threats

of aid withdrawal and conditionalities. Discursive formations that held out to populations the promise of development obscured BITs' innate nature as power instruments, which privilege foreign investors over the rest of the population, and trade sovereignty for as little as the mere possibility of investment. Language of equality, reciprocity and rule of law disguised a reality of intervention through the imposition of external standards of treatment and the denationalisation of adjudication. Much like the unequal treaties of colonial times, the assertion of consent was detached from the duress that produced it.

Not so long ago China was a spokesman for the New International Economic Order movement. It was only in the late 70s, that its interactions with foreign investment underwent a metamorphosis. Since its first 1982 BIT with Sweden, it entered into some 130 BITs and 17 other IIAs. Quantitative augmentation was supplemented by normative evolution in the direction of greater protection for investors.

Why China should go down this route is not immediately apparent. Years of adherence to a policy of self-reliance meant that it was free of debt bondage. By the 80s, it could hardly claim a misapprehension of the type experienced by Pakistan when they thought the signing of the first BIT ever in 1959 a mere photo opportunity. A liberation war and a popular revolution were meant to deliver a socialist persona and social relations resistant to capitalist bio-power incursions. For Mingqi Li (2008) the explanation lies in the coup that took place within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) upon Mao's death. Such explanation however is incomplete without an examination of the productive power that came on top of the military defeat of the Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60).

Together, these historical developments engendered social and structural disintegration, which, in turn, enabled the drawing of China into the orbit of the capitalist world system. Discursive and military onslaught produced an intellectual and eventually political response whereby indigenous notions of identity and development came to be questioned. A western-embedded teleology of development depicted China's temporary weakness as an inherent condition, a permanent state of backwardness that was the antithesis of historically codified Western progress with capitalism its pinnacle.

China's response was to search for the source of power in a predatory world. Western ideas and the nation-state as modernity's signatory institution became the main protagonists in an iconoclastic project of new consciousness and national regeneration. Thus, a strong state and economic construction were the CCP's primary aims from the outset. This combination of borrowing from the West, while simultaneously resisting it produced a fault line and ongoing simmering conflict between opposing camps within the CCP as to the course of post revolution China. With Mao's death, a new discursive consensus was constructed around a critique of radicalism, inefficient SOEs,

and failed Maoist utopianism. Seen through this lens, China's incorporation into the BITs program may be understood as an attempt to counter resistance to domestic economic "reforms" by imbuing them with an international dimension, and a hope that competition from foreign capital will steer the economy in the desired direction.

With empowerment and renewed national confidence, China appears to once again revisit its past. This time it borrows from rather than reject Confucian political philosophy. It is repositioning itself internationally as not merely a recipient, but also a diffuser of norms and structures. A vision of a harmonious world was formulated in 2005, and now incorporated into the CCP charter. According to this narrative, free trade and investment-based globalisation managed properly can produce inclusive prosperity, rather than the expulsions and immiseration of the current system. Interstate equality will become real, sovereignty will be protected from intervention, international relations will be democratised, hegemony will give way to multipolarity, interstate competition will give way to cooperation, with China leading the developing camp, civilizational differences will be preserved, and people will be the masters of their own path to development.

The harmonious world paradigm raises the possibility of resistance at the interstate level. Yet, it is resistance that remains within systemic boundaries – an attempt at being simultaneously in and out, the same and different. This takes us back to BITs. For they reproduce the fault line which, as we saw above, from the outset, haunted China's response to its encounter with the West. If the harmonious world's flagship is diversity and the peaceful co-existence of differences, BITs operate so as to lock in governments and people into uniformity. If the harmonious world envisions a place of common prosperity, BITs are designed to benefit the core and its corporate elites. If the harmonious world cherishes intervention free sovereignty, BITs are interventionist and sovereignty reducing instruments. If the harmonious world underscores the importance of localised solutions, BITs operate to universalize them.

Further, BITs straddle both the transnational and the national, with implications flowing in both directions. The penetration of foreign private capital into China is indivisible from the legitimisation of domestic private capital. Five years after signature of the country's first BIT, the private sector was pronounced a useful supplement to the public sector. By 2011, private companies reported 50.9% and 79.5% year-on-year increase in assets and profit respectively, and called for the dismantling of state-owned enterprises monopolies. If historical experience is anything to go by, fused domestic and transnational capital may well attempt to use the fault line in China's state-led resistance so as to capture power, and stop resistance altogether.

Tunisia- navigating between revolution and global governance

As in the case of China, Tunisia's discursive incorporation into the global capitalist system came on the back of coercive power. First, bankruptcy, brought about by extensive borrowing at exorbitant interest rates from European banks to finance modernisation projects, invited external economic control. French military intervention followed suit and, in 1881, put an end to indigenous attempts at state-building.

In line with colonial rule elsewhere, under the French, Tunisia's land and indigenous population were exploited for the benefit of the colonisers. Resistance was quick to erupt and increased over time, leading to a negotiated independence in 1956. The first head of the new state was the French educated Habib Bourguiba, whose strong pro-west foreign policy orientation and eventual economic liberalisation ensured that Tunisia remained within the French sphere of influence to the benefit of foreign economic interests. Past experience of external indebtedness and its consequences notwithstanding, in 1984 Bourguiba accepted its first International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan, conditional on structural adjustments. "Free trade zones" (often referred to as "offshore enterprises") were later established, in which goods destined for Europe were produced free of tax and using cheap labour. The coming to power of Zine Elabidine Ben Ali in a bloodless coup represented a change in style rather than substance. His rule came to be characterised by the expulsions and socio-economic pathologies associated with neoliberal authoritarianism, including state violence, repression, entrenched inequality and systematic corruption.

The intervention of IFIs in Tunisia's economic governance adhered to a broad set of post-Cold War liberal governance principles, foremost of which was the advancement of "technical" solutions as a means to depoliticise and denationalise economic issues. Ostensibly, international loans were made for reasons of budget deficit and public debt reduction. In reality, external debt increased more than five-folds, productivity slowed, and impoverishment grew. In the years leading to the revolt, in some areas, unemployment reached up to 45 per cent. The "*muhammishin*" (marginalised) were Tunisia's expelled population. Having ceased to be of value as workers and consumers, they were excluded from social, economic and political systems. In due course, they, together with other politically and socially marginalised groups, would form the basis of future disruptions to the neoliberal dream. Both organised and spontaneous, these came in the forms of subversive political activism, strikes, sit-ins, online activism, and eventually the mass mobilisation and occupation of public space that resulted in Ben Ali's ousting.

Many scholarly and activist accounts of the Tunisian uprisings viewed the mass mobilisation and concomitant rejection of Ben Ali's symbolic and material forms of power through the lens of the *infatih* ("opening"/liberalisation) policies, and the authoritarian restructuring and entrenchment they entailed. However, for the IFIs, the problem was neoliberalism's failure to take root as deeply or as systematically as had been hoped for. The solution was therefore more liberalisation. Employing "pro-

poor” rhetoric, the 2014 World Bank report on Tunisia claims the key to addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality in Tunisia is deregulation. It is only through “removing distortions... barriers to market access that undermine productivity growth” and “promoting competition” that Tunisia’s social ills will be addressed.

As Alfredo Saad-Filho (2010) has demonstrated, despite pro-poor pretensions, the policies underpinning the language of “inclusive growth” continue to adhere to the Washington Consensus paradigm. Deconstructing the language used, “inclusiveness” refers to access to markets, resources, and regulatory frameworks, rather than meaningful economic and political change. Such language demonstrates how adaptive neoliberal governance is as a form of power. If there was a lesson for the IFIs to learn from the uprisings, it was that blockages to more comprehensive “reforms” lie not only in domestic power structures, but also on a deeper level of individual subjectivities. With this realisation the IFIs have partially shifted tact. Working in tandem with domestic elite, they have embarked on project that seeks to transform the anarchic and rebellious energy of the uprisings into a productive power amenable to further neoliberalisation.

Higher education has thus become a more prominent target for IFIs intervention. As a technique of bio-political power, such intervention focuses on the level of “populations”, seeking, in the words of David Chandler (2014), to “shape social practices in order to produce cognitive and ideational change”. Schools play an important role in this process, functioning as a central social and cultural institution in the (re) production of identities, social hierarchies and forms of knowledge production. In their *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Bowles and Gintis describe education as a system engineered “to produce (an) amenable and fragmented labour force” (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 107). As such, it is unsurprising that higher education has become a principal arena for the expression and contestation of global neoliberal governance power in post-uprising Tunisia.

The relationship between global (neo) liberal governance actors and Tunisia’s higher education system was concretised through a series of agreements. These were signed between the Tunisian government and the World Bank as part of its numerous loan packages, dating back to the start of the *infitah* era. The first major higher education project was launched in 2006, and lasted eight years. The Tunisian government was granted a US\$ 95.20 million loan with the stated aim of assisting Tunisian universities to enhance “capacity”, “efficiency” and “institutional performance”. Other leading IFIs have expressed interest in remoulding Tunisia’s higher education system, with the World Trade Organisation Chair for Developing Countries the newest participant. As the latest addition to the WTO Chairs Programme of developing and least-developed countries, Tunisia’s higher education will ostensibly benefit from various “knowledge transfer”, “curriculum development”, and “capacity building” programmes.

Several shared aims on the level of higher education may be delineated: expanding the capitalist market to the realm of higher education through privatisation of various facets of teaching, learning and administration; significantly reducing the percentage of the state budget dedicated to education; enhancing partnerships between industry and higher education institutions in order to better gear teaching towards the needs of industry; expanding the curriculum and teaching “capacity” to normalise a neoliberal rendering of the purpose and function of global trade.

As with other attempts at global liberal governance, the hegemonic power of IFIs is never complete. Internal contradictions inherent in (neo) liberal higher education interventions facilitate certain forms of contestation, rendering the study of their specific histories and institutional contexts even more pressing. Perhaps the next Tunisian uprising will take place on university campuses.

Conclusion

Going back to the tale of the tortoise and the hare we must ask ourselves: what does this anecdote tell us about the prospects for resistance in the international system, and the role of China and Tunisia within this struggle? That peoples and states should remain steadfast in the face of the capitalist civilisational onslaught? Stay where they are, reverse course or perhaps build upon their expulsion and difference, and allow the hubris of the hegemonic power to result in self-destruction and imperial overreach? In their own ways, China and Tunisia have both followed and veered from the path of the tortoise.

As result of its power, size, and structural location within the international system, China has historically been better placed to resist on both the domestic and international levels the pressure for sameness that emerged in the context of colonial and capitalist expansion. Such pressure has continued until today in the form of global neoliberal governance. China has struggled to devise its unique path of development, foreign policy and vision for the international system. Yet, the BITs program is fundamental to the maintenance of current iteration of the global capitalist system. China’s incorporation into this program leads us to question the plausibility of the country’s quest for substantive, rather than superficial difference. By maintaining its critique within the boundaries of the very global capitalist system it is resisting, China may fail to supersede its paradigmatic underpinnings, and may ultimately end up perpetuating the very structural inequalities and related imposed uniformity it seeks to challenge.

In the case of Tunisia, the expelled have taken the lead in resisting the domestic manifestation of global hierarchical power. In the neoliberal context, where “rule of law” and “stability” are privileged governance tropes, activists

have been drawn towards un-governability as a particularly effective form of resistance. In *Two Cheers for Anarchism* James Scott maintains, that more often than not, structural change, is achieved through disruption in the “form of riots, attacks on property, unruly demonstrations, theft, arson, and open defiance [that] threatens established institutions”. In the cases of Tunisia's bread riots, mining strikes and the 2010-2011 uprising, activists found it increasingly difficult to locate and adequately challenge neoliberal power in the sites of institutionalised politics. After all, these institutions, designed to defuse “popular tumults and make peaceful, orderly legislative change”, often function “at the service of dominant interests”. It follows that non-institutionalised resistance to (neo) liberal governance – regardless of its aims or indeed longer-term effectiveness – may serve to re-establish a meaningful political subjectivity and perhaps a return to some of what has been lost in the process of the race to sameness. Foucault (2000, p. 452) eloquently spoke of the implications of such resistance in “Useless to Revolt?”:

A convict risks his life to protest unjust punishments...a people refuses the regime that oppresses it...It is enough that they exist and that they have against them everything that is dead set on shutting them up for there to be a reason to listen to them and to see what they mean to say.

One way to apply (Foucault's observations to the Arab uprisings would be to listen to forms of non-institutionalised politics that have persisted into the period of transition. This may be particularly difficult amidst the cacophony of global (neo) liberal governance voices seeking to mute, co-opt or confuse revolutionary subjectivities. Nevertheless, our patience and attention are required. It is in these non-institutionalised spaces, that revolutionary politics continue, and challenge to the impact of neoliberalism on the political identities and everyday lives of Tunisia's expelled are posed on a daily basis. These activists may not supersede the paradigmatic underpinnings of the global capitalist order through offering a new model of state power. However, in their ability to disrupt the status quo, both at the domestic and international levels, they may, paradoxically, go further in challenging deep-rooted structural inequalities.

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