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Editorial Note

We live in times when, on the one hand, scientific discoveries in all disciplines are proliferating, with more and more specialized approaches, while on the other hand, the very relevance and benefit of science for societal advancement is questioned, even at the basic level of the existence of a set of objective facts. This means that scientific rigour, if not coupled with valid and thought-through ways of presentation and communication of original research results, might increasingly reach its limits in facilitating progress. Scientific discoveries remain valuable regardless of their practical impact, nevertheless it seems desirable to combine both and, through these means, prevent from staying locked in ‘academic ivory towers’. Academic journals can play a prominent role in the conversation beyond academia, since they often present ground-breaking findings sooner and more rigorously than any other platform. However, it is then important that they are able to reach out beyond specialized academic for a to policymakers and citizens alike.

Politikon, the flagship journal of the International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS), aims to continue in contributing to this fusion between academia and practice, while not shying away from the commitment to the broadening and deepening of sub-, inter- and multi-disciplinary academic discourses of pertinent questions of politics, broadly conceived. Founded in 2001, it builds upon an extensive tradition of critical peer-to-peer feedback and presentation of high-quality research in Political Science and related disciplines without any restrictions on academic seniority. *Politikon* is open to authors of any level of academic seniority, but it is particularly welcoming towards contributions of students and early career researchers. Because of its ties to IAPSS, it offers a unique platform where academic excellence is combined with efforts to empower all individuals involved in the publishing process (authoring, editing, reviewing, proofreading, disseminating of academic content) to express their visions on various issues, always based on a sound theoretical and methodological framework, in most cases combined with empirical analysis as well.

Vol. 37, as several previous ones, presents four articles on a broad range of subjects, adding to geographical and topical diversity of the journal’s scope. Nevertheless, all are connected by answering critical questions pertaining to individual and collective well-being, policy advancement or the role of principles and rationality in decision-making. In the first article, Tyler Leigh explores whether selected country specifics are able to influence the capacity of civic education to increase levels of political participation, and answers this question in the affirmative with the help of statistical analysis, acknowledging the limitations stemming primarily from the lack of availability of detailed data on

this subject. Secondly, Tarsis Daylan Brito applies the concept of undecidability from the philosopher Jacques Derrida on the outcomes of the 1995 Beijing Conference on women's rights in order to uncover and critically assess them from a feminist standpoint. The third article by M. Rafiqul Islam pays attention to the political as well as administrative challenges surrounding the critical issue of freshwater supplies in Bangladesh, arguing that the lack of 'financing, rules and regulations, technical know-how, and awareness' is detrimental for the local population, and proposing the investment of resources into rainwater harvesting as a possible solution. Last but not least, Zachary E. Shufro provides a fresh view on Machiavelli's understanding of intentions and rationality in governing the state by interpreting the actions of three Machiavelli's political contemporaries in the famous *Discourses on Livy*.

The *Politikon* Editorial Board encourages its readers to interact with the authors as well as authors with each other, via contacting them by e-mail or proposing to write a reply to their findings. We welcome your feedback and suggestions for further improvements of the journal and for new opportunities that we might be able to offer. As always, we also look forward to receiving and reviewing new manuscripts on all kinds of questions in Political Science and related disciplines.

Max Steuer
Editor-in-Chief

The Impact of Country Characteristics on Civic Knowledge and Political Participation

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Abstract

Political participation scholars have argued for years over whether or not civic education has any effect on political participation, with no clear conclusion being drawn, despite a variety of analyses. These analyses tend to ignore the country characteristics and structural factors that influence the relationship between civic education and political participation. This article seeks to address the gap in the literature by using data from the International Civic and Citizen Study and other sources to show through quantitative analysis that country characteristics such as low economic development, stable state authority structures, and high inequality play a clear role in how effective civic education is in encouraging political participation. The article concludes by discussing limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

Keywords

Civic Education; Economic Inequality; Education; Governance; Political Participation

Introduction

Democracy depends on the active participation of citizens in a variety of governance activities, from voting in elections and donating to political campaigns to protesting and running for office. Scholars and researchers have found ample evidence supporting this assertion over the years, and it is now widely acknowledged as fact that democracies cannot be built or survive without robust political participation (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Galston, 2001; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996). Unfortunately, there is evidence that political participation in many Western democracies is dropping, and recent studies show that younger age cohorts are the least likely to participate. In this context, some politicians and researchers are beginning to fear that democratic institutions and the freedom and equality associated with them may begin to erode (Galston, 2004).

Educators and policy-makers point to education generally, and civic education specifically, as a cure for falling political participation rates and rising political apathy. According to Galston (2001), the concept of civic education can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle, who noted that a key aspect of education is teaching future citizens how to behave and interact within the political system. This holds true in autocracies and democracies alike, where children must learn how to interact with the political structure of the society in which they live. In modern usage, civic education most often refers to a specific type of formal education in democracies through which students learn about their country's political system and how to take part in the system (Galston, 2004). Murphy (2007) argues that civic education also involves the transmission of certain civic virtues to students, but many scholars disagree with him. Most recently, the process of civic education has been distinguished from civic knowledge, which is the set of skills and competencies necessary for engagement in politics (Lauglo, 2013). For the purposes of this analysis, civic education will be defined as the formal educational process through which students learn the concrete skills and knowledge necessary for participation in the political systems of democratic countries, while civic knowledge will be the measurable outcome of the civic education process.¹

Unfortunately, the literature on the effect of civic education on participation is mixed at best. Using data from the Vietnam War era, Berinsky and Lenz (2011) show that increasing overall education levels among veterans did not impact rates of political participation. Instead, they present evidence that although education is correlated with political participation, there is no causal link between the two (Berinsky & Lenz, 2011). This finding is supported by research in Sweden showing

¹ Although most of the research cited throughout this article focuses on the relationship between civic education and political participation, the focus of the analysis will be on the relationship between civic knowledge and political participation, in recognition of new developments in the field and new methods of investigating civic education and civic knowledge.

that increased exposure to civic education curriculum did not lead to increased political participation (M. Persson & Oscarsson, 2008).

Other researchers provide evidence supporting the idea that civic education can address falling political participation. Based on years of research and experience in the field, William Galston argues that civic education is the most effective way to raise rates of political participation (Galston, 2004). Research on civic education in the United States has shown that it builds civic skills and increases civic knowledge which researchers argue in turn increases political participation (Nie et al., 1996; Niemi & Junn, 2005). Finally, Lauglo (2013) shows that civic knowledge, the product of civic education, is positively correlated with expected political participation across almost 30 countries using data from the International Civics and Citizenship Education Study.

A consistent weakness across all of the studies mentioned is the treatment of the civic education – political participation relationship as a black box. The research above looks at civic education as the input and political participation as the outcome, but that may be an overly simplified view of the relationship. Lauglo (2013) notes that there is variation in the average correlation between an individual's civic knowledge and expected political participation across countries, yet there is no further exploration of the causes of these variations.

The fact that variations in the strength of the correlation exist suggests that outside factors may influence the civic education – political participation relationship. By looking at the economic, political, and social contexts in which citizens receive civic education and participate in politics, this article aims to present evidence that previous studies examining civic education and its efficacy in encouraging political participation overlook the importance of the national context. The next section outlines the theoretical arguments for including an analysis of the national context in any examination of the relationship between civic education/knowledge and political participation. Following that, three national characteristics—economic development, governance structure, and economic inequality—are discussed as potential national characteristics that could influence how civic knowledge affects political participation.

Analytical Framework

Resources for Participation and the Political Environment

The analytical framework for this article is adapted from the Resource Model of Political Participation developed by Brady, Verba, and Lehman Schlozman (1995). Based on the strong positive correlation between socioeconomic status and political participation, this model argues that individual political participation is closely related to the resources available to the individual, which are in turn reflected in socioeconomic status (Brady et al., 1995). Brady, Verba, and Lehman Schlozman identify three resources that most heavily influence participation: time, money, and civic

skills. Individuals need free time in order to be engaged in political activities, whether it is voting in an election or taking part in a protest, and they also need money to be able to participate in activities and to support their preferred candidates and interests. Finally, civic skills are necessary in order to use time and monetary resources efficiently in the political arena (Brady et al., 1995). Interestingly, there is little exploration of the relationships between the three resources and if deficiencies in one resource can be countered by surpluses of other resources.

Although Brady et al. (1995) focus on the resources necessary for participation at the individual level, others have noted how the broader social, political, and economic environments play a role in resource allocation, thereby shaping political participation. Kuklinski, Quirk, Jerit, and Rich (2001) show how the socio-political environment shapes the resources and motivations of citizens, which then influence the individual's participation in political activities. Taken together, these two models of political participation argue that factors influencing the social, political, and economic environment can have an impact on the resources crucial to political participation. With this in mind, it is possible to identify the country characteristics that influence the social, political, and economic environments of citizens, thereby shaping the resources available for participation in the context of a given country.

National Characteristics Influencing the Civic Knowledge – Political Participation Correlation

Assuming an efficient and effective education system, civic education leads to increased civic knowledge, which in turn helps to develop the civic skills identified by the Resource Model of Political Participation as critical to political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Nie et al., 1996; Niemi & Junn, 2005). Given these assumptions, national characteristics that influence the civic skills available to citizens will likely have the most significant influence on the strength of the civic knowledge – political participation relationship. In contrast, where national characteristics limit the availability of money and time, there may not be as strong of an influence on the civic knowledge – political participation relationship, since having the civic skills necessary to participate is unrelated to the monetary and time-based barriers to participation imposed by structural factors. Three national characteristics have been identified that could influence the relationship of interest: governance structure, economic development, and inequality.² Each of these is discussed below, along with hypotheses of the expected effects on the civic knowledge – political participation correlation.

² Data limitations constrained the national characteristics that could be analyzed. Since this analysis is based on publicly available secondary data, it was not possible to find data for some structural factors initially identified as interesting to the research. Future research can compile data on structural factors for which there is not data available, extending and enhancing the findings of this article.

The first national characteristic expected to influence civic knowledge and political participation is the governance structure of a country. The governance structure of a country refers to the authority characteristics of the government of a state. This concept can be thought of as how democratic or undemocratic a state is. While the governance structure of a state has far reaching implications for all aspects of society, it impacts the civic skills available to citizens most. Research has shown that when there is competition in the politics of a country, a key aspect of democracy³, political participation rates are higher (Franklin, 2004; Norris, 2004). As this competition continues to occur over generations, participation becomes a part of the political culture of a state, which is then transmitted to new generations through formal civic education and informal political socialization, further strengthening the culture of participation (Bockstette, Chanda, & Putterman, 2002; Franklin, 2004; Giuliano & Nunn, 2013; Searing, Schwartz, & Lind, 1973). Viewed a different way, past experience with democracy provides citizens with the necessary skills to participate politically in the future. Just as one learns to ride a bike or swim by practicing, one can also “learn” democracy and gain civic skills through practicing democracy. These skills are then transmitted from one generation to the next.

An important assumption, drawn from the literature, is that while one can learn the civic skills necessary for participation by participating in democracy, one cannot gain the civic knowledge taught through schools and civic education by simply practicing democracy (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Muller & Seligson, 1994). As used throughout this article, civic knowledge refers to the outcome of civic education, which is not gained from participation in democracy. Civic knowledge can lead to the development of civic skills identified by Brady et al. (1995) as important to political participation, but having the civic skills does not mean one also has civic knowledge (Brady et al., 1995).

Since democracy transmits civic skills, it is expected that the more democratic a state is, the weaker the civic knowledge – political participation relationship will be. When civic skills are passed on outside of civic education from democratic culture, political participation is not as dependent on civic education and civic knowledge. When civic skills are not passed down due to a lack of previous democratic experience, then the civic knowledge of a citizen is more important in developing the civic skills necessary to participate. This leads to the hypothesis that as democracy increases, the strength of the civic knowledge – political participation relationship will weaken. In other words, the more democratic a country is, the less civic knowledge is related to political participation. This relationship is expected to be strong since both civic knowledge and past democratic experiences affect the civic skills used for participation.

³ For a more thorough discussion of the characteristics of democracy and the role of political competition in it, refer to Lipset (1959) and Schmitter and Karl (1991).

The second characteristic expected to have an impact on the civic knowledge – political participation correlation is the level of economic development of a state. Most commonly measured by gross domestic product, the level of economic development of a country is how productive the country and its economy are. As Lipset (1959) states, a basic level of economic development is a necessary condition for democracy and can be used to predict political participation. As economic development and country wealth increase, democracy often becomes ingrained in society, and participation becomes more and more a part of political culture (T. Persson & Tabellini, 2006). Brady et al. (1995) explain these findings by showing that money is an important resource in allowing citizens to participate in government and politics and by linking the money available to individuals to the wider economic state of the country. As a country and its citizens becomes more wealthy, political participation becomes more likely, so it is expected that the relationship between economic development and the civic education – political participation correlation will be positive simply because political participation becomes more likely. Because economic development encourages participation through the monetary resources available for participation, and not civic skills, it is expected that the relationship between economic development and the civic knowledge – political participation correlation will be weak.

Finally, the level of income inequality in a country is expected to influence the correlation between civic knowledge and political participation. Income inequality limits the money available for participation by concentrating resources in the hands of economic and social elites (Solt, 2008). This in turn depresses participation not only by limiting the resources available but also by decreasing public motivation to participate due to a perceived lack of relevance (Brady et al., 1995; Kuklinski et al., 2001; Lipset, 1959). By limiting participation in the ways described, income inequality is expected to have a negative effect on the civic knowledge – political participation relationship. With inequality depressing participation, all else equal, civic knowledge will not counter this effect since inequality and civic knowledge affect two different participation resources. Income inequality most directly affects money, therefore it is not expected that there will be a strong relationship between the civic knowledge – political participation correlation and income inequality.

Methodology

In order to examine the relationships between the three national characteristics identified and the civic knowledge – political participation correlation, a quantitative analysis of the available data was undertaken. To do this, the structural factors identified were operationalized using well known measures and datasets. Governance structure was operationalized using the Polity IV dataset which contains a variable for how democratic a government is in any given year as well as a variable for the amount of time since the last change in governance structure (Gurr & Marshall, 2015).

Economic development was operationalized using gross domestic product (GDP) from the World Bank (“Gross Domestic Product,” 2017). The GINI Index provided quantitative measures of income inequality used for the analysis (“The GINI Index,” 2017). The dependent variable comes from Lauglo (2013), who used student-level data from the International Civics and Civic Education Survey to calculate the average correlation between an individual’s civic knowledge and his or her expected level of political participation for approximately 30 countries. Once all the data was compiled, an ordinary least squares linear regression was performed to determine how the structural factors related to the dependent variable—the national civic knowledge – political participation correlation.

Findings

Analysis of the data collected shows that the national characteristics identified account for just over half of the variation in the country civic knowledge – political participation correlations (adjusted $r^2 = .505$)⁴. This confirms the central hypothesis of this article which argues that the civic knowledge – political participation relationship is not a direct relationship but rather is affected by the national context. The adjusted r^2 value suggests that other structural factors are influencing the correlation but were not accounted for in the regression. Since data limitations forced the exclusion of some variables initially deemed relevant to the analysis, this result is not surprising. Future research may be able to address this gap by expanding the data collected beyond publicly available secondary data.

The first variable analyzed was governance structure, operationalized by the Polity IV scale. As expected, the sign of the correlation was negative, indicating that high levels of civic knowledge are less likely to correlate with high levels of political participation when a state is democratic in nature. Unfortunately, the result is not significant for this variable, meaning that the observed correlation between governance structure and the civic knowledge – political participation correlation may be due to chance, so all interpretations of the data must be made with this in mind. Surprisingly, this relationship was the weakest of all the variables analyzed, indicating that the effect of governance structure on the civic education – political participation correlation is the least influential of the structural factors identified. This finding runs contrary to the expectation that governance structure would be the most influential of the factors identified since it most directly affects civic skill resources available for participation—the same resource that civic knowledge affects.

⁴ Complete regression results can be found in Annex 1.

The length of time since a change in governance structure, measured by Polity IV durability, was also included in the analysis and showed a surprisingly strong effect on the civic knowledge – political participation correlation. The correlation was positive and significant to 96%, meaning that the length of time since the last change in governance has a noticeable impact on civic knowledge and political participation. All things equal, for each year since a change in governance structure, a high level of civic knowledge is nearly 40% more likely to correlate with a high level of political participation. Further analysis was performed by running the same regression noted above but only using cases which are considered a full democracy⁵. The relationship was confirmed and the correlation was stronger and maintained significance. The implications of this finding are discussed in more detail in the discussion section of this article.

The regression analysis showed that there was a weak but positive relationship between income inequality and the strength of the civic knowledge – political participation correlation. This means that as income inequality increases, civic knowledge becomes more positively correlated with political participation. Although the finding is insignificant, the moderate positive correlation found refutes the original expectation that income inequality would weakly and negatively correlate with the civic knowledge – political participation correlation since income inequality affects money available to participate, while civic knowledge affects the civic skills participation resource.

Finally, the level of economic development of a country was found to have a strong negative correlation with the strength of the civic knowledge – political participation correlation. The finding was significant to 98%, indicating a real and observable relationship. As a country develops economically, civic knowledge is not as closely correlated with political participation. When all other variables are held constant, every \$10 billion USD increase to a country's GDP, weakens the civic knowledge – political participation relationship by nearly 90%. This clearly and resoundingly rejects the expectation that economic development would have a weak and positive effect on the dependent variable. The implications of this finding are discussed in the following section.

Discussion

As noted above, although increasing levels of democracy decrease the potential role of civic knowledge in encouraging political participation, the length of time since a change in governance structure increases the chance of civic knowledge positively correlating with political participation. This is a surprising finding because it calls into question the idea of the civic skills that lead to political participation being transmitted as a part of democratic culture outside the context of civic education and civic knowledge. Since it is clear from the findings that higher levels of democracy weaken the

⁵ The definition of “full democracy” is derived from the Polity IV codebook. For more information, consult Gurr and Marshall (2015).

relationship between civic knowledge and political participation, and since democracies inherently have higher levels of participation, it is possible to say that the civic skills needed to participate could be transmitted outside the context of civic knowledge and civic education. The findings on the length of time a given governance structure has persisted could suggest that the transmission of the civic skills through democratic culture does in fact increase the civic knowledge of citizens, contrary to expectations. This would mean that civic knowledge and political participation increase due to the consolidation of democracy, but there is not necessarily a causal relationship between the two. Further research probing the role of civic education and the development and transmission of civic skills and knowledge in democracies could help to clarify the findings from this analysis.

The correlations observed between economic development and income inequality on one hand and the civic knowledge – political participation correlation on the other suggest that there is the possibility for substitution between the resources Brady et al. (1995) identify as crucial for political participation. As noted above, income inequality limits the monetary resources available for participation. Based on the finding that an increase in income inequality strengthens the civic knowledge – political participation correlation, it can be said that the civic skills derived from civic knowledge might bolster political participation in cases where there is a lack of money available to participate. The finding that low levels of economic development similarly strengthen the correlation between civic knowledge and political participation further supports this conclusion. If civic knowledge does correlate with higher political participation in instances where monetary resources are low, then building civic knowledge through civic education can be a viable policy tool to address low rates of political participation.

With the results of the analysis in mind, it is possible to build an ideal type of the context in which civic knowledge most positively correlates with political participation. The concept of an ideal type comes from Max Weber who developed the idea to facilitate comparisons between cases (Eliaeson, 2000). By coming up with a hypothetical ideal type to act as the standard for comparison, social scientists can compare variations in real life cases to the ideal type in order to predict variables for analysis. Constructing an ideal type of the context in which civic knowledge most strongly correlates with political participation will allow researchers and policy-makers to better explore the relationship between civic knowledge and political participation as well as to know in what situations increasing civic knowledge may lead to increased participation rates.

From the analysis, it is clear that civic knowledge is more likely to positively correlate with political participation when economic development is low. Additionally, the relationship between the two is strongest when income inequality is high. As less money is available as a resource for participation, civic knowledge and civic skills may be able to act as a substitute resource for

participation. Finally, less democratic states are more likely to show a stronger positive civic knowledge – political participation correlation, and this relationship strengthens as a government remains unchanged.

Altogether, these findings indicate that civic knowledge is most highly correlated with political participation in countries with high income inequality, low economic development, and governance structures that are stable but undemocratic. In other words, the relationship between civic knowledge and participation is strongest in countries that are the least developed by Western standards. This means that efforts to increase civic knowledge, such as increasing exposure to civic education or reforming civic education curriculum, might be effective ways of raising political participation in less developed countries. In turn this could promote transitions to democracy which is a major goal of many international actors (Barro, 1999; Diamond, 2006; Dunning, 2004). Unfortunately, this also means that improving civic education and increasing civic knowledge in developed Western democracies may not address the concerns many researchers and policy-makers have regarding decreasing participation rates.

Conclusions

The analysis and discussion of the findings above does shed some light on the relationship between civic knowledge and political participation and the situations in which the two have the highest positive correlation, but there are some limitations to the research conducted. First, it is important to note that nothing in the research establishes causality. There is no clear causal link between civic knowledge and political participation, so the effects observed and discussed in this article could be resulting from changes in an unknown and extraneous variable. This possibility limits the validity of the findings, but it does not discredit them altogether. Further research into the mechanisms behind political participation and civic knowledge may reveal causality, but that is beyond the scope of this analysis. Additionally, the research was limited by the availability of public secondary data. It was not possible to collect data for this analysis, so some national characteristics of interest had to be excluded from analysis. Future research can address these gaps by collecting primary data for analysis.

Another limitation of this study is that it only considers the national characteristics affecting the civic knowledge – political participation relationship. There are almost certainly individual level factors that also influence the correlation, but it was not possible to explore these factors with the data available. There is some support in the literature for the idea that individual level factors such as socioeconomic status, job status, and personal attribute/characteristics may affect the civic knowledge – political participation correlation (Brady et al., 1995; Kuklinski et al., 2001; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2016). Extending the analysis into individual level factors influencing the correlation

would provide additional insights into the relationship that could benefit policy-makers and researchers in the future.

Finally, this research can be further developed and built upon in several ways. As previously mentioned, more detailed research into the mechanisms behind political participation can help to establish causality, moving beyond the correlational research of this analysis. Future research can also explore the substitution of the resources Brady et al. (1995) identify as crucial to political participation. The analysis above suggests that there may be a substitution effect between civic skills and money, but a more detailed analysis of the process through which this occurs would benefit the literature greatly.

From the analysis conducted it is clear that structural factors do play a part in determining the strength of the civic knowledge – political participation correlation, and that the relationship should not be treated as a black box, but should be explored more thoroughly. Some structural factors were identified that influence the correlation, but it is likely that others also play a role. Nonetheless, this study provides a starting point for discussing the contexts in which civic education and civic knowledge can be expected to correlate with higher levels of political participation, and this allows policy-makers interested in political participation to begin to develop strategies to increase it.

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Annex 1: Regression Results

Regression Coefficients Predicting the Strength of Civic Knowledge - Political Participation Correlation

	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized B
polity2	-0.014	0.01	-0.244
Gini	0.003	0.003	0.301
GDP_2009	-0.009	0.004	-0.899**
durable	0.001	0.001	0.38**
(Constant)	0.626	0.13	

Notes: Adjusted R² = .505

* p < .10

** p < .05

*** p < .01

Appendix 2: Datasets Used

The datasets used in this research can be accessed online through the following link (1 July 2018):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6P5s-RPOMByRG5WeDJ4WkUzYm8/view?usp=sharing>

Global Feminism and *undecidabilities*: Beijing' 95 and beyond

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Abstract

This paper engages with the philosophical underpinnings of the Beijing Conference on women's rights that took place in 1995. Drawing on Derrida's concept of undecidability – which becomes here both a method of analysis and a political strategy – it critiques the universalising aspects of Beijing' 95's. In so doing, it aims to provide a remodelled strategy for a feminist global politics, one that be able to maintain feminism on the undecidable terrain of the binaries 'Woman/Man', and 'Woman/women'. This strategy, it is argued, allows the project to be at once open to difference/particularism and always prepared to universalise its aims, offering women the possibility of fighting as 'humans or women', and as a 'universal woman or particular women'. Bearing this in mind, I try to show how Beijing' 95 de-politicises the binaries I have referred to by 'closing' their undecidabilities, rendering any attempt to politically engage with them impossible a priori.

Keywords

Beijing' 95; Deconstruction; Global Feminism; Humanism; Undecidability; Universalism

Introduction

The Beijing Conference on women's rights, which took place in 1995, has been constantly construed as a watershed regarding 'global gender politics'. Having culminated with the signing of the *Beijing Platform for action* by 189 national governments, the conference established a commitment to achieve *gender equality* and/by the *empowerment of women* globally. To this end, its final report expressly called upon all the international community to take strategic action in a plethora of areas related to gender, ranging from education and economic inequalities to war and violence. Moreover, a broad and explicit 'platform for action' was designed during the meetings in order to ensure the effectiveness of what was being agreed upon. Its universal dimension and goals, it has been claimed, have propounded a fruitful political and institutional framework upon which feminists can engage globally and, so, implement real changes in women's lives (Moser and Moser, 2005).

Nevertheless, despite the way the Beijing Conference has been celebrated by (mainly liberal) feminists all over the world, a great deal of critiques has been addressed to both the Conference's aims and its ideational bases. Chief among these critics are poststructuralist and postcolonial feminists. These two groups – sometimes similarly, sometimes distinctively – have been critiquing the 'universalist' and 'essentialist' claims proposed by this novel platform for action. Mohanty, a postcolonial scholar, for instance, might point to the ethnocentrism underlying such a project, for it would be built in accordance with the 'old' principles of European humanisms, in which the Other (non-Western women) must be salvaged from its inferiority, a fact that ends up re-affirming the superiority of the West(ern Woman) (Mohanty, 1988, p. 81). In a similar vein, a range of poststructuralist feminists has been exposing the dangers and paradoxes of feminist liberal projects, which usually end up both essentialising and universalising a *particular* understanding of woman (Holm and Cilliers, 1998; Parens, 1989).

Mindful of those discussions, this article aims at providing a remodelled strategy for a feminist global politics, providing an answer to the question: 'can we rethink Beijing' 95's *main goals* and *strategies of operationalisation* without entirely disregarding its importance to a Global Feminist Project?' Grounded on the works of Derridean and post-colonial feminists, then, I intend to critique both the major *goals* of *Beijing's 'platform for action'* and its universal *operationalisation*. My criticism, however, *must not* be confused with a complete distrust of this liberal feminist project. Instead, considering the ontological instability of hierarchical binaries (a term to be explained shortly), I propose a political strategy rooted in a perpetual negotiation that takes place in two fronts: an *argumentative strategy* that takes the choice between 'Woman/Man or Human' into consideration; and an *operationalisation* that truly tackles the necessary choice between 'Woman/women'. My methodological framework, in its turn, goes hand in hand with Derridean deconstructionism, in that it tries to critically address those two binaries, evidencing the paradoxes that underpin their

structures, and seeking to come up with possible strategies to deal with – and not to extinguish – those binaries in a political manner. This is undertaken via the usage of what I term, drawing again on Derrida, ‘undecidabilities’. Finally, my main argument is that this remodelled feminism promises to offer a better response to both the *multifaceted environment* where it takes place and to the *multitude of heterogeneous situations* it is required to face daily.

In order to render the article more intelligible, therefore, it will be divided into three main parts. First, I seek to give a brief account of Derrida’s concept of ‘undecidability’, highlighting the way the decision for one of the terms in a given binary is always political. This discussion grounds my major argument explained at the end of the first section. Second, in light of the writings of Kate Nash and Drucilla Cornell, I intend to make use of the notion of the insurmountable *undecidability* between the terms ‘Man or Human/Woman’ to address the Beijing Conference’s main goals. This idea will help us expose how a project that constantly negotiates between the *affirmation of sexual difference* and the *erasure of this difference* can be of great importance to a ‘Global Feminism’. Third, I seek to offer a critique of the operationalisation of Beijing’ 95. To that end, I give an account of some postcolonial critiques of the liberal idea of *universal woman*, a term which has been undergirding a doctrine of universal application of feminist politics. This critique will be followed by the proposal of another undecidability, this one more closely related to the movement’s *operationalisation*: that of ‘Woman (as a Western universal)/women (as plurality and particularity)’. Finally, my conclusion will resume this incipient project as well as give a brief account of its potentials.

Deconstruction, undecidabilities, and International Relations

Derrida’s strategy of ‘deconstruction’ was introduced into the discipline of International Relations (IR) by ‘the first generation’ of poststructuralists’ in the 90’s. Those authors were mainly engaged in producing a metatheoretical critique of the discipline as a whole, interrogating the naturalness of some of the binaries that structured IR. Amongst those scholars, we may certainly include the works of Ashley (1988), who addresses what he termed ‘the Anarchy *Problematic*’. *En bref*, the author, through the usage of a deconstructive strategy, tries to unearth the paradoxes underpinning the oft-unquestioned binary ‘sovereignty/anarchy’ in the discipline. According to him, the sovereign state has been construed as the source of all meaning and agency in IR, *as if* its boundaries were indeed fixed and a-historical, a sight where order and social stability reign supremely. Nonetheless, as he argues, this image of the sovereign state – which is akin to the figure of the ‘modern man’ – can only make sense of itself through pointing to the existence of a ‘place’ of pure disorder, a ‘locus’ that represents the very opposition to sovereignty, namely, anarchy. After all, as Ashley comes to realise, despite the fact that anarchy had always been grasped in the discipline as the ‘outside’ of sovereignty, the very opposition of presence, order, and stability; sovereignty could

only make sense of itself by referring to anarchy as its opposition, its very 'degradation'. Anarchy, therefore, becomes what is sometimes conceptualised as the 'constitutive outside' of sovereignty, the 'other' that offers intelligibility to sovereignty. This springs from the fact that, although anarchy is constantly portrayed as the degradation of sovereignty, it is, at the same time, what 'signifies' the sovereign state by contrast. In this sense, although sovereignty is often conflated with 'presence' (order, stability) whilst anarchy tends to be equated with 'absence' (chaos, disorder), he ends up concluding that the 'presence' of sovereignty can only become effectively *present* through the 'absence' of anarchy. As if presence and absence could no longer be ontologically distinct.

What is paramount in the work of Ashley, one of the first authors to introduce Derrida in the discipline of International Relations, is the 'logics of binaries' underwriting the divide 'sovereignty/anarchy'. As Derrida makes it clear, the Western Philosophy and thought in general has tended to be organised around 'binaries', such as Self/Other, Good/Evil, Language/Matter, Nature/Culture, and the like. Those divides often present a privileged term that suggests 'presence, purity, authenticity', and a deviated one that is usually understood as the degradation of the former (impure, supplement). What a deconstructive reading then tries to do is to interrogate and scrutinise the coherence of those binaries, rendering visible the way the privileged term can only exist as such through the existence of the deviated one, as if its purity necessarily required a trace of 'impurity' in order to become intelligible (Derrida, 1981a, p. 128). As a result, none of the terms in a binary can stand alone, they are always already in a relationship with each other, for their meanings depend on a process of constant exclusion of the other term. That is why Derrida argues that the deviated term is both a menace and the condition of possibility of the 'pure term'. After all, the process of exclusion of this 'outside' ends up being exactly what constitutes the presence of the first term. This trend can also be noticed in the works of Walker (1992, 1995), who addresses the binary outside/inside in IR; in Doty's writings (1997), in which she deconstructs the opposition 'agent/structure'; and in Zehfuss (2012), who takes the divide 'human/non-human' as a point of departure to analyse 'humane warfare'.

If none of the opposing terms in a binary has an independent existence whatsoever and their meanings can only be established in opposition to each other, then, there is simply no ontological grounds – no transcendental guarantees – that can justify the choice for one of the terms. After all, as Derrida (1998) points out when addressing the divide nature/culture, the outside (culture) is constitutive of the inside (nature) as much as the opposite is true. Consequently, to say that something is cultural or natural is always to decide upon an 'undecidable' terrain. In other words, if nature and culture are not given entities, but always presume and imply each other, the binary becomes an 'undecidable structure', one 'that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary

opposition), resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics' (Derrida, 1981b, p. 43). It follows that any choice to define something as 'natural' or 'cultural' is not just an act of attesting something, but it is always involved in a *political* decision *par excellence*, one that is always taken on a terrain where both sides can be picked, an *undecidable* terrain *a priori* (Edkins, 1999). The moment of undecidability, then, is, aporetically, the moment when a decision is taken, despite the lack of necessity of choosing for one side.

Undecidability is not a vague indeterminacy, it does not mean that anything goes, it is always a 'determinate oscillation between possibilities' and it is necessary that there should be a decision, but there is no necessity for the decision that is actually made. (Nash, 1998, p. 17)

A deconstructive strategy, nevertheless, in no way aims at 'destroying' those binaries. After all, as Derrida acknowledges, any attempt to overcome the binary ends up reinforcing the binary itself. Rather it tries to work within the logic of those binaries, rendering those 'political decisions' visible, and, finally, taking profit of their '*politicalness*'. In this sense, it suggests that we keep questioning the naturalness of the entities of a given binary, using the ontological instability of its terms in our favour (Derrida, 1999). Deconstruction, thus, works exactly to ensure that those binaries remain open to novel decisions, to novel reformulations of its content. It revolves around the acknowledgment of the fact that what we take as given when it comes to binaries such as culture/nature is instead always the result of a *decision*. However, and this is pivotal, because those decisions are never stark enough to dismantle the instability of the binary, deconstruction suggests that we *keep deciding* upon the undecidable, without ever 'freezing' – de-politicising – today's decision. After all, the acceptance of the binary as something natural and, then, unquestionable, ends up effacing its *politicalness* and, hence, naturalising political and historical situations of violence and dominance. This commitment to decision, then, is what makes deconstruction into an essentially ethico-political endeavour (Baker, 2011), one that recognises the importance of rendering 'the political' visible, working not against politics, as one might argue, but hand-in-hand with it (Derrida, 1994, 1999; Campbell, 1994).

Undecidability: a theoretical framework and a political strategy

In light of this brief introduction of Derrida's notions of deconstruction and undecidability, I argue that those two notions can offer both a fruitful theoretical framework through which we can analyse how feminist policies are being undertaken, and a paramount strategy that can be imported by feminist projects, especially by those which aim to act 'globally'. This stems particularly from the fact that a feminism that aims to expand its frontiers towards the globe has to deal necessarily with two pivotal undecidabilities. On the one hand, a formulation of global feminism needs to address the binary 'Human or Man/Woman'. On the other, such a project has to grapple with the binary 'Woman/Women'. The former suggests that the very concept of woman is always already involved

in a relationship with the concept ‘man’ – a term that has been historically privileged and conflated with ‘the human’. Whilst the latter points to the always politically relevant distinction between universal and particular politics. In brief, are we addressing ‘a universal woman’ or ‘particular women’?

That said, my argument is that instead of defining a priori which side of those binaries will be privileged once and for all, feminists should embrace the undecidability that underpins both binaries. This is not to say that the project will suffer from a ‘paralysis’, but that there must always be a *political decision* rather than an acritical acceptance of the binary as it is stated *today*. For undecidability, as Derrida (1999, p. 66) has argued, is fundamental for politics: ‘[F]ar from opposing undecidability to decision, I would argue that there would be no decision, in the strong sense of the word, in ethics, in politics [...] without the experience of some undecidability’. Mindful of that, this article advances the idea that a deconstructive strategy, one that takes the undecidability of binaries seriously, seems to be the best way to ensure the emergence of a global feminism that remain at once open to difference and attentive to the ethical necessity of deciding and acting globally, respecting the plurality of situations it is required to face daily as well as the multifaceted environment in which it is supposed to act. The major difficulty of this understanding of politics, and I acknowledge it, stems from the fact that it resists being apprehended by a sort of final ‘programme’ which only requires an (usually blind) application of its content (Culler, 1982, p. 156). Another idea of politics is required, one which can find some ‘comfort’ in remaining on an undecidable terrain.

Having said that, the next sections will address both undecidabilities, in an attempt to formulate strategies for a global feminism, which is here understood as *(a) feminist project(s) that keep(s) constantly questioning – without necessarily completely dismantling – national and other types of borders in favour of a global approach to the situations of women*. The subsequent section argues that, since there are no ontological grounds that can finally justify the existence of ‘woman’ or ‘man’ as such – in that they are always implying and excluding each other – women have the possibility to use the undecidability that underpins this binary in their favour, sometimes arguing for a politics that includes woman in the concept of ‘human’, sometimes fighting for a politics that privileges the sexual difference, *as if* women were indeed ontologically distinct from men. Finally, I address the existing undecidability of the concepts of Woman/Women, which is grounded on the opposition ‘Universal’ and ‘particular’. It is argued that, once more, feminists can take advantage of the undecidable structure of this binary, in some occasions privileging the category of woman as being ‘universally valid’, and, in other cases, privileging the internal plurality of the concept. This will be undertaken via a critique of the philosophical underpinnings of the Beijing Conference in 1995, which will be criticised – *although not entirely dismissed* – for its attempts to finally resolve the undecidabilities I have been referring to.

‘Human or Man/Woman’: the first undecidability

Women’s rights are *human rights* (UN, 1995, p. 3).

‘The evidence is increasingly in that empowering *women* empowers *humanity*’ (UN, 2015).

The Beijing Conference, in conformity with the previous conferences on women, is very clear as to its main purpose: to reach *gender equality* globally. In other words, states and institutions are called upon to empower women up to a point where the gender distinction can be, if not completely undone, at least starkly undermined. After all, as its full report constantly repeats, ‘*women’s* rights are *human rights*’, which basically means that women, *as men*, are humans *above all* (Bunch and Fried, 1996, p. 200). Within that framework, the Beijing Conference ends up equating the concept ‘empowerment of women’ with an idea of ‘*humanisation* of woman’, driving us to believe that the only way through which its results should be judged is by an account of how equal women are to men in a given point in time. Bearing this in mind, we are led to conclude that the conference’s main goal is to transcend all the ‘violent remnants’ of sexual difference, by bringing women to the (usually public) spaces that only men were supposed to occupy (UN, 1995, p. 3).

This trend still seemed to remain unchanged twenty years after the implementation of the Platform, as we can see in ‘The Beijing Declaration and Platform for action turns 20’ (UN, 2015). Throughout the document, it is possible to notice that gender equality remains perhaps not the only but indubitably the most important objective to be reached by the Platform for action. In this regard, the document recognises that progress has been made since Beijing’ 95. On the one hand, it affirms that women have been gaining a wider access to education, to the job market, to national parliaments and even to methods of contraception all over the world. On the other, laws concerning violence and other important subjects have become more equalitarian in terms of gender, diminishing considerably the violence against women worldwide (UN, 2015). The concern with gender equality becomes even more noticeable when the topic of ‘human rights of women’ is addressed. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the 2015 version reaffirms as well as requires a greater focus on its commitment to women’s rights *as* human rights: ‘The Platform for Action makes clear that the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is essential for achieving gender equality’ (UN, 2015, p. 36). Once more, the fundamental commitment is to transforming women into humans, bringing them to a certain sphere of humanity. Those results, indeed, should be celebrated by feminists, and must not have their importance diminished. What should be perhaps questioned is if the conflation of feminist progress with the idea of ‘*humanisation* of woman’ that seems to ground both the Beijing Conference and the Platform for Action that has been implemented since then.

The idea of humanity – especially human rights – within the framework of the Beijing Conference, therefore, seems to point to a sphere of ‘neutrality’ that would precede the very sexual

distinction between man and woman. Based on this ideal, then, feminists, articulated in different levels, have been engaging politically in the global arena. Their engagement, especially via institutional actions (e.g., the World Bank, the UN Women, NGOs), has undoubtedly resulted in important changes in favour of women in a range of areas, such as war and violence, humanitarian disasters, economic empowerment, and so on (UN, 2015). Nonetheless, despite a robust international acceptance, those feminist politics have been criticised for being unaware of the essential masculinity the idea of humanity as neutrality carries (Nash, 1998, p. 2). It has been argued, in short, that the way the opposition ‘Man/Woman’ has been constituted throughout (especially Western) history, has maintained the category of ‘man’ as *the* representative of rationality and, most importantly, neutrality (Cornell, 2017, p. 200). As a result, the idea we should bring women to this pretence neutral domain of humanity has been framed as ‘masculinist’ as well, for it does not seem to provide room for a politics based on *sexual difference*, in which women can fight *as women*.

This debate, opposing those who argue for a non-differentiation between man and woman, and those who prefer a strategy that points to the *feminine difference*, has been part of feminist discussions – whether in academia or in politics – for a long time, particularly after ‘Feminism’s second wave’ (Nash, 1998, p. 126). An answer for this challenge, however, has never been accorded. After all, on the one hand, by subsuming women into a *human identity*, ‘we lose the specificity of female diversity and women’s experiences; we are back, in other words, to the days when ‘Man’s’ story was supposed to be everyone’s story’ (Scott, 1988, p. 45). Whilst, on the other hand, to fight for *sexual difference* seems to risk essentialising the sexual distinction itself, as if there were an actual feminine space, a ‘truth of woman’ (Derrida, 1982, p. 67). Mindful of this dilemma, Nash (1998, p. 140) argues that the concept of woman seems to be at the very same time included and excluded from our liberal frameworks, as an *undecidable* between ‘woman, the inferior term of the binary opposition between the sexes, and ‘human’ or ‘man’ the superior term, the bearer of the ‘universal’ liberal rights to freedom and equality’.

To claim, then, that the concept of woman is always an undecidable between man/human and woman herself is, essentially, to recognise, in accordance with Derrida, the impossibility of achieving ‘transcendental guarantees’ when it comes to oppositional categories – the binaries I have referred to in the preceding section. After all, ‘the characteristics which are supposedly proper only to the degraded term (*Woman*) and excluded from the privileged one (*Man or human*) are actually necessary to the constitution of both and of the difference between them’ (Nash, 1998., p. 12). Thereby, it follows from that that neither an understanding of woman as a ‘truth’, an essence apart from man, nor her dissolution into a pretence neutral sphere of humanity can be fully justified (Parens, 1989, p. 292). Consequently, we should be circumspect of any attempt to *finally resolve* this

opposition, for none of the concepts is able to transcend the system of hierarchical opposition in which it is inscribed once and for all.

Nonetheless, once we admit the existence of this undecidability, the impossibility of a final either/or decision, to paraphrase Cynthia Weber (2016, p. 19), how can a global feminism effectively act as a political project? Before formulating an answer, it is pivotal to make it clear that when I claim there is no final exit from this dilemma between equality and sexual difference, I am not implying that there should not be an effort to work *within* this system. After all, as I have argued in the preceding section, a deconstructive project has no intention to ‘destroy’ the binaries themselves nor to pretend that it ‘is free from the form, logic, and postulations of metaphysics’ (Parens, 1989, p. 293). In other words, this remodelled global feminism, by being faithful to the undecidability of woman, foregrounds *the decision itself*, all the while it acknowledges that ‘to decide’ is, essentially, to ontologically affirm *either* humanhood *or* womanhood. What is pivotal, however, is the fact that the decision concerning whether to affirm or to efface the sexual difference between the concepts ‘woman/man or human’ do not be taken nor crystallised in advance. The decision, I argue, must always await the arrival of the event, after which it can be taken. The undecidability of the binary, thereby, must be preserved.

Beijing’ 95: re-opening the undecidability ‘Human or Man/Woman’

To sum up, what I am proposing here is a feminist politics that accepts and embraces the undecidability that the concept of woman carries. This proposition stems from the fact that it is only by bearing in mind the existing paradoxical relationship between ‘the hu(man)’ and ‘woman’ that feminists can be aware of the viability of a negotiation between these two poles, a process of ‘calculation’ that comprehends the contingency and *singularity* of the decision to include or exclude woman from ‘humanity’ (Cornell, 2017, p. 207). The negotiation between these two poles is important in that it gives feminists the chance to appropriate the *politicalness* of this particular binary in their favour, sometimes fighting as ‘humans’, sometimes fighting as ‘women’ instead of only ‘programmatically’ choosing to pursue one side of the binary, without negotiating.

Beijing’s Platform for action, nonetheless, by stating that ‘[T]he advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of *human rights*’ (UN, 1995, p. 16), and *human rights* only, ends up closing the ‘undecidability’ I have been referring to. Consequently, any feminist politics that truly follows its dictates simply renounces its capacity to negotiate between womanhood/humanhood, as the choice for a non-negotiable humanist strategic argumentation is not, at least apparently, open to reformulations (Cornell, 1991, p. 95). In so doing, Beijing Conference presumes that humanity is indeed a neutral sphere, ignoring the masculinities

circumscribing such a notion. For neutrality, as I have exposed, has been historically conflated with masculinity, a place where violence towards women is rendered invisible.

My criticism towards Beijing's humanist goals notwithstanding, my position is not a complete distrust of the liberal project which has been implemented since 1995, for, as Nash (1998, p. 2) problematises, 'are we to give up such a powerful weapon?'. As an example of Beijing's platform for action's empirical strength, then, I may point to the initiatives promoted by the UN Women designed to end violence against women (McQuigg, 2017, p. 4). In this area, particularly, the usage of gender equality as an alternative to address humanitarian emergencies in conflict and post-conflict situations have indubitably brought about a plethora of advancements recently (Ahmadi; Steans, 2011, p. 228). Besides, projects buttressed by the UN Women's Global Flagship Initiative, such as the celebrated 'Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces', launched in 2010, have been utilising the concept of women's human rights as a strategy to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in a range of countries, such as Ecuador, Egypt, India, and so on. (UN Women, 2017).

However, despite the apparent success of this humanist approach, there are times when its employment may not be sufficient. If we briefly consider the attempts to deal with HIV in Africa during the last decade, for instance, we may be led to think that 'women's rights as human rights' can sometimes not be the only possible answer (HIV/AIDS & STD Strategic Plan for South Africa 2000-2005, 2000). Initially, because the disease was shared by men and women *equally*, it seemed that a reasonable approach for a feminist project would require the *humanisation* (empowerment) of those women. After all, by empowering them – and, hence, making them into humans – activists thought they could *include everybody* in the scope of the project and, so, tackle the problem at once (Cavanagh, 2005, p. 18). Nonetheless, because we can never know for sure when women are *empowered enough* to be considered *humans*, this pretence neutral approach ended up rendering part of the sexual violence they were facing during the programme invisible. Two outcomes merit our attention here: first, despite having been granted humanity, women had much more trouble than men to 'say no' to unprotected sexual relationships, a fact that gave to men the main responsibility in avoiding the spread of the virus (Cavanagh, 2005, p. 18); second, although the prevention of mother-to-child transmission was actively combatted, the focus seemed to rely much more on the children's health than on the mothers (Cavanagh, 2005, p. 19). In both cases, this neutral approach was not enough to prevent women from being perceived as *not quite humans*, no matter how often they were claimed to possess the same status as men. Perhaps another approach should be envisioned here, one whose main goal is not to lead woman from sexual distinction towards humanity by empowering her, but to strategically fight *as women* and *for* women, *as if* they were essentially distinguishable from men.

That said, I conclude this section by stating that Beijing's Platform for action should surpass what I call 'the programmatic use' of its humanist strategy. Put differently, the fight for bringing women towards the neutral realm of 'humanity' must not become something unquestionable, insofar as it seems to ignore the masculinity underpinning the very concept of 'human'. This is not to say that this goal must simply be forgotten, and that women should only privilege sexual distinction. On the contrary, I argue that because there are no transcendental guarantees that can finally resolve the distinction 'woman' and 'hu(man)', women should profit from this undecidability and make a political usage of it. This understanding suggests that feminists be always ready to redefine its strategies, respecting the circumstances of the event, rather than trying to come up with a final decision. After all, as I have argued, the multifaceted character of a global feminism as well as the contingency of the plurality of situations should be reminders that the project must always be exposed to self-critiques (Cornell, 1991). This move asks us not to 'close the door' to sexual difference – as the Beijing Conference seems to have done. Instead, the project's most incessant political battle should envision the very right to remain on this strategical terrain of undecidability, where women can maintain their *right to decide*.

'Woman/Women': the second undecidability

... determined to advance the goals of *equality*, development and peace for *all women everywhere* in the interest of all humanity (UN, 1995, p. 2).

The first undecidability addressed in the previous section, some authors might argue, would have the ability to undermine – *never to overcome* – imperialistic projects designed under the banner of a global ethics. After all, as Cornell indicates, by refusing to have a final decision concerning its content and, hence, rejecting all kinds of 'ultimate identity', this reformulated feminism, promises to be truly open to the *Other(s)*. Put differently, this could be a project that, for being always ready to reformulate itself, to decide differently, has the potential to embrace the radical contingency of each situation (Cornell, 1991, p. 113). Yet – and this is noteworthy – Cornell does not say that such project can avoid, once and for all, the imperialistic violence that stems from any form of identity politics, for the decision is still made in conformity with ontological dictates (Cornell, 1991, p. 110).

Even though I agree with Cornell on the importance of a feminist praxis that preserves the undecidability of 'Human or Man/Woman' as a strategy to act politically, it seems that its *global-ness* still requires us to take into consideration another undecidability, this one probably more related to the process of *operationalisation* of such a global feminist politics. This second undecidability – despite the impossibility of being entirely separated from the first one – opposes 'universality' (usually a synonym for the 'Western' experience) and 'difference or plurality' (usually a synonym for non-Western 'others'), in which the former comes to be the privileged term over the latter (Spivak, 2010).

This particular hierarchical binary has been undoubtedly perpetrating feminist projects, especially when feminism has tried to extend its frontiers towards the global level – as does the Beijing Conference –, for *Western ideas on woman* have constantly given birth to *universal ideals* – or *telos* – to be followed by *all women*. Consequently, we have not seldom seen universal fictions of womanhood that ignores its incapacity of effectively including all women's experiences in its scope (Ang, 1995, p. 193).

Some answers have been given to this operational deadlock. Mohanty (1988, p. 81), for instance, addresses this challenge via a critical postcolonial perspective, in which she compares the operationalisation of this global feminism with a 'violent humanism', in which Western women essentialise other women – third world women – as inferior beings that must be brought to a Western ideal of womanhood. In so doing, she argues, feminism has been constantly ignoring the tense relationship between *Woman* as an ontological ideal, and *women* as the 'real, material subjects of their collective histories' (Mohanty, 1988., p. 62). Nonetheless, the major problem for Mohanty is not the idea of universalism *per se*, but its excluding and Western content. In other words, she does not discredit all kinds of feminist solidarity across borders. Instead, she believes in the possibility of developing a non-colonising global project via a *better* and more *accurate* understanding of women's specificities (Mohanty, 2003, p. 224). In short, Mohanty's politics is to be conceived in universal terms insofar as this universalism is 'fair' to all women.

Ang, in her turn, offers us a different answer. Accordingly, rather than insisting in a feminism that can include all women, we should accept the essential *partiality* of feminist politics. In her view, no matter how inclusive a global feminism intend to be, its 'reparation strategies often end up appropriating the other rather than fully controlling the incommensurability of the difference involved' (Ang, 1995, p. 193). Therefore, in order to take differences seriously, feminism would need to engage in a process of constant limitation of its scope, respecting the incommensurability of women's sufferings. Full universality, accordingly, is bound to be another aspect of appropriation and, hence, colonisation of other women's cultural backgrounds (Ang, 1995., p. 196).

Nonetheless, rather than coming up with a final answer in favour of universality or plurality – or a synthesis of both – I claim that a better strategy for Global Feminism, is, again, to remain on the terrain of undecidability. After all, 'Woman/women' – the former representing a (commonly Western) universal understanding of Woman, and the latter the representative of the *other women* – seems to preserve the same undecidable structure of 'Man or Human/Women'. This similarity stems from the fact that, if on the one hand, the inclusion of all women in a global feminism seems not to pay enough attention to the discrepancies amidst them, on the other, their exclusion of this global woman's identity ends up essentialising the distinction itself, as if both sides were ontologically stable

and distinct. Put differently, and assuming once more there are no ontological guarantees justifying a choice for universalism nor plurality – no final either/or decision – none of these possibilities can be understood as ontological necessities (Nabers, 2015).

Beijing' 95: re-opening the undecidability 'Woman/Women'

Bearing this in mind, when the document 'The Beijing Declaration and Platform for action turns 20' states, for instance, that '[E]fforts need to be strengthened to ensure *universal* ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women worldwide' (UN, 2015, p. 37), it seems to be presupposing a certain universal notion of what women are like, or, at least, of how women should be. This understanding is what legitimates the Conference's ambition of speaking in the name of all women, on their behalf. The paradox here is that, by deciding to speak on behalf of *all women*, extending its policies throughout the globe, it ends up – perhaps unintentionally – paradoxically excluding all those *other* women they aim to include, for there is simply no room for difference no more. After all, is it still possible to address difference within a framework that claims that 'to be transformative, the future agenda must be *universal*' (UN, 2015, p. 54)? The fact that this movement, as other types of universal movements, is imperialistic in some terms, must be recognised, for, as I tried to make it clear before, it ends up appropriating the other by assimilating her into a universal self, not allowing her to 'speak' as someone apart from this totalisation, as Spivak's (2010) *subaltern woman*. Beijing' 95, then, and this is pivotal, not only fights for *women*, it fights for a 'specific woman', it creates a route towards a certain kind of 'womanhood' that is grasped as being universally valid.

The universal aspect of the Gender Framework propounded by Beijing' 95, thereby, can and has brought about some imperialist consequences during its implementation. First, the universalist basis can and, as a matter of fact, has been combined with other 'Western universal ideals' such as democracy, neoliberalism, and the like (Eunhye, 2012). Due to the universal aspects that underlie the structures of those 'ideals' – or 'ideologies', to paraphrase Žižek (1989) – those projects have been so densely combined so that it sometimes becomes impossible to define the precise boundaries of each of them. This trend is shrewdly illustrated by Purewal (2015), to whom Beijing' 95, especially its educational concerns, was used as a neo-colonial tool to legitimate the 'war on terror' during the last decade. According to her, Gender Rights were 'evoked in the 'war on terror' as evidence of the need for intervention' (Purewal, 2015, p. 51), not seldom disregarding the agency of the women in those societies. Second, the characteristics that constitute the 'ideal woman' according to Beijing are not only not able to justify its universalism, but also, tantamount to the concept of 'human' above-mentioned, they are not neutral. In other words, because what is considered to be universal tends to be conflated with the West itself, this implies that the West is always already portrayed as superior,

and as ‘the one’ to be followed. This understanding ends up legitimating cases of cultural, racial, and other forms of superposition, in which the agency of the ‘other women’ are routinely denied (Wilson, 2011). Projects destined to combat poverty amongst women in third-world countries can be taken as examples. In such cases, there is a tendency to presuppose certain ideals of ‘richness’, economic inequality, well-being, and the like, that, non-coincidentally, follow the predicates of Western ideals which may not be – and, as a matter of fact, are not – true everywhere (Morley, 2015; Chachage and Mbilinyi, 2003).

In light of this, I claim that a movement towards plurality, an act of asking ‘to know the other, or ask that the other say, finally or definitely who he or she is’ (Butler, 2005, p. 43) should remain as a possibility in our political horizons. More accurately, a global feminism should always remain prepared to sometimes waiting for the *Other Woman* to reveal herself, to *speak* and to *decide* for herself (Butler, 2005, p. 43), which implies in not defining the ‘other’ *a priori*, as if one could know the other better than herself. More accurately, in lieu of deciding in advance for a universalism as the project’s (only) form of operationalisation when it comes to a global feminism, as if all women were already included in the project, feminists should fight in order to keep the undecidability of the concepts Woman/women open. The argument, again, is that a *multifaceted* arena as well as the *infinitude of discrepant situations* related to women all over the globe can be better addressed once the project preserves its capacities of deciding situationally – even though aware that any response may entail ontological and violent consequences. Within this framework, thus, its policy can sometimes be not to speak *on behalf of all women*, but rather to embrace singularity, to wait for the other women to speak first, a decision that in no way exclude a *future decision* for universality (Butler, 2005, p. 42).

Finally, this strategy need not be though as an attempt to entirely undermine the political framework that originated in the aftermath of the Beijing Conference. After all, its universal ideal of operationalisation has proved to be very useful in some situations. Areas related to ‘women and healthy’, for instance, have been starkly benefiting from universal ideals of operationalisation, as the raise in six years in women’s life expectancy, since the Conference, possibly indicates (UN Women, 2015). Nevertheless, and this is not a novelty, policies addressing, for instance, poverty and global development, massively criticised in *academia* for purportedly imposing Western ideals of woman’s prosperity upon others, could – and not must – rethink its universal scope. That is, an effort to wait for the *other* women to reveal herself first, respecting their singularities and our essential incapacity of including everybody. There must be space for the other women to speak, even if that means we must sometimes strategically assume our differences as being essential for this to happen. That is, by and large, what Spivak means in her first engagements with Derrida’s philosophy, when she comes up with the notion of ‘affirmative deconstruction’, an understanding that claims that the third world

should appropriate the political logic of the binary in which it is inscribed in order to politically act in the global sphere, sometimes as a whole, sometimes as particular entities. Following her take, then, I conclude this section by claiming that the other should be allowed to occasionally assume a temporary ontological identity, a position through which she, *as a third-world woman, as a black feminist, or as a Brazilian woman*, can speak first (Spivak, 1987, p. 207).

Conclusion: Global decisions

In this article I have argued that rather than insisting in a ‘global feminism’ that chooses a priori for a humanist and universalist approach, feminists should take advantage of the undecidabilities that underwrite the concepts of Hu(man)/Woman and Woman/Women. Drawing on Derrida, I pointed out that those concepts configure hierarchical and undecidable binaries, in that they: 1) have a ‘privileged term’; and 2) each side of those binaries have no transcendental guarantees and cannot ‘stand’ alone, being always signified by the exclusion of its opposition, which makes those binaries undecidable a priori. That said, I tried to show how a political approach that make usage of the undecidability of those binaries in order to act globally can ensure feminism always remain open to difference and contingency without ever giving up on its universal ideas once and for all. In other words, this particular notion of global feminism promises to be better prepared to face the multifaceted reality in which it is embedded as well as better equipped to understanding the particularities of each situation that requires its action. What is pivotal here, thereby, is that feminists be always prepared to decide following the event, privileging the event, on its undecidable terrain. Those strategies, though – and I am aware of it – do not fit straightforwardly into common notions of politics, in that it is more focused on its very application – decision – than on its content. As a result, they do not subscribe to the literature that intends to foreclose the undecidabilities of those binaries by giving a definitive answer either in favour of humanism and universalism or in support of sexual difference and particularism. This literature, as shown in the text, is not restricted to liberal feminists, but can be found even in post-colonial, constructivist and even poststructuralist feminisms, groups that sometimes fall short in acknowledging the political-ness of the terms with which they are engaging. Drawing on Derridean feminists, then, I reiterate that straightforward answers always end up de-politicising the debate by naturalising particular situations of violence and dominance that can and do buttress universalist and imperialist projects.

In order to advance my ideas, I opted for engaging with Beijing’ 95 and its philosophical underpinnings. Rather than using the Conference as a ‘simple’ case study, I chose to use it in order to better construct my argument throughout the text. In this sense, the article then tried to make clear that Beijing’ 95, perhaps unconsciously, ends up de-politicising the binaries I have referred to by *simply deciding once and for all* for a *humanist* and *universalist* approach to the issue of ‘women’ all over

the world. In so doing, the conference on the one hand: 1) ignores the violence and the non-neutrality that are inherent to the concept of ‘human’; and 2) impedes that women fight *as and for women*, making use of a strategy grounded on sexual difference. On the other, it: 1) downplays the imperialist consequences of an acritical universalist approach; and 2) it renders any attempt to effectively deal with difference – the other women – virtually impossible. This stems from the fact that Beijing’ 95 has systematically ‘closed’ both undecidabilities – Hu(man)/Woman and Woman/Women – so that any political involvement with these categories becomes unimaginable. There seems to be little or no room for decisions in those regards, and the project seems then to be armoured against self-critiques and reformulations.

This incipient project, nevertheless, should not be construed as a novel feminist *theory*. It is rather an attempt to formulate political-oriented strategies for a global feminism that intends not to ignore the need for continuous self-critique. In this sense and disagreeing with those feminists that discard the importance of poststructuralism – especially deconstruction – as a vehicle to (re)think politics, I claim that this ‘deconstructive ethos’ should be construed as ‘an expressly *political* activity which ought not to be separated from politico-institutional problems’ (Holm and Cilliers, 1998, p. 378). To conclude, I reaffirm the notion that undecidability must not be grasped as ‘the lack of decision’. On the contrary, it is a rather strategical acknowledgment that we can never have a final decision, which is the same as *a call for decisions*. Furthermore, this framework, for also being conscious of its incapacity to end violence and imperialism once and for all, as Hooks (1986) also seems to acknowledge, enables us to keep imagining remodelled forms of diminishing violence – whether external or internal to the movement – whenever we are called to engage politically. That said, I reiterate that those strategies need not be thought of as a radical rupture with Beijing’s platform for action. I still believe that Beijing’s focus on *humanity* as well as its *universal ideals of operationalisation* are sometimes fruitful ways to act in the global arena. Its major problem, however, comes from its incapacity to grapple with both the multifaceted arena in which global feminist politics takes place and the radical singularity of each case. Hence, we should consider a global feminism that goes beyond the programme, accepting its eternal task of negotiating and, most importantly, deciding.

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Rainwater Harvesting to Reduce Water and Economic Poverty in Coastal Bangladesh

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Abstract

The economic condition of coastal communities in Bangladesh is adversely affected by the freshwater crisis arising from salinity intrusion in ground and surface water. Even though the country receives 2400mm (average) rainfall per year, the use of rainwater is undermined by the water governance system and by the increasing dependence on contaminated groundwater. Based on this argument, this paper explores how can rainwater be used to reduce the freshwater crisis problem in coastal Bangladesh? This paper focuses on the climate-induced water poverty approach based on fieldwork experiences in Chilla, coastal Bangladesh. The findings indicate that the majority of the population living in Chilla, like many other coastal communities, has been facing severe freshwater poverty which, in turn, makes them economically poorer. It also argues that the promotion of a Rainwater Harvesting System (RHS) alongside a strong governmental financial and technical assistance can reduce water and economic poverty.

Keywords

Climate-induced Water Poverty; Coastal Communities; Freshwater Crisis/poverty; Rainwater Harvesting System; Salinity Intrusion; Water Governance

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change effect in the present world. Within the country, the coastal region is more vulnerable than the urban region due to its geographical location. The proximity to the Bay of Bengal and the increasing and recurrent nature of the climatic problems like salinity intrusion, cyclones, storm surges, and floods facilitate this vulnerability. As such, the freshwater crisis is a major concern which arises from the salinity intrusion in the coastal region. Besides salinity intrusion, the uninterrupted pollution of surface water sources like rivers, ponds, and canals by industrial and agricultural chemicals, unhygienic activities; the arsenic pollution in groundwater; lowering groundwater level due to excessive withdrawal; and the lack of recharge of aquifers are the main constraints for the development of a dependable freshwater supply infrastructure in Bangladesh (Islam et al., 2015). Since freshwater is conceived as an essential component for the development of any region irrespective of their location, size, and economic capacity, the increasing insufficiency of freshwater supply has made it necessary to rethink the governance and the management pattern of an ecological resource like rainwater in coastal Bangladesh. In this context, academic research is needed for exploring the possibility of Rainwater Harvesting (RH) for reducing the freshwater crisis that might lead to socioeconomic development in the coastal community. This paper answers the following research question: how can rainwater be used to increase the socioeconomic development in coastal Bangladesh?

Presently, freshwater supply sources like ponds, groundwater, canals, and rivers in the coastal areas are not reliable due to the salinity intrusion and the climate change effect. Failure of this freshwater supply largely affects the financial position of the coastal people with increasing health costs and reducing income opportunities. Notwithstanding such facts, the country receives abundant rainwater which is about 2400mm per year (Ghosh et al., 2015). Most of this rainfall occurs during monsoons. The mismanagement of rainwater creates a number of problems like flooding, water stagnation, and damage of agricultural crops and infrastructures. A proper management of this rainwater by RHS can bring two major benefits. Firstly, it can reduce the risk of flooding during monsoons (June to October) and it can mitigate the drought problem during the dry season (October to March). Secondly, it can be a good alternative source of freshwater which can be collected during the monsoon, and preserved and used during the freshwater crisis period especially during the dry season. Additionally, it can improve the financial position of the coastal population by reducing the health expenditure and increasing income opportunities with freshwater supply improvement. For an effective utilization of rainwater, mutual interaction is needed between government organization, non-governmental organizations, and users of ecological resource which has used by Elinor Ostrom (2007) in her Social-Ecological System Framework to bring out a better outcome by managing ecological resources like rainwater.

Literature review

Groundwater is the main water supply source in rural and urban areas of Bangladesh because it is free from pathogenic microorganisms and it is available at shallow aquifers (Islam et al., 2014). However, the process of groundwater uptake makes the country vulnerable to arsenic contamination (Abdullah and Rahman, 2015) and it may be a vital reason for creating a zone of aeration in clayey and peaty sediments which contain arseno-pyrite (Safiuddin and Karim, 2001) that accomplice arsenic contamination in the country. Additionally, for a densely populated area such as the Bagerhat district, where the population and the shrimp farming growth is high, it is not viable to use the groundwater for a long term. Rapid groundwater depletion may result in getting the source polluted with salinity intrusion. The salinity levels of some coastal districts in Bangladesh are displayed in table 1:

Table 1: Salinity presence in surface water in some coastal districts

District	Salinity in surface water in ppm
Bagerhat	5->10
Barguna	1-5
Barisal	0
Bhola	1-10
Patuakhali	1-10
Pirojpur	0-10
Satkhira	5->10
Khulna	5->10

Source: Islam, 2004

Moreover, the coastal region, particularly the southern part of Bangladesh, is a hotspot for climatic problems like salinity intrusion. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Report 2011, the level of salinity has been increasing in the last several years. The report identified that some major factors like the sea level rise, prolonged dry weather, and shrinking groundwater were responsible for this increase. The level of salinity intrusion may increase further for the same reasons in the coming future. The increase of salinity intrusion and the freshwater crisis became severe in the south and the western part of coastal Bangladesh (Islam et al., 2014), and began to affect the socioeconomic development in that region.

In this context, it is important to find a new and viable freshwater supply source for the Bagerhat district. Rainwater is the only renewable and viable source which is easy to collect either individually or socially with a minimum cost (Islam et al., 2014). "RHS requires a collection basin or catchment, usually the roof of the house to harvest rainwater, a piping arrangement and a container to store it" (Islam et al., 2014: 142). Islam et al. (2014) also showed that the cost for RHS is US\$171 for 2000-liter storage capacity which is suitable for coastal people with their socioeconomic position.

The longevity of an RHS infrastructure is from 15 to 20 years (Islam, 2017). The collected rainwater can be used for drinking, cooking, and dishwashing purposes (Islam et al., 2010).

The collected rainwater is free from arsenic contamination and it presents acceptable means of freshwater as it meets physical, chemical, and bacteriological quality (Rahman and Jahra, 2006). The collected rainwater is good for health as it is free from arsenic contamination and salinity intrusion. Hunter et al. (2010) found a positive relation between an adequate freshwater supply and health status. This relation has either direct or indirect impacts on health. For example, poor-quality drinking water is one of the main factors responsible for diarrhea (Pruss and Havelaar, 2001; Fewtrell et al., 2005) and “diarrheal disease is the second most common contributor to the disease burden in developing countries” (Hunter et al., 2010: 2) like Bangladesh. RHS may contribute to reduce this diarrhea problem and other water-borne health problems that arise from the lack of freshwater and can contribute to the socio-economic development in the coastal region.

RHS is a strategic measure for socioeconomic development which provides crucial and effective means of poverty alleviating in semiarid regions where freshwater sources are scarce or contaminated (Deng et al., 2004; Zhu et al., 2004). This socioeconomic development can be measured in terms of reducing the health care cost (Hunter et al., 2010), saving time and money, increasing financial savings, and income generating activities. Haller et. al (2007) found that every US\$1 investment on water supply and sanitation would provide economic returns of between US\$5 and US\$46 with the highest return in the least developed countries and most of this additional income comes from saved time by having a reliable water supply near to the household. “A 2012 estimate suggests that cutting just 15 minutes off the walking time to a water source could reduce the mortality of under-five children by 11% and the prevalence of nutrition-depleting diarrhea by 41%” (Harlin et al., 2015). This saved time can be used for income generating activities like running a small business in the household, poultry farming, livestock rearing, producing vegetables in the house yard, and fisheries. Moreover, the investment in water can alleviate poverty (Carter and Bevan, 2008; Hanjra and Gichuki, 2008) by reducing the workload of women and creating income opportunities for them.

The sufficient supply of freshwater near the household can save time that can be spent on productive activities like crop production (Wahal and Harti, 2012) and taking care of their health and children. Safe water supply may provide livelihoods and entrepreneurial opportunities in various areas such as services, constructions, and small businesses for poor people and it can generate high returns for local economies regarding employment creation and multiplier effects (Harlin et al., 2015). Additionally, RHS can contribute to the household income improvement by improving water supply to the household (Hatibu et al., 2006). For example, drinking polluted water causes health-

related problems which might limit employment and income opportunities. Additionally, irrigation from RH is more economical than the forced pumping of groundwater due to the installation and annual operating costs of a pump.

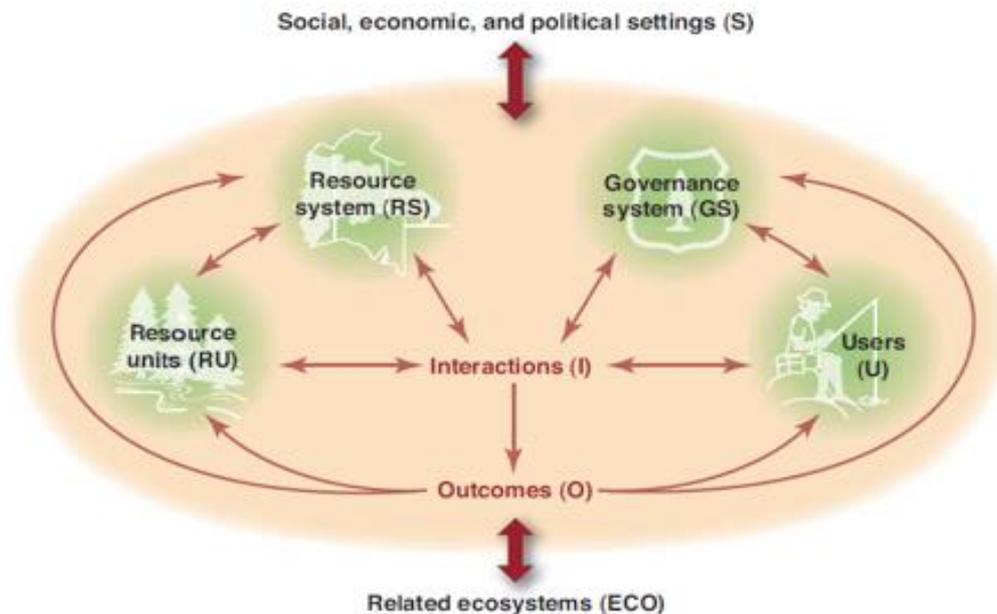
The promotion of RHS must take into consideration the technological, ecological, social, economic, political (Li et al., 2000), quality, and knowledge factors which can be major constraints for its successful application. The lack of knowledge and awareness about the maintenance and operation of RHS, the lack of finance to build up the infrastructure, the lack of space for storage tanks as coastal region is densely populated, and the low mineral salt in collected rainwater might be adversely affected the performance of the system (Abdullah and Rahman, 2015; Islam et al., 2014; Rahman and Jahra, 2006). To add mineral salt with harvested rainwater may increase the cost of using RHS. Moreover, RHS might be an attractive solution for the freshwater crisis from the technical, ecological, and economic perspective, but possible health risks from intake of harvested rainwater related to microbiological and chemical contaminants need to be taken into consideration (Ghosh et al., 2015). Those contaminants have been found in collected rainwater and sometimes they exceed international and national guidelines for safe drinking water (Simmons et al., 2001; Chang et al., 2004; Zhu et al., 2004). Although RHS has some drawbacks, it can play an important role in solving the freshwater crisis in the coastal region in Bangladesh. In order to overcome these drawbacks and getting the full benefits from its application, there an effective interaction among rainwater harvesters, government as well as non-government organizations is needed.

The coastal region of Bangladesh is a part of the Ganges Delta which is intersected by large tidal rivers discharging into the Bay of Bengal (Khan et al., 2011), and the saline front along that coastline has encroached > 100 kilometers inland into ponds, canals, groundwater supplies, and agricultural lands through various estuaries and water inlets, which have connection with the major rivers (Allison et al. 2003; Rahman and Bhattacharya 2006). Salinity encroachment might affect the economic position of the coastal community due to the creation of freshwater crisis. However, the impact of salinity intrusion is dependent not only on their hydrological characteristics but also on management and governance (Silva et al. 2015).

The aim of this article is to analyze how the governance system of ecological resource can reduce economic poverty arising from salinity intrusion. The Social Ecological System (SES) framework of Elinor Ostrom is applied to achieve such goal. Elinor Ostrom's strive "turned to identifying eight underlying design principles that characterized robust common property institutions" (Ostrom, 2005) and provided a framework to analyze SESs (Ostrom, 2007, 2009). "Analysis of how attributes of a resource system, the resource units generated by that, the users of that system, and the governance system jointly affect and are indirectly affected by interactions and

resulting outcomes achieved at a particular time and place” (Ostrom, 2007;15182). The outcome of an ecological resource like rainwater depends on the interaction between these subsystems (shown in figure 1).

Figure 1: The subsystem in SES framework



Source: Ostrom, 2009

Under each of these subsystems there are several multiple second level variables and the framework helps to identify relevant variables for the study (Ostrom, 2009). Ostrom’s Government Organization variable (GS1) under Governance System (GS) was selected for this analysis because government organizations are solely responsible for rules and regulation, ecological resource management plans, and find out the solution of problems such as freshwater crisis and economic poverty. Furthermore, the State’s utmost priority is to serve the common interest of the people, which was another reason for selecting the governance system. With respect to rainwater, the other subsystems of SES are working well but the lack of governance in rainwater use was the reason for the lack of better outcomes from this ecological resource. These three are the main reasons for limiting the analysis to the governance system.

In Bangladesh, Abdullah and Rahman (2015), Ghosh et al. (2015), Islam et. al (2010), Islam et al. (2014) and Islam et al. (2015) found that RHS is a good alternative to solve water shortage problems in coastal and non-coastal regions but regulatory authorities⁶ failed to understand the importance of RH. Additionally, Chan et al., (2016), Chadwick and Datta (2003), Kabir and Das

⁶ Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), Water Resources Planning Organization (WARPO), Joint River Commission (JRC), Water Supply Authority.

(2015), WWF⁷ and H & M⁸ (2015) analyzed the water sector's policy and acts such as NPSWSS⁹ 1998, NWP¹⁰ 1999, GPWM¹¹ 2000, NWRD¹² 2001, NWMPDS¹³ 2011, BWA¹⁴ 2013 but they did not find any policy related to rainwater harvesting. Moreover, within the framework of the Rainwater Harvesting Convention in 2012 participants and organizers urged the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to include the RH in policies including the National Building Code, National Housing Policy, and other related policies (WaterAid, 2012) but there has not been any visible measure taken (Muyeed and Rahman, 2014). Moreover, the policy does not always reflect the practice and vice versa and there is always a big gap between policy and practice because it is dependent on the execution mechanism of the regulations in place (Kabir and Das, 2015).

Conceptualization and operationalization

Salinity intrusion is the encroachment of saline water into freshwater sources like aquifers, ponds, canals, rivers, estuaries, and groundwater, which can lead to polluting those sources and other consequences. Saltwater intrusion mostly occurs in coastal aquifers because there is a hydraulic connection between groundwater and seawater. It has some characteristics like higher water pressure and mineral content, and it is denser than freshwater which pushes it inland beneath the freshwater (Johnson, 2007). However, the lowering of the groundwater level and the excessive withdrawal from aquifers have increased saltwater intrusion in many coastal districts. Other contributors to saltwater intrusion are climatic problems such as the sea level rise, tidal surges, and cyclones. There are 14,698 sq. km. areas that are highly exposed to the extreme salinity of 1ppt of zero sea level rise (Sarker and Ahmed, 2015). Enhancement of the sea level rise might exacerbate the situation. Most of these saline vulnerable areas are the southern districts of Bangladesh namely Bagerhat (study site), Satkhira, Khulna, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Barguna, and Bhola as these districts are close to the Bay of Bengal (Islam, 2004). In these areas, saltwater intrusion creates the freshwater crisis, also known as water poverty.

“Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a human right” (WWAP, 2015). However, this access to safe drinking water and sanitation is unequal in the world, and even within a single country. For instance, the coastal people in Bangladesh suffer more from the freshwater crisis than urban people due to the climate change effect. This shortage of water can be called “Water Poverty”

⁷ World Wide Fund for Nature.

⁸ Hennes & Mauritz.

⁹ National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation.

¹⁰ National Water Policy.

¹¹ Guidelines for Participatory Water Management.

¹² National Water Resource Database.

¹³ National Water Management Plan: Development Strategy.

¹⁴ Bangladesh Water Act.

and it can be defined as the shortage of safe water to meet water needs in the household, agriculture, and industrial sectors. The Oxford Dictionary defines water poverty as the situation where water sources are inadequate for the access of sufficient safe water to meet one's basic needs.¹⁵ Raskin et al., (1997) measure water scarcity in terms of quantity. Above 1700m³ annual per capita water supplies indicate that there is little or no water and below 1000m³ per capita indicates water scarcity that threatens economic development, human health, and wellbeing. Less than 500m³/capita water supply means absolute water scarcity. This water poverty might produce economic poverty particularly in coastal Bangladesh where people suffer more from freshwater poverty than other regions.

The Economic Poverty (EP) concept is defined in terms of the capability of a person in the economic transaction, such as purchasing consumption items, getting health services, selling productive services, and engaging in productive activities. Money is the main actor of those economic transactions. Money does not come automatically to the people, it requires income opportunities. These opportunities encompass performing in a job or doing business. To perform either of these functions, good health is a prerequisite and it largely depends on the supply of freshwater. For this reason, the freshwater crisis arising from saltwater intrusion is a major concern in coastal Bangladesh, which adversely affects the income opportunities for the locals. As the freshwater problem persists, it might create health problems that can increase medical expenditure. As for the consequences of the freshwater crisis, people face an economic crisis in two ways: they might lose income opportunities due to physical illness and lose financial savings for health expenditures arising from physical illness. Both ways make the coastal people economically poorer as they negatively affect their income or their savings. RH can be a good alternative source of freshwater as the country receives ample rainfall (e.g. 2400mm on an average) every year.

Rainwater Harvesting (RH) is a system of inducing, collecting, storing, using and conserving rainwater either from the roof top or open space for domestic or industrial purposes. RH involves a system of concentrating, storing, and collecting rainwater for agricultural, environmental, domestic, and industrial uses (Sutherland and Fenn, 2000). "Rainwater Harvesting strategies may vary from direct runoff concentrations in the soil for direct uptake by the crops, collection and storage of water in structures (surface, sub-surface tanks, ponds and small dams) and aquifers for future productive uses" (Pachpute et al., 2009: 2816). The volume of rainwater collection and use depends on several factors such as the area where it is taken from, storage capacity, financing of the system, technical know-how of the rainwater harvester, intensity and volume of rainfall, operation, and maintenance of RHS.

¹⁵ See Oxford Dictionary (2018).

The use of rainwater can reduce the freshwater crisis, which might lead to reducing the loss of income opportunities and financial savings. If we consider reduction of medical expenditure due to the use of rainwater rather than polluted water the rainwater has economic value. This value can be quantified in terms of monetary value in medical expenditures, income opportunities, and expenditures for collecting and purchasing freshwater. In order to use the rainwater, it needs operational rules, monitoring and a sanctioning process of rainwater use, financial and technical support. The question is who will take lead in using rainwater and provide the required support for the better outcome from rainwater.

The government is responsible for ensuring the supply of freshwater among the citizens irrespective of their place, socioeconomic position, religion, and other grounds. In a nutshell, the government cannot be biased in supplying freshwater, as it is a basic human right. For ensuring sufficient freshwater in the coastal region, the government can promote the idea of rainwater use for socio-economic development by preparing rules and regulations regarding the rainwater use, create awareness about the benefits of rainwater use, provide technical support like training in maintenance and operation of RWS, and financial support to the poor people for setting rainwater harvesting infrastructure. Yet, the government of Bangladesh relies on groundwater as their main source of freshwater and ignores the importance of rainwater. This kind of water governance approach also helps saltwater intrusion as the over-extraction of groundwater reduces the pressure and lowers groundwater levels, which ultimately makes the people economically poorer.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted by collecting qualitative and quantitative information from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected by using Focus Group Discussions (FGD), questionnaire surveys, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and participant observation methods. FGD was held before questionnaire surveys for a broader understanding of rainwater harvesting and economic poverty which was helpful for preparing survey questionnaires. After the questionnaire survey, FGD took place to cross-check the collected information. In order to obtain information as in-depth as possible about the relation between water poverty and economic poverty, history of rainwater harvesting practices, government roles, and environmental history, older day laborers, farmers, fishermen, fisherwomen, and two local government officials were selected as Key Informants (KI) who have extensive knowledge about those issues. Random sampling techniques were used to select the participants. Secondary data were gathered from different published and unpublished literature of different scientific research works, seminars, workshops, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and different ministries and departments in Bangladesh.

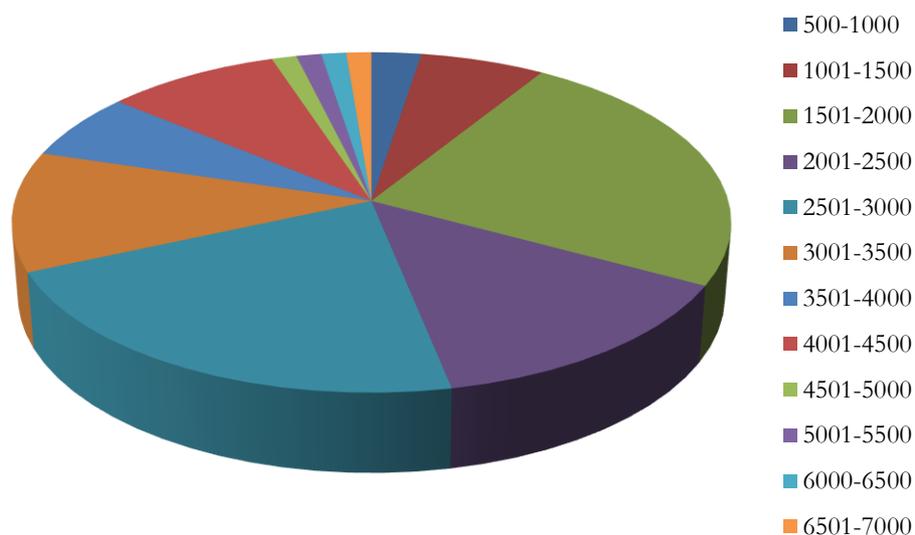
“Methodology is influenced by worldview and the underlying beliefs and attitudes concerning the world we live in, and how we can obtain knowledge about it” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 5). In order to obtain the knowledge from the world, this study is multidisciplinary in nature and uses quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. After collecting the data, statistical analyses were performed (with SPSS and NVivo). Multidisciplinary research is helpful to combine different disciplines to solve a practical problem, to develop new expertise, and to produce high impact research. At the same time it is very challenging and expensive as it requires combining different directions into one.

Analysis and Findings

Freshwater Crisis and Economic Poverty

The people in the Chilla community rely on five different sources of freshwater for fulfilling their water demand. Such sources are rainwater, groundwater, sweet pond water, river water, and bottled water. Bottled water is very expensive; sweet pond¹⁶ water is far away from the Chilla community; groundwater is polluted with arsenic and saltwater; and river water is saline almost whole year and polluted with agriculture and industrial wastes. In these circumstances, within the study group, everyone in the Chilla community spends money for freshwater supply to their family except for one person who has enough storage capacity to collect rainwater for the whole year.

Figure 2: Expenditure for Water Purchase (in BDT)



Source: Field data, Author

¹⁶ It is a big pond where water is not saline. The water in pond is not affected by saltwater intrusion.

Figure 2 shows that 24% of people usually spend BDT 1501-2000 (US\$18.76-25¹⁷), while 14% of people from the total of respondents spend BDT 1501-2000 (US\$ 18.76 – 25) for water purchasing purposes every year. However, 22.50% of people in the study group spend BDT 2501-3000 (US\$31.25 – 37.5) for the same purpose. With the accumulation of these three expenditure groups we can cover more than 60% of the total of respondents. Within the study group, nine respondents spend BDT 3001 – 3500 (US\$ 37.5 – 43.75) for buying water from either water trader¹⁸ or bottled water. It is noticeable that BDT 4001 – 4500 (US\$ 50 – 56.25) was spent for water purchasing purpose by five participants a poor community like Chilla, where 80.5%¹⁹ and 6.3% people live in *kutcha* and *jhupri*²⁰ house respectively (BBS, 2015). In the same way, five participants spend more than BDT 5000 for water purchase purposes within this study group. In a nutshell, people in Chilla, like any other coastal communities in Bangladesh, spend a good portion of their income for water purchasing purposes. This kind of high expenditure for water is not needed even in most part of Dhaka city, which is one of the most populated cities in the world. This type of practice makes them economically poorer, yet they have no alternative because it is related to their health care which can make their survival more challenging. In order to reduce economic poverty, they need to find out suitable freshwater sources that can supply enough freshwater to the community.

Only one source, rainwater, can contribute to reducing this economic poverty by supplying sufficient freshwater to the community. This possibility of economic poverty reduction can be determined by four economic aspects: health expenditure, income opportunities, financial savings, and saving time.

Health expenditure

The primary purpose of rainwater harvesting is to improve freshwater supply because coastal people have been facing a freshwater crisis problem for a long time. For this freshwater crisis, they suffer water borne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, and typhoid. KI Mohon Bachar could not work for a period of nearly one month during the severe freshwater crisis period²¹ last year (2016) because he suffered with diarrhea and stomach pain for around ten days. He spent around 1500 (US\$ 18.75) for that treatment. As per his doctor's prescription, the reason behind his illness was polluted water. But he did not face the same kind of problem during rainwater use period.

¹⁷ One US\$ equals to BDT 80.

¹⁸ It is a group of people who collect water from a big sweet pond and sale it to the locals. They carry this water from big sweet pond to the local area.

¹⁹ Its floor is built by soil. Generally, if people have money, their floor is made from brick, cement, and sand.

²⁰ This kind of house is made from polyethylene, bamboo, and bush. It can be damaged with the normal speed of wind.

²¹ December 14 – May 13.

According to the questionnaire surveys results, all of the survey respondents (80) believe that their health status improve with the use of rainwater. More specifically, seventy one respondents out of eighty informed that that their diarrhea, dysentery, and stomach pain stopped during the rainwater use period. Opposingly, they face those problems when collecting pond water and when buying pond water. For this reason, their medical expense is higher during pond water than rainwater using period.

Saving time and income opportunities

As the questionnaire survey results show, rainwater harvesting has been creating income opportunities for the respondents by reducing skin problems (16), stomach pain (15), diarrhea (45), dysentery (15), cholera (5), digestion problem (6), and vomiting. As they suffer less physical illnesses, they can perform their jobs properly. These are indirect income opportunities. Arcona Roi and Biswanath Bala informed that they can earn more money during the rainwater use period because they do not need to spend time for collecting water from the distant freshwater source such as the sweet pond. In a single time water collection, they need to spend almost the whole day for collecting and carrying water from the freshwater source. Moreover, this water collection is not free of charge, as they cannot carry water by themselves because of the distance²². They have to rent a transporter²³ to go to the water source and carry the water. They can use this saved time to work as a laborer in the river or in the fishing farm.

Financial Savings

This study covered eighty households in the Chilla village in Bagerhat district in Bangladesh. All the respondents gave a positive response about financial savings with RHS. It is either direct or indirect. For instance, eighty respondents think that their freshwater supply has improved by RH, which contributes to their physical fitness. This physical fitness enables them to perform their professional responsibility properly so that their income is not hampered by physical illness. Shohor Banu, Arcona Roi, and Mohon Bachar told that their average water expenditure is BDT²⁴ 3000 (US\$ 37.5) for eight months. Through the remaining four months of the year they use rainwater for freshwater purposes. If they do not collect rainwater, their expenditure will increase to BDT 4200 - 4500 (US\$ 52.5-56.25). They save BDT 1200 – 1500 (US\$ 15-18.75) each year with their current storage capacity. However, if they have enough storage capacity they do not need to spend money for water purchase because they can collect enough rainwater for the whole year. Moreover, if they have training about the process of collecting, reservation, and use of rainwater they could use their

²² The shortest distance is 4 miles.

²³ Trawler (a kind of big boat run by engine) or boat, van, or small truck.

²⁴ BDT=Bangladeshi Taka. One US\$ = BDT 80.

collected rainwater more efficiently, which might expand the period of rainwater use due to improving efficiency.

Discussion

In order to get the full benefits from rainwater, the coastal people need substantial support from the government of Bangladesh in policy formulation, increasing technical capacity with training, increasing awareness about rainwater use, and finance or storage tank. Let us see how the government has been playing its role regarding rainwater use in those aspects.

A government is a “conduct of conduct,” the way some look for to act upon the behavior of others to alter or channel that behavior in the specific direction (Foucault, 1982: 220-221). The government is responsible for the wellbeing of their citizens by any means. Here, ‘means’ indicate policy. The policy is the way to ensure a disciplined usage of any kind of natural resources including rainwater. As the other sources of water are not viable for the coastal community, the government needs to prepare a policy to use this resource to supplement the existing water supply system and to bring discipline in its use. Otherwise, it will hamper the groundwater and surface water interaction, which is important for the ecosystem and biodiversity. For instance, rainwater helps to recharge the aquifers²⁵ through infiltration. The aquifers need to recharge as the people pump out water from it. If all rainwater is collected and used then the aquifers will not recharge, which will cause salinity intrusion further inland and expand arsenic contamination areas. It is unfortunate that, as per the survey in Chilla, they do not need any kind of permission to set up an RH infrastructure in the household or in the industry. Moreover, they do not have any obligation to use rainwater for meeting their freshwater demand. Therefore, it is assumable that there is no such kind of policy existing in Bangladesh.

The interaction between the coastal community and the government is an important aspect for the governance system and to address the problem (e.g. water poverty). Most of the people in the coastal region are poor and largely rely on the government to sort out their problems. But they are continuously facing challenges with respect to access to government services due to lack of officers, lack of technical knowledge of the concern officer, nepotism, and corruption. Mohon Bachar informed that he did not get relief in 2009²⁶ and 2016²⁷ because of nepotism and corruption. In 2015, he tried to get advice from the government office for placing the storage tank to collect rainwater but failed because he could not provide the demanded bribe. Additionally, Arcona Roi informed that she did not get water purification tablet in 2007.²⁸ She does not know why. The

²⁵ Aquifers are large storehouse of water under the surface.

²⁶ After cyclone Sidr.

²⁷ After floods.

²⁸ After cyclone Aila.

concern officer told her that the tablets were not available anymore, but she saw that the other people²⁹ were getting tablets. KI Bahadur Mia³⁰ (fake name) informed that most of the time he provides services to either rich or politically affiliated individuals because the former can give money and the latter can help him to get extra benefits (e.g. promotion, getting transferred from Mongla to Dhaka). The other KI acknowledged the problems but they are trying to improve the situation.

A rainwater harvesting system might be simple to operate and maintain. In order to obtain the full potential benefits from collected rainwater, the technical knowhow for a long-term use as well as the maintenance of good quality of the collected rainwater are a necessity. Without technical knowledge, sometimes collected rainwater cannot meet the demand of freshwater as it can affect the quality of collected rainwater. Mohon Bachar, a KI, informed that he could not use the collected rainwater for the expected long time because of pollution a few years ago. He had collected rainwater in October and started to use it in mid-November. After using it for nearly one month it seemed to him that there was a bad smell in the collected rainwater. Subsequently, he checked the storage tank of collected rainwater and his concern was confirmed. He threw out all of the collected water. As a result, he faced a severe freshwater crisis and had to spend a lot of money for water purchase purpose that year. The technical know-how can be developed by training the rainwater harvester³¹ in the procedure of rainwater collection, cleaning the rooftop³² (catchment area), cleaning the storage tank, the location of the storage tank, and keeping the collected rainwater safe from pollution. According to the survey, the government does not provide training for the Chilla people. However, some NGOs such as Tearfund UK, Prodigon, Sushilon, BRAC, World Vision, Concern Worldwide, provide training to the community.

Rainwater harvesting might be a good alternative to resolve the freshwater crisis in the coastal region where existing freshwater supply source failed to meet up the demand for freshwater. For effective utilization of the rainwater, the people need to know about the system, advantages, disadvantages, and technique of collection and use of rainwater. In this circumstance, an awareness-raising campaign can play an important role in create awareness among the people in Chilla. According to the questionnaire survey, 48.75% of total participants informed that they did not notice any awareness campaign held in Chilla. It may be held but without these locals having been informed about it. On the other hand, 51.25% of all respondents informed that an awareness-raising campaign was indeed held in Chilla and they participated at an event related to it. This awareness-raising campaign was arranged by various NGOs like World Vision, Rupantor, Prodigon, Hit Bangladesh,

²⁹ Who has a good relation to the officer.

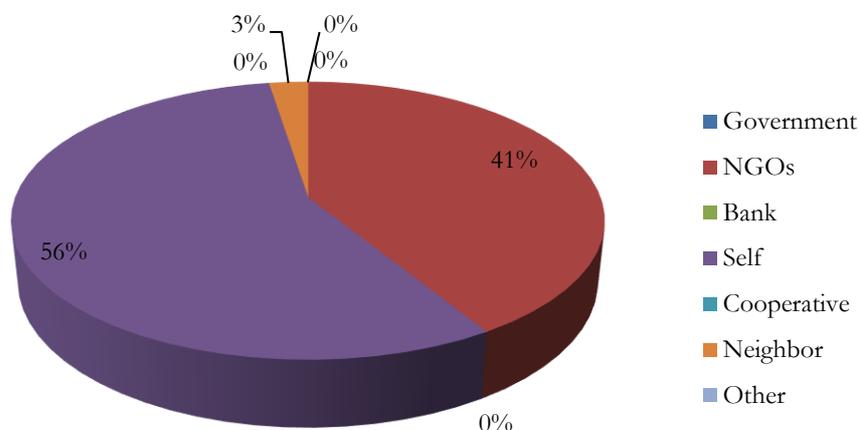
³⁰ A government officer in Mongla and Key Informant. Fake name because he/she doesn't want to expose his/her identity.

³¹ The one who collects, preserves, and uses rainwater.

³² From where rainwater can be collected

Concern Worldwide, Tearfund UK, and BRAC. The activities of awareness-raising campaign include rally, house yard meeting, and talking to the locals.

Figure 3: Finance for Rainwater Harvesting System in Chilla



Source: Field Data, Author

Thirty three (41.25% of total respondents) people get finance from NGOs (shown in figure 3). This type of finance came either through a large tank or from a monetary benefit such as lending. The lending came from the Association for Social Advancement (ASA).³³ Within this NGOs beneficiary group, two persons got finance from ASA and the remaining thirty one respondents got benefits through rainwater harvesting storage tanks and materials from six different NGOs such as Tearfund UK, World Vision, Sushilon, Prodipon, Concern Worldwide, and Rupantor. Within those having received storage tanks and other materials from different NGOs, World Vision provides nineteen large tanks and other materials for rainwater harvesting in Chilla. After World Vision, Concern Worldwide provides five tanks and Prodipon, Tearfund United Kingdom, and Rupantor provides two tanks each of them within the study group in Chilla. In the study group, forty five respondents finance their RHS with their own money and the other two respondents got help from their neighbor regarding finance. Neither government nor formal financial institutions like banks finance RHS. Additionally, NGOs such as ASA do not lend money for rainwater harvesting purposes. The borrowers received the loan from ASA by showing another purpose on the loan documents. For instance, Kamal (fake name)³⁴ took loan of BDT 20000 from ASA for small business purposes. However, the major portion of his loan was spent for buying large storage tank and other materials for his RHS.

³³ Is a microcredit organization. It is also known as an NGO.

³⁴ Because he does not want to expose his identity. The reason behind this is that he used his loan for different purpose other than mentioned in his loan application and it can create problems for him.

Conclusion

The coastal areas in Bangladesh are vulnerable to climate-induced problems like salinity intrusion. The saltwater intrusion can create different types of problems. The freshwater crisis is one of them in that region. However, the water sources that are polluted by human intervention, mismanagement of rainwater, and lack of coordination among government, NGOs and the locals trigger a severe freshwater crisis. Consequently, the local communities may lose income opportunities and savings due to their illness arising from lack of freshwater. Moreover, many people cannot irrigate their land and face challenges in home vegetable gardening due to the lack of freshwater. These types of problems make the coastal people economically poorer.

Water is an indispensable part of life. It is not possible to lead a healthy life without freshwater. Every citizen has the right to have access to sufficient freshwater for a healthy and sustainable living. It is the responsibility of the government to guarantee this right. As the existing sources of water cannot fulfil the demand of freshwater at coastal areas in Bangladesh, rainwater can be a good alternative source as the country receives abundant rainfall every year. Additionally, locals use that source for solving their freshwater crisis. However, they cannot use it effectively due to lack of financing, rules and regulations, technical know-how, and awareness. Therefore, effective steps should be taken by the government to promote a rainwater harvesting system in order to solve the freshwater crisis. This way, it may help improve the economic strength of the local population. In this process, the government can invite different NGOs that are working with the same issue in the same region as well as the locals to the table in order to find solutions. For a successful resolution of the freshwater crisis through rainwater harvesting, mutual interaction among government organization, NGOs, and the locals is necessary.

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Imperfect Good and Evil: Savonarola, Soderini, and Machiavelli's Excusing of Failure

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Abstract

In his Discourses on the First Decade of Livy, Machiavelli relies upon the example of his Tuscan contemporaries to tease out an understanding of the role of evil intentions in the founding of a political state. Through the examples of the Perugino Giovampagolo Baglioni and the Florentines Girolamo Savonarola and Piero Soderini, Machiavelli implicitly defines good and evil intentions for founding a state, as well as the corresponding 'good' and 'bad' means through which such a state is founded. When Machiavelli examines the failings of these men considering their respective motivations and means, he advocates in favor of excusing the failures of those who failed to be 'perfectly evil' through willingness to act over those of one who failed to be 'wholly good' through passive acceptance. This advocacy, in turn, reveals Machiavelli's belief in the expedient nature of deception in the foundation of a durable political order.

Keywords

Deception; Excusing Failure; Livy; Machiavelli; Political Philosophy; Political Theory

Introduction

Despite the purportedly ancient focus of *Discourses on the First Decade of Livy*, Niccolò Machiavelli devotes disproportionate attention to two men whose lives overlapped and closely intertwined with his own: Fra Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican friar whose religious and political movement led to the expulsion of the Medici from Florence and Piero Soderini, Gonfaloniere of the Florentine Republic. These men – one whose expulsion led directly to Machiavelli's entry into political life, the other whose expulsion led to Machiavelli's eventual disgrace and exile – both served as leaders of the nascent Florentine Republic. They also succumbed to failure stemming from personal weaknesses, each time bringing their political orders to ruin through scandal. Machiavelli expresses some respect for each man and admits that each intended to create a lasting, stable government; their failings are somewhat mitigated by their intentions. This paper seeks to understand how Machiavelli rationalized his apparent respect for both men despite their failures and to examine why Machiavelli judges one more harshly than the other. Hence, the cases of Savonarola and Soderini imply to Machiavelli's audience that to come to ruin from a willingness to act decisively is more excusable than to fail to attain perfect republican virtue through passive acceptance.

Past Treatment of Machiavelli

Past scholars have not overlooked Machiavelli's keen observations on both Savonarola and Soderini's elevation to power and their subsequent falls from grace. Two schools of thought have grown through the intervening centuries since Machiavelli's works were first set down on paper: One sees Machiavelli as a progenitor of evil – the archetypal 'Machiavellian' politician – and the other views him as a political reformer. Indeed, Rousseau wrote that "Machiavelli's *Prince* is the book of republicans" (Rousseau 2012: 95). These viewpoints are relevant to the thesis that Machiavelli was more concerned with the *results* of the founder of a political state, and with that founder's willingness to do whatever necessary to properly found a state, than with the *means* through which this result was accomplished.

Machiavelli, Defender of Evil

The prevailing view of Machiavelli in the centuries after his death has been as a defender of evil or as an areligious manipulator. Machiavelli's unsavory image is now largely seen as a simplistic depiction; his discussion of Savonarola and the use of religion throughout the *Discourses* has nevertheless been held up to support this view. Examining his treatment of Savonarola and religion, Benner notes that "Machiavelli's analyses of various unreasonable uses of religion in politics [appears to] encourage ordinary citizens to take responsibility for scrutinizing public appeals to God" (Benner 2009: 393). Others read a similar message into these passages. "while Savonarola's example shows

that Christian beliefs can be exploited for political ends, it also teaches that religious manipulation, if not supported by more tangible and forceful means, is bound to prove ineffective in the long run” (Hörnqvist 2008: 85-6). The readers find in Machiavelli’s hatred towards Savonarola an anti-populist and anti-religious sympathy, as “Savonarola’s republican theory combined...the appeal to the Venetian Great Council as a model, the wish to purge Florence of her sins so that she could serve as the New Jerusalem in the coming apocalypse, and the notion that *governo largo* was a means to these religious ends” (Colish 1999: 611). Isaiah Berlin underscores the practical realism that Machiavelli’s ‘defender of evil’ image encourages by observing that Machiavelli condemned Soderini and Savonarola’s failures “because they substituted what should be for what is” (Berlin 1972: 166). Clearly, Machiavelli’s image as defender of evil permeates scholarship on his works.

Machiavelli the Modernist

Machiavelli’s negative reputation, this school of thought claims, is undeserved. As Viroli and other scholars argued, Machiavelli was a proto-modernist, who favored conflict between factions as leading to moderation (Viroli 1989: 405-20). Viroli acknowledges the necessary role of virtue in Machiavelli’s republicanism, but it does not present as the opposite of evil rather “Machiavelli’s virtue makes room for goodness as its necessary and useful opponent” (Viroli 1993: 169). Early scholars argued that Machiavelli’s most infamous passages are a conceit through which his own antithetical personal beliefs must be inferred (Gentili 1924: 156). Others observe that Machiavelli considered “the tight and vital relationship between the *buone armi* and the *buoni ordini*” to be “a cornerstone in the life of a healthy republic” (Silvano 1993: 58). Scholars disagree whether Machiavelli viewed internal conflict and factionalism as a key to the development of a strong republic or a factional city is contrary to idealized early Roman virtue; Gennaro Sasso and Giorgio Inglese, among others, support the latter argument (Sasso 1993, Inglese 2006). Some favor the positive aspects of factionalism in Machiavelli’s analysis, noting the negative consequences that arise when “Christianity destroys the nonpartisanship of the people by making it difficult or impossible for the political princes to appeal to them” (Mansfield 1996: 98). Thus, Machiavelli’s republican intentions, while contrary to his recommendations in *The Prince*, do not necessarily oppose his recognition of evil’s utility.

Framework and Methodology

In *Explaining Technical Change*, Jon Elster states an “intentional explanation” that examines “not only goals and desires but also beliefs” to determine an actor’s motives through the “triadic relation between action, desire and belief” is appropriate to examine a work of historico-political philosophy like Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, as individual actors often influence the development of political states (Elster 1983: 70, 84). His writing should be examined in hermeneutic and interpretive

methods, to examine the meaning behind the statements about his contemporaries and their ancient Roman counterparts, and to contextualize this meaning within his opus. The resulting interpretation, less applicable in well-established democracies, is nevertheless prescriptive for authoritarian and autocratic regimes where arbitrary power dominates.

Re-Ordering the State: Baglioni's Mistake

Machiavelli articulates the conception of a successful re-ordering of a state early in the first book of the *Discourses*. He begins by noting that “a prudent orderer of a republic, who has the intent to wish to help not himself but the common good...should contrive to have authority alone” (Machiavelli 1998: 29). Distinguishing oneself from one's compatriots creates a sense of authority that allows for society to willingly bend to one's vision. How one becomes sole ruler is not as important; with Romulus, for example, Machiavelli excuses fratricide and the (supposed) sanctioning of his co-regent's death. While extreme, such deeds can be understood as necessary. Machiavelli says that “it is very suitable that when the deed accuses him, the effect excuses him; and when the effect is good...it will always excuse the deed; for he who is violent to spoil, not he who is violent to mend, should be reproved” (Machiavelli 1998: 29). The end of sole rule, and of being capable of creating new modes and orders within a state, justifies how one accomplishes it.

Nevertheless, Machiavelli does not judge all means of acquiring the sole rule as morally equivalent. Rather, “because the re-ordering of a city for a political way of life pre-supposes a good man, and becoming prince of a republic by violence presupposes a bad man, one will find that it very rarely happens that someone good wishes to become prince by bad ways, even though his end be good, and that someone wicked, having been prince, wishes to work well, and that it will ever occur to his mind to use well the authority that he acquired badly” (Machiavelli 1998: 51). Machiavelli implies that men are, in almost all instances, incapable of acquiring a state by nefarious means without also governing by bad modes and orders, or the inverse; as such, almost all men appear unable to re-order a state. Hope remains for those aspiring to do so, for Machiavelli expounds that one does not need to be wholly good to effectively rule a state. Rather, one must be decisive and take terrible actions for a worthy cause. He cites the example of Giovampagolo Baglioni, tyrant of Perugia, who was immoral, corrupt, and who failed to kill the pope when the two came to confrontation. Machiavelli explains that Baglioni's ruin “arose from men's not knowing how to be honorably wicked or perfectly good, [for] when malice has greatness in itself or is generous in some part, they do not know how to enter into it” (Machiavelli 1998: 62-3).

Baglioni was indisputably evil – Machiavelli describes him as “a villainous man, who was taking his sister for himself, who had killed his cousins and nephews so as to reign” – but his failures stem from his inaction when confronted by “the pope” and “all the cardinals with all their delights”

(Machiavelli 1998: 62). He “did not know how – or, to say better, did not dare, when he had just the opportunity for it – to engage in an enterprise in which everyone would have admired his spirit and that would have left an eternal memory of himself as being the first who had demonstrated to the prelates how little it is to be esteemed whoever lives and reigns as they do” (Machiavelli 1998: 63). Killing the pope and the cardinals would have “surpassed all infamy, every danger, that could have proceeded from it” because it would have rid the world of the corruption of the Court of Rome and left Baglioni to re-order his state without the loyalty of the people divided with their loyalty to the Church³⁵ (Machiavelli 1998: 63). By not being ‘wicked’ enough to act, Baglioni lost his opportunity to acquire a name and reputation for himself that would have endured through the ages – “the glory of the world...that makes [a ruler] live secure and after death renders [him] glorious” – as every re-orderer should desire (Machiavelli 1998: 33). His inability to align his individual rationality with the rationality of the state brought both to ruin.

Savonarola: Inability to be Wholly Wicked

Similarly to with Baglioni, Machiavelli suggests that Fra Girolamo Savonarola failed in his attempt to re-order the state of Florence due to his eventual inaction. He notes the general desire in Florence of his era for a figure who could re-order the city: Machiavelli “observes that many of his fellow citizens, unsure how to take responsibility for their own troubles or unwilling to do so, sit back and pray for God or some holy man to save them [...] ‘they would like a preacher who would teach them the way to paradise,’ he writes” (Benner 2009: 61). This *redentore*³⁶ appears to the people of Florence in the person of Savonarola; and Machiavelli writes that, by 1494, Florence “had been reordered in its state by the aid of Friar Girolamo Savonarola, whose writings show the learning, the prudence, and the virtue of his spirit” (Machiavelli 1998: 93). The ambitious priest, who spoke of fire and brimstone in the impending apocalypse and who claimed to have the ability to speak with God, advocated a total theocratic republic.

Savonarola accomplished the fundamental requirement among those who re-order a city of having an exclusive claim on prophecy. In this way, “when Savonarola claimed to speak with God, no political authority could gainsay him and the people were drawn into partisanship with his ‘sect’ [*setto*]” (Mansfield 1996: 98). Machiavelli recognizes the political expediency and question the veracity of such a claim: for he explains that

Although coarse men may be more easily persuaded to a new order or opinion, this does [not] make it impossible also to persuade to it civilized men who presume they are not coarse. To the people of Florence it does not appear that they are either ignorant or coarse; nonetheless, they were persuaded by Friar Girolamo Savonarola that he spoke with

³⁵ In Book I.12, Machiavelli discusses the disunion of the Italian principalities, and declares that “the cause that Italy...does not also have one republic or one prince to govern it is solely the church” (Machiavelli 1998: 38).

³⁶ “Italy expects its *redentore*” (Gilbert 1972: 97).

God...[though] an infinite number believed him without having seen anything extraordinary to make them believe him (Machiavelli 1998: 36).

By claiming to speak directly to God, Savonarola positioned himself above any other authority in the city. Because of his lack of proof, Machiavelli implies that Savonarola's claims arose solely out of political expediency. Thus, "the plebian prince Savonarola, having persuaded the people of Florence that he spoke with God (I 11), did not have to report to the magistrates" (Mansfield 2001: 165). Nevertheless, his ability to convince as civilized a people as the Florentines to suppress their own modes and orders is remarkable. Machiavelli encourages such deception, as he opines that in observing the example of Savonarola, "no one, therefore, should be terrified that he cannot carry out what has been carried out by others, for...men are born, live, and die always in one and the same order" (Machiavelli 1998: 36). Such an act of deception, if properly perpetrated, is laudable for the re-orderer of a city.

While his apparent ability to re-order Florence does make Savonarola appear glorious, his failure demonstrates the weakness of reliance on religion alone. Savonarola, having advocated to allow appeals against death penalties, managed to have this law enacted. But when "five citizens were condemned to death" and attempted to appeal, "they were not allowed to and the law was not observed...that [decision] took away more reputation from the friar than any other accident: for if the appeal was useful, it ought to have been observed; if it was not useful, he ought not to have had it passed...this exposure of his ambitious and partisan spirit took away reputation from him and brought him very much disapproval" (Machiavelli 1998: 93-4). Once his actions were revealed to not have been directly inspired by God, Savonarola lost all credibility he was previously granted by the Florentine populace. In this instance, "we see that Savonarola was exposed in his sermons rather than his writings, perhaps because in sermons it is easier to note omissions and to trace authorship of laws" (Mansfield 2001: 137). Machiavelli emphasizes the unquestioning nature of those who did not require proof of Savonarola's divine inspiration. He is critical of these "citizens who rely too much on divine authority and mistrust their own powers of authorization undermine the foundations of free civil orders" (Benner 2009: 393).

Beyond the lesson, this example offers through the people of Florence. Machiavelli provides an illustration of the pitfalls an aspiring reformer faces. It is indisputable in this instance that Savonarola saw himself as an individual capable of re-ordering the city of Florence; indeed, on 7 December, 1494, Savonarola advocated "political reform," saying to the people of Florence: "new city, if you want to be new and have a changed new state, you must change to new modes and live anew, if you want to last, and if you want to rule" (Silvano 1993: 46) (my translation). Indisputably political in nature, this sermon prescribes "new modes and orders" for the Florentines just as Machiavelli sets out to do in the *Discourses* (Machiavelli 1998: 5). However, Savonarola failed to

achieve his political end as he lacked power to preserve his state. Thus, “Machiavelli offers the example of Savonarola, who he claims ‘was ruined in his new orders as soon as the multitude began not to believe in them’”(Sullivan 1996: 143).

Machiavelli believed that Savonarola was a fraud with political intent from the beginning; for “in a letter [Machiavelli] sent on March 9, 1498...giving a résumé of Savonarola’s sermon on *Exodus*, he observed: ‘It is thus that he veers from point to point, to paint and color his fraud and cunning’” (Bertelli 1975: 3). In this same letter, Machiavelli keenly observed that while “at first Savonarola spoke only to unite his party...[later] he changed his tune...[and] ‘thus, according to my judgment,’ Machiavelli concludes, ‘he keeps on working with the time and making his lies plausible’” (Colish 1999: 611). This letter evinces how “Machiavelli clearly regards Savonarola as a fraud, a hypocrite, and a demagogue” (Colish 1996). Some of this animosity, however, can be rationalized, as the very means by which Savonarola intended to re-order Florence were antithetical to Machiavelli’s ideal republic, and to the government in which he took part. Nonetheless, Machiavelli concedes that “Savonarola understood the problem [of overcoming *invidia*, envy] very well, but he was unable to deal with it effectively for two reasons: first, because he was a friar and therefore lacked authority; second, because his followers did not grasp the nature of the problem as he did” (Weinstein 1972: 255). In the end, Machiavelli excuses a portion of Savonarola’s failure, discounting his final inaction to the fact that he was an ‘unarmed prophet’ whose authority could not compel his followers to carry out his bidding – that is to say, he could not make other recognize the rationality of the state he hoped to form.

Soderini: Inability to be Perfectly Good

If Savonarola is remarkable in Machiavelli’s writings for his lack of ‘wicked’ action, then Machiavelli’s former employer, Piero Soderini, is equally of note for his ‘goodness’ and passive acceptance. Soderini was Gonfaloniere of the Florentine Republic from 1502, shortly after the downfall of Savonarola, until his own expulsion in 1512; Machiavelli “first rose to be Piero Soderini’s adviser” as second chancellor of the republic, and then as secretary to the council of the Ten of War (Guarini 1993: 22). He favored Soderini’s government, under which “Florentines have ‘experienced’ a different, more fully republican form of government” than under Medici rule (Benner 2009: 56). His preference is underscored by the fact that while he questions the means and ends of Savonarola’s government, his “observations on Soderini in the *Discorsi* are nearly all concerned with the question of how the authority of the new head of the state could be secured and checked at the same time” (Rubenstein 1972: 27). Machiavelli’s bond to Soderini is, in some respects, quite personal. Nevertheless, Machiavelli does not refrain from criticizing Soderini for his failures, both personal and political, to an equal degree as his criticism of Savonarola.

Principal among Soderini's faults is his inability to prefer his political preservation, even in matters in which he had a vested interest and which would have also protected the Florentine Republic. Machiavelli observes that "Soderini had a reputation for himself in the city of Florence with this only: favoring the collectivity" and eventually, "all the rest of the republic was ruined with his ruin" (Machiavelli 1998: 104). The same problem of *invidia* that Savonarola failed to adequately address was of principal concern for Soderini. As Machiavelli recounted it, Soderini allowed his own person to bear the brunt of this envy, for the good of the republic. Nevertheless, "Piero too came to make an error by not anticipating the ways by which those adversaries of his made him fear, for which Piero merits an excuse, whether because it was difficult for him to do so or because they were not honest to him" (Machiavelli 1998: 104). Soderini's behavior appears as blameworthy as his conscious decisions: he made it easy for his enemies to harbor envy towards him personally to protect the republic, yet his actions inspired envy in others, and fear of this envy inspired his further actions.

Soderini's desire to avoid conflict when possible is chief among his political weaknesses. The fact that the ruler of a republic would like to seek consensus is not surprising in modern times. However, according to Machiavelli, it can be a disastrous choice. Machiavelli expects that "in the hope of escaping present dangers, such rulers [as Piero Soderini] can instead be expected to follow the 'neutral way' (*quella via neutral*) which most of the time leads to ruin" (Hörnqvist 2008: 102). The ruin of the middle way does not arise immediately: when time and fortune aligned with his actions, Soderini attained some degree of success. Nevertheless, Machiavelli implies that ruin was inevitable, given Soderini's fear of extremes, for while "Soderini...proceeded in all his affairs with humanity and patience... when he needed to break with patience and humility, he did not know how to do it, so that he together with his fatherland was ruined" (Machiavelli 1998: 240). Soderini could not temporize with the changes of time and fortune,³⁷ and therein lay his ruin.

It was "the inability of Soderini to drop his natural patience and humility [that] brought him to ruin and with him the ruin of the Florentine republic [for] according to Machiavelli, the principle of never breaking a covenant or promise was a form of weakness" (Viroli 1993: 169). Thus, Soderini was not only mistaken in how to govern a republic, but also in how to manage a crisis without bringing down the republic alongside its leader. Such 'goodness' – passive acceptance and inaction – is only a problem, however, when it is paired with an overly-trusting and naïve nature, as was the case for Soderini. In the case of Don Michele,³⁸ who was significantly less naïve, passivity does not

³⁷ Cf. Book III.9, "How One Must Vary with the Times If One Wishes Always to Have Good Fortune." (Machiavelli 1998: 239-41). See also *The Prince*, Chapter XXV, "Quantum Fortuna in Rebus Humanis Possit, et Quomodo Illi Sit Occurrendum."

³⁸ Head of the Florentine militia under the Soderini regime (Mansfield 1996: 28).

appear to be a cause for personal ruin; and “for [Michele], if not for Piero Soderini, goodness when corrected and no longer too trusting is enough” (Mansfield 1996: 28). Thus, Soderini’s naïveté led to his ruin and to the ruin of the republic; his individual rationality and desire to avoid conflict directly went against the rationality of the state.

Beyond his naïveté, Machiavelli implies that Soderini’s patience resulted in his missing a crucial opportunity to save the republic from an eventual backslide into Medici dominion. Florentine history is often paired with Roman history in direct comparison throughout the *Discourses*, and in book three, these comparisons continue. Just as “the ‘change Rome made from kings to consuls’ was the founding of the Roman republic, made secure by the killing of Brutus’ sons [...] the ruin of the Medici in 1494 preceded the coming to power of the inadequate Piero Soderini and of Machiavelli” (Mansfield 2001: 344). Soderini is positioned as the Brutus-figure in the foundation of the new Florentine Republic; accordingly, allowing his enemies to predict his action, and target him personally, was a form of simulated madness on Soderini’s part. Brutus did more than just appear mad to the Tarquini: he acted when the time was ripe for boldness. On the other hand, “Piero, for not knowing how to ‘resemble’ (*somigliare*) Brutus, lost his office and his reputation together with his fatherland...[for] to resemble Brutus one must imitate his simulated stupidity and...his political concern; and thus in politics, one must also imitate his severity in memorable executions” (Mansfield 2001: 312). Soderini, convinced that his goodness alone would allow him to maintain power, chose not to act against his enemies. For he “understood the grave threat posed by usurpers but not how to deal with it appropriately...[and he] believed that time, goodness, good fortune, and favors would minimize the threat of usurpers” (McCormick 2011: 133). Soderini fundamentally misunderstood the decisive role of a ruler within a new republic; the ruin of the state followed as a result.

One reason why Soderini failed to properly execute his enemies is that to do so, he would have needed to take extrajudicial actions. Machiavelli observes that the inability to assure such executions in a legal manner was a problem prior to Soderini’s rule; under Valori, the Gonfalonier under Savonarola, the republic faced a similar dilemma. Machiavelli explains that rather than destroying the state to depose Valori, “if one had been able to oppose [Valori] ordinarily, his authority would have been eliminated with harm to him alone” (Machiavelli 1998: 25). He continues that “one could also cite in support of the conclusion written above the incident that also occurred in Florence regarding Piero Soderini, which occurred entirely because in that republic there was no mode of accusation against the ambition of powerful citizens” (Machiavelli 1998: 25). Ordinary modes of accusation, such as existed in Ancient Rome, appear vital to the well-being of the republic; Machiavelli demonstrates their integral nature in the preservation of a republic free from partisans through the example of Camillus’s accusation and acquittal. In the case of Florence, Soderini failed

to take up such modes; he believed “he would have needed to take up extraordinary authority and break up civil equality together with the laws” (Machiavelli 1998: 214-5). This fear of acting extrajudicially prevented Soderini’s actions. Machiavelli concludes that “if such modes [of accusing citizens publicly] had been there, either the citizens would have accused [Soderini]...or, if he were not living badly, they would not have dared to work against him for fear of being accused themselves” (Machiavelli 1998: 25). Soderini’s failure to execute his enemies stems from his nervousness to execute them through extrajudicial modes; nevertheless, this reticence prevented him from maintaining his state, as patience and goodness could not counter his enemies’ animus.

Machiavelli levels the additional charge that beyond his fear of extraordinary modes, Soderini knew the importance of eliminating his enemies – the ‘sons of Brutus’ who conspired against the republic – and yet chose not to act. Machiavelli explicitly states that Soderini “believed he would overcome with his patience and goodness the appetite that was in the sons of Brutus [here, Medici supporters] for returning to another government...[and] nonetheless he never turned his mind to doing it” (Machiavelli 1998: .,214). No total revolution of the laws was required for Soderini to achieve his end; rather, he needed merely temporize to protect the republic against an enemy of liberty. “Soderini, Machiavelli suggests, needed only to preside over a single case, such as the trial where Brutus participated in the prosecution of his pro-Tarquin sons and then witnessed their execution, to save the republic” (McCormick 2011: 134). Soderini’s good nature served him well in his rise to power, but Machiavelli nevertheless condemns his judgment. While some of Soderini’s failings can be attributed to a mistaken desire to protect the state, his downfall appears to have come from a fear of perverting the laws or institutions of the state through bad example, and Machiavelli does not excuse Soderini’s lack of sense of urgency in protecting the state.

Inability and Timidity

Machiavelli rarely compares the examples of Savonarola and Soderini, but – under the formulation provided in Book I.27 of the “honorably wicked or perfectly good” man who re-orders a republic – their juxtaposition fulfills this dichotomy (Machiavelli 1998: 63). Towards the end of the first book of the *Discourses*, Machiavelli notes a parallel between the two men: the various signs that foretold their demises. He explains that “everyone knows how much had been foretold by Friar Girolamo Savonarola before the coming of King Charles VIII...[and] everyone knows too that soon before Piero Soderini, who had been made gonfalonier for life by the Florentine people, was expelled and deprived of his rank, the very [Palazzo della Signoria] itself was struck by a thunderbolt” (Machiavelli 1998: 113-4).³⁹ While Savonarola was aware of the impending danger the signs of his

³⁹ In Machiavelli’s writings, lightning strikes are significant: in the *Florentine Histories*, he notes that following the death in April 1492 of Lorenzo il Magnifico, “the highest tip of the church of Santa Reparata was struck by lightning with such

times indicated, and thus attempted to purge Florence of sin, Soderini did not heed the warnings heaven revealed to his government. However, “it is hard to see how a sign would have helped Piero to defend himself, since we are told in I 52 that he lacked the prudence or ruthlessness to do what he should have foreseen himself” (Mansfield 2001: 166). Machiavelli contrasts the signs of impending doom these two men faced, examining if either heeded fortune: Savonarola attempted to conquer it, while Soderini paid it no attention.

Savonarola was a man who could have re-ordered the Florentine state, had he been a partisan fraud; for Soderini, Machiavelli’s judgment is harsher. Overall “in the comparison with Piero Soderini[,] Savonarola comes off decidedly the better of the two...for Soderini had failed to see that no amount of good will on his part would protect him against his enemies” (Weinstein 1972: 256). Soderini is unwilling to recognize the necessity of the times; in not killing the sons of Brutus, he denied that in re-ordering a state, some exceptional acts of harshness are necessary. In this manner “honest reformers...like the worthy [Gonfalonier] of the Florentine republic, Piero Soderini...or the far more gifted Savonarola...foundered and caused the ruin of others” (Berlin 1972: 166). “Savonarola had a strong will, whereas Soderini was, in Machiavelli’s view, small minded and indecisive...[both had] an inadequate grasp of how to use power” (Berlin 1972: 166).

Machiavelli notes two distinct reasons for why both men failed to retain the state: a lack of opposition to the pro-Medici factions in the *Consiglio Maggiore*, and a lack of either ability (in the case of Savonarola) or willingness (in the case of Soderini) to execute their enemies as needed. On the first failing, “Machiavelli strongly intimates that if Savonarola or Soderini had mustered the temerity to try [their] aristocratic enemies...the assembled people would have readily condemned them to death” (McCormick 2011: 72). He knew the people’s willingness to condemn to death those accused of conspiring against the state: he had witnessed such a fury at age seven, after the Pazzi conspiracy.⁴⁰ Machiavelli invokes the example of Moses, who “was forced to kill infinite men who, moved by nothing other than envy, were opposed to his plans” (Machiavelli 1998: 280). “Savonarola knew this necessity very well; Piero Soderini, gonfalonier of Florence, knew it too...[for] the one was not able to conquer it because he did not have the authority to enable him to do it (that was the friar) and because he was not understood well by those who followed him ...[while] the other believed that with time, [or] with goodness...he would eliminate this envy (Machiavelli 1998).

fury that a great part of the pinnacle was ruined” (Machiavelli 1990: 362). Thunderbolts seem to signify impending political ruin – either through Savonarola’s rule or through the Medici re-capture of the city in 1512.

⁴⁰ In the *Florentine Histories*, Machiavelli writes that after Giuliano de’ Medici was killed, “the whole city was in arms...Jacopo [Pazzi] was also taken while crossing the mountains, because the mountain people, having heard of the event in Florence and seeing him in flight, attacked him and led him back to Florence...[where he and] Rinato were condemned to death four days after the event had taken place” (Machiavelli 1990: 326).

Soderini and Savonarola both were unable to kill their enemies due to an inability to authorize the extraordinary means this would have taken. “[A] leader of [virtù] needs to know how to deal with the envious: but neither Savonarola nor Soderini was ‘able to overcome envy’ and in consequence ‘both of them fell’” (Skinner 2001: 68). *Invidia*, envy, is therefore the humor that hobbled both men’s ambitions; had Savonarola been better understood by his followers, or had Soderini been willing to kill the sons of Brutus, such envy would have been eliminated. “[W]ith Machiavelli’s retrospective advice, Savonarola and Valori, and later Soderini, could have improved upon the examples of Moses and Brutus [...] the would-be republican princes could have formally enlisted the people assembled in Florence’s Great Council to participate in the punishment of liberty’s usurpers” (McCormick 2011: 132). Had they followed Machiavelli’s advice, and achieved sole rule through notable executions, these men would have overcome envy.

In his final analysis of these two men’s failings, Machiavelli is more forgiving of Savonarola’s faults, as they were not for his lack of effort; as for Soderini, Machiavelli offers little excuse besides his naïveté, which cautioned him against true republican virtue. While Savonarola – like Baglioni – was unable to be ‘wicked’ through decisiveness, Soderini was too passive and accepting to be perfectly ‘good.’ Savonarola failed to make others see, as he had seen, the rationality of the state, while Soderini failed to see the state’s rationality himself. As a result of their inaction, both men were unable to accomplish their goals of re-ordering the Florentine state.

Conclusion

Throughout his *Discourses on the First Decade of Livy*, Machiavelli recalls the examples of his compatriots Girolamo Savonarola and Piero Soderini. Both men, Machiavelli reveals, came within reach of re-ordering the Florentine Republic; however, they both faltered in their quest to do so due to the conflict between their individual rationalities and the rationality of the state. Savonarola was a fraud who relied on religion to gain influence, and who was ultimately unable to enact his desired political reforms. His condemnation stemmed from the revelation of his ultimately partisan and ambitious nature, and from his inability to convince the people of Florence to take his sermons literally. Soderini, on the other hand, was elected to office and believed that through his luck, patience, and kindness, his enemies would have no option but to target his person rather than the state. His failure to execute these enemies was due to excess caution, which limited his actions enough to secure his downfall. Machiavelli shows some deference to each man, and excuses some of their failings; overall, however, Machiavelli pardons Savonarola more than Soderini. The lasting impression is that Soderini’s failings were of a more personal nature than were Savonarola’s. In drawing this personal culpability to the fore, Machiavelli illustrates how one is more easily excused

of failing to re-order a state from lacking the decisiveness to be wholly 'wicked,' like Savonarola, than from passive acceptance and caution which overcome republican virtue, like Soderini.

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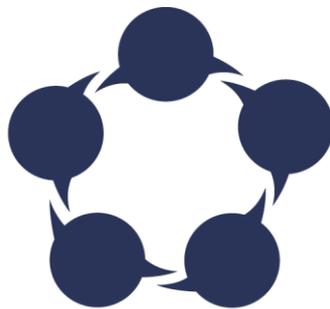
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