International Political Sociology (2024) **18**, olae014

How Best to Be Egyptian? The "Honorable Citizen" and the Making of the Counter-revolutionary Subject

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Despite growing interest in studying counter-revolution in Egypt, scholars have neglected the ways in which the regulation of normativity governs conduct and discourages resistance. This article argues that discourses of normativity in Egypt have produced counter-revolutionary subjectivities, without whom the counter-revolution could not have succeeded. These subjectivities are constructed through the mobilization of normal/deviant binary logics, which are encapsulated in the normative figure of the honorable citizen. I suggest that the honorable citizen—which informs how best to be Egyptian—is a contradictory figure that is made possible by the ongoing interaction between (post)colonial and neoliberal governing rationalities. By employing Foucault's work on governmentality, and Cynthia Weber's queer analysis of figuration, I conceptualize normal/deviant logics through what I call counter-revolutionary governmentality (CRG). CRG reduces the originality of Egyptian resistance by associating it with the desire to be Westernized and constructs revolutionary aspirations as a threat to sovereignty. I argue that figurations of normative "Egyptianness" fortify Egypt's "backwardness" in contemporary international orderings of progressive versus backward states and maintain international hierarchies that privilege Western modes of socio-economic and political organization. Such maintenance is not only the work of the global North but is also reproduced in the South.

Malgré un intérêt croissant pour l'étude de la contre-révolution en Égypte, les chercheurs ont négligé les façons dont la réglementation de la normativité régit le comportement et décourage la résistance. Cet article affirme que les discours de normativité en Égypte ont produit des subjectivités contre-révolutionnaires, sans lesquelles la contre-révolution n'aurait pu réussir. Ces subjectivités s'établissent en mobilisant des logiques binaires Normal/Déviant, résumées dans le portrait normatif du citoyen honorable. Je propose que le portrait du citoyen honorable—le meilleur Égyptien que l'on puisse être—s'avère contradictoire et qu'il n'aurait pu voir le jour sans les interactions continues entre les rationalités (post)coloniales et néolibérales de gouvernance. En employant le travail de Michel Foucault sur la gouvernementalité et l'analyse de la figuration de Cynthia Weber, je conceptualize les logiques Normal/Déviant par le biais de ce que j'appelle la gouvernementalité contre-révolutionnaire (GCR). La GCR réduit l'originalité de la résistance égyptienne en l'associant au désir d'occidentalisation et envisage les aspirations révolutionnaires telle une menace pour la souveraineté. J'affirme que les figurations du ≪ caractère égyptien ≫ normatif renforcent le retard de l'Égypte dans les ordres internationaux contemporains d'États progressistes et d'États arriérés, tout en entretenant des hiérarchies internationales qui favorisent les modes

Abdelhamid, Amira (2024) How Best to Be Egyptian? The "Honorable Citizen" and the Making of the Counter-revolutionary Subject. *International Political Sociology*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olae014
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occidentaux d'organisation socioéconomique et politique. Ce schéma ne revient pas qu'aux pays du Nord ; le Sud le reproduit aussi.

A pesar del creciente interés por estudiar la contrarrevolución en Egipto, los académicos han descuidado las formas en que la regulación de la normatividad gobierna la conducta y desalienta la resistencia. Este artículo argumenta que los discursos de normatividad que han tenido lugar en Egipto han producido subjetividades de carácter contrarrevolucionario, sin las cuales la contrarrevolución no podría haber triunfado. Estas subjetividades se construyen a través de la movilización de lógicas binarias normal/desviación, las cuales se engloban dentro de la figura normativa del ciudadano honorable. Sugerimos que la figura del ciudadano honorable, la cual informa sobre la mejor manera de ser egipcio, es una figura de carácter contradictorio, cuya existencia es posible gracias a la interacción en curso entre las racionalidades en materia de gobierno, tanto (pos)coloniales como neoliberales. Utilizamos el trabajo de Foucault sobre la gubernamentalidad, y el análisis ≪queer≫ de la figuración de Cynthia Weber, para conceptualizar las lógicas normales y las lógicas desviadas a través de lo que llamamos gubernamentalidad contrarrevolucionaria (CRG, por sus siglas en inglés). La CRG reduce la originalidad de la resistencia egipcia, asociándola con el deseo de ser occidentalizada, y construye las aspiraciones revolucionarias como una amenaza a la soberanía. Argumentamos que las figuraciones en materia de la "egipciedad" normativa fortalecen el "retraso" de Egipto dentro de los ordenamientos internacionales contemporáneos de Estados progresistas frente a Estados retrasados y mantienen jerarquías internacionales que privilegian los modos occidentales de organización socioeconómica y política. Este mantenimiento de las jerarquías no es sólo obra del Norte global, sino que también se reproduce en el Sur.

Introduction

> … many people perceived those who took part in the revolution to be foreign spies who were trying to destroy societal values. Often when a public figure was known to be gay, they were met with rejection from different [opposition] parties, because they didn't want them to confirm the assumption that the revolution wanted all Egyptians to be *khawalat*[1] ["fags"] (Al-Gharib 2020).
>
> *Jameela, a queer Egyptian activist, 2020.*

Only 2 weeks after Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took power, and against the backdrop of the 2011 January Revolution (hereafter, the January Revolution) that ousted then-President Mubarak, SCAF cautioned the "honorable citizens of Egypt" against "organized plots" and "internal and external obstacles" that "attempt to create discord in the national fabric." "Honorable Egyptians" were called upon to face these plots, which according to SCAF, "do not align with the morals and customs of the people of this dear country" (quotes in Abdelfattah 2012). This discursive construction of Egypt *under threat* in the discourses around the January Revolution suggests that Egypt is under threat from, but also itself poses a threat to, those who do not and will not identify as normative "honorable citizens," especially deviant "homosexuals" and revolutionary activists who apparently "wanted all Egyptians to be *khawalat*" (see opening quote).

[1]Historically, and up until the early twentieth century, *khawal* in Egypt referred to male dancers in drag who performed at popular celebrations. In contemporary colloquial Egyptian Arabic, *khawal* is used as a derogatory term to refer to homosexual men, especially so-called "passive partners." Based on recent fieldwork in Cairo, it seems some queer people in Egypt are reclaiming the reference.

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Despite the repeated circulation of these normal/deviant discourses, little scholarly attention has been given to the figures of the honorable citizen or the male homosexual, with a few exceptions (see e.g., Amar 2013; Awad 2021). The prevailing notion that some antiregime protesters are Westernized homosexuals who receive foreign funds, or at least one of these descriptors, is rarely ever taken up as an object of analysis. Perhaps this is because so-called (political) homophobia is claimed to be a natural expression of Egyptian/Arab/Muslim cultures, or perhaps it is because (homo)sexuality is considered an inconsequential matter to politics, or both. However, this article posits that normal/deviant binary logics are at the center of the counter-revolution in Egypt. I argue that figures[2] of deviance (e.g., the "male homosexual"[3] or the so-called Westernized antiregime protester) and figures of normalcy (e.g., the honorable citizen), emerge as part of what I call *counter-revolutionary governmentality* (CRG). CRG is the repertoire of knowledges, discourses, and practices around normativity and deviance that authorize the exercise of governmental power in ways that forsake the multiplicity of political subjectivities, and securitizes those who do not neatly align with the same desires and aspirations of "honorability."

CRG prevents self-governing Egyptian forms of subjectivity from manifesting by naturalizing the conception of the population as homogenous, and by externalizing deviations as a threat to this very population. This type of governmentality encourages and incites aspirational forms of citizenship that, at their core, work to break the potential for solidarity among disparate actors. Thus, rather than seeing the Egyptian counter-revolution as a mere *event* after the fact of revolution, or only as a *process* that "always involves recomposition and never a simple return to the past" (Allinson 2022, 17), I understand counter-revolution as a *rationality* of government that is constantly *becoming* as it responds to, and interacts with, emergent forms of deep coalitional politics (see Lugones 2006; Medina 2020).

Following Cynthia Weber's queer analysis of figuration (Weber 2016; Haraway 1997), as well as an engagement with Foucault's governmentality analytic (Foucault 2007 [1978], 2008 [1979]), I examine the broader social, political, and historical contexts of seemingly disparate discourses through which the "honorable citizen" is made legible. I show that CRG arises from interactions between (post)colonial governmentality and neoliberal governmentality, which are two political rationalities at the center of Egypt's contemporary regime of population management, and which inform contradictory and plural figurations around the honorable citizen. I argue that figurations of the honorable citizen and its deviant Others construct *counter-revolutionary subjectivities* without whom the counter-revolution in Egypt could not have succeeded. While the figure of the male homosexual informs how *not* to be Egyptian, the figure of the honorable citizen informs how *best* to be Egyptian. Here,

[2]I am using "figures" and figuration here as an analytical approach (see Weber 2016), which I discuss below in more detail.

[3]In this paper, the examination is centerd on male homosexuality within the socio-political context of Egypt. This specific focus is informed by the distinct ways in which male homosexuality has been mobilized in public and political discourse, particularly in relation to authoritarianism and the delegitimization of revolution. The prominence of male homosexuality in these discourses can be attributed, in part, to the pervasive influence of patriarchy in society. Under patriarchal norms, male homosexuality often confronts and challenges traditional notions of masculinity and male dominance, making it a more visible target for political and social condemnation. This heightened visibility and the associated stigma contribute to its frequent use as a tool in political rhetoric, especially in contexts where challenging traditional gender roles is seen as synonymous with challenging the political status quo. Female homosexuality is subject to different dynamics of visibility and social reception. The patriarchal framework often renders female sexuality, including homosexuality, as less visible or politically significant in public discourse. This does not diminish the importance or complexities of female homosexuality, but it does result in different modes of social and political engagement. The less overt public and political attention toward female homosexuality necessitates a different analytical approach, one that is beyond the scope of this paper.

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to be a "good" Egyptian, a "safe citizen" (see Weber 2008)[4] is to be docile, patriotic, heteronormative, and to "loyally repeat the nation" (Kuntsman 2009, ix), and at the same time, to be an active, entrepreneurial, and self-responsible *individual*.

These ways of being (and not being) Egyptian demonstrate how sexuality and normativity are an existential vector for the survival of the state, how revolution and counter-revolution are entangled with sexuality and normativity, with one another, and with malleable formations of coercive and conductive power that attempt to govern how best to be Egyptian as a way to govern Egypt itself. Moreover, normal/deviant discourses demonstrate how revolution and counter-revolution construct sexualized international orderings of progressive versus backward states that maintain and privilege Western modes of socioeconomic and political organization (see Weber 2016). What the Egyptian case highlights, is that the construction and maintenance of these orders and hierarchies are not only the work of the global North; they are also produced and reproduced in and by the so-called global South.

Below, I present a brief survey of the literature on counter-revolution in Egypt and argue that, despite the acknowledgment of the centrality of the counter-revolutionary subject in some of the literature (e.g., see Allinson 2022), the ways in which this subject is constructed are not delineated. I then expand on my theoretical mobilization of CRG, followed by an explication of my use of a figuration analytic to show how governmentality is translated into conduct. Following this, I elaborate on the historical antecedents around figurations of honorability and normativity in Egypt, and I analyse how these figurations have informed contemporary governing rationalities leading up to and during the January Revolution. I conclude by exploring the stakes of this analysis on our understanding of International Relations.

Counter-revolution

The standard theorization of counter-revolution as a mere reaction to revolution, a movement aimed at restoring the interests of the ruling elite, is reflected in many scholarly accounts of counter-revolution in Egypt. For example, Selim (2015) understands counter-revolution as a hybrid national/international force resulting from an alliance between the United States, the SCAF, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Selim argues that a structural alliance between these three actors "suppressed repeated calls for democratic change [. . .] to ensure the continuity of an authoritarian power structure that would be responsive to the interests of the deep state as well as the foreign centers of power" (*ibid.*, 195). These readings mobilize an understanding of authoritarian articulations of power as top-down and coercive, where ruling groups represent the counter-revolution against the revolutionary masses. In a sense, this implies that overturning radical transformations in a place like Egypt is somewhat a *normal* outcome of authoritarianism.

Other accounts understand revolution and counter-revolution to involve contentions over hegemony. For example, De Smet posits that the counter-revolution succeeded because revolutionaries were unable to construct new relations of power that held sway over the working class. De Smet's analysis reveals the "capacities and constraints of elites to deflect popular initiative and restructure historical blocs from above" (De Smet 2021, 1078). He traces back existing hegemonic practices of counter-revolution in Egypt to the time of colonial independence under Nasser.

Against the backdrop of the initial welcoming of the Armed Forces by anti-Mubarak protesters in 2011 De Smet notes: "despite the critical attitude of organized activists vis-a-vis the role of the Armed Forces, the broad masses cautiously

[4] Weber was writing about the US context, so a safe US citizen looks very different from a safe Egyptian citizen. In the Egyptian case, "unsafe citizens" are those who do not, for whatever reason, conform to the national ideal of honorableness.

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welcomed the intervention of the military" (2014, 14). He argues that this is a product of the Nasserist lineage and the historical expectation of the army by the masses, "as a national and popular force for change" (*ibid.*).

Salem (2019) provides another compelling account of the Nasserist legacy in informing the counter-revolution in Egypt. She argues that Nasserism is a "form of haunting" that "continued to act as powerful political memories that limited Egyptian politics in the decades that followed" (*ibid.*, 261). For Salem, Nasserism is a normative project that sets the parameters of what constitutes "what politics should look like" (*ibid.*, 262). Salem also argues that Nasserism significantly affected the ability of radical social forces to prevent the very neoliberal project Nasser consistently warned Egyptians about' (*ibid.*).

To this end, and writing about the "Nasserist attachment to the military state" (Allinson 2022, 124), Allinson (2019, 333) emphasizes that the Egyptian "counter-revolutionary project, derived from the immediate postcolonial period under Gamal Abdel Nasser." Nasserist politics—which according to Allinson "persisted long after Nasser's death"—constitute a uniting of "an ideology of national dignity with a corporatist view of the nation centerd around the military" (*ibid.*). As Allinson (2022, 124) has recently argued:

> Counter-revolution is built partly by portraying revolution as an external threat that could be countered only by the organic unity of an imagined past. In the case of Egypt, this political inheritance derived from the immediate post-colonial period under Gamal Abdel Nasser, the "afterlives" or "ghosts" of which continued to haunt the revolution of the early twenty-first century.

While I agree that counter-revolution mobilizes the notion that revolution is an external threat to sovereignty, I posit two main issues with the above readings. First, these accounts assume a Nasserist legacy that advances linearly across time; it suggests that Nasserism is as legible in 2011 as it was in 1956, without providing an examination of how this legacy is updated, modified, and made legible 60 years later. Second, the emphasis on hegemony and ideology implies that subjects exist prior to and outside of relations of power, and locates the production of counter-revolutionary subjectivities in social structures rather than social relations (Stoddart 2007, 204). These readings leave unproblematized the normative discursive foundation of counter-revolution, the consequent norms of conduct and subjectivities it generates, and neglect the ways in which "we take up discourse and incorporate it into our sense of self" (*ibid.*, 206). This understanding does little to help us unpack the power effects of normal/deviant discourses and their strategic integration within the context of the January Revolution.

In the next section, I argue that the political rationalities that inform the success of the counter-revolution in Egypt are best encapsulated by the notion of CRG, where, not only Nasserist legacies, but (post)colonial and neoliberal rationalities overlap to inform normal/deviant discourses around the January Revolution.

CRG

> For sure, everyone believes in democracy. But when will you do that? When the people here have the culture of democracy (Omar Sulieman quoted in ABC News 2011).

In the original French version of the essay the "Subject and Power," Foucault writes that government is the "conduct of conduct" (Foucault 1982; Dean 2010, 43). As a verb, to conduct is "to lead, to direct or to guide" (Dean 2010, 43) oneself or others, and as a noun, conduct is the way we behave and act in the world. Governmental power relations structure "the field of freedom" and the "field of possible action" (Lorenzini 2016, 8). By linking governing "and modes of thought," Foucault demonstrates that "it is not possible to study the technologies of power

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without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them," emphasizing the "close link between power relations and processes of subjectification" (Lemke 2001, 191). Central to subjectification processes is the understanding of discourse as a "historically specific body of concepts, norms, and strategies that play a crucial role in diffusing a set of organized and organizing social practices through which meaning is given to physical and social realities" (Sottimano and Selvik 2008, 7). It is through discourse that "theoretical boundaries and social rules are established surrounding history, concepts, notions, and agency" (Azeez 2014, 75–76). Governing discourses, therefore, produce and conduct "people's subjectivities and self-conceptions" (Martin and Waring 2018, 1296).

In this reading, power is not possessed by a dominant group and exercised over another. Instead, we see power as relational and discursive, where discourses are "rooted in their own unique relations of power" (Dore 2009, 745), and where these relations constitute a normative force that is the source of the transformation of individuals and their subjectification. Seen this way, then, the study of counter-revolutions "requires a stern critique of the epistemological practices of history and power-knowledge formations that produce them" (Azeez 2014, 65–66). In other words, we need to study counter-revolution, not as a hegemonic force or an ideology disseminated by the ruling elite, but as a specific form of knowledge—about the individual and the population—that normalizes governing rationalities that hide from view different ways and possibilities of being.

What does the starting quote of this section *do* as a governing discourse? What is peculiar about the above statement by ex-Vice President Omar Suleiman is not that *he* uttered it. After all, the notion that Arab cultures are incompatible with democracy, and that authoritarianism is necessary for the government of the people of Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA), is a pervasive orientalist trope recurrent in Egyptian as well as Western discourses and advanced by prominent scholars of international politics (see e.g., Huntington 1996). What interests me, however, is the question of what modes of subjectification are activated through this discourse; and what is at stake in terms of resistance and revolution?

Here, Suleiman invokes an age-old trope that Egyptians are just not there yet, and perhaps will never be, on a par with the "democratic West." These pronouncements echo orientalist and colonial tropes that represent Arab subjectivity as docile, apolitical, and incapable of self-government. The above quote is, therefore part of a larger discursive formation, which Govand Khalid Azeez (2014, 2015) calls "counter-revolutionary discourse" (CRD). According to Azeez (2015, 121), CRD is a "program of action," where the "Western colonial apparatus [. . .] homogenizes and resubjectifies the previously thingified subject's subjectivity and resistance." Azeez identifies a number of "distinct historically erected analytical tools" in the genealogy of CRD. The most pertinent for this discussion are "Recrudescence of Fanaticism, Progress Fetishism, [and the] Outsourcing of Agency" (*ibid.*). CRD advances the notion that SWANA revolutions are "Islamic, impulsive, conservative, irrational, anarchic, violent, tribal, or ethnic. At best, the revolutions are mere attempted failures at capitalist modernity and nationalism by a few hopeful Westernized or Western-supported Orientals importing foreign philosophies, ideals and concepts" (*ibid.*, 120–121).

We see two of these analytical tools in Suleiman's statement, the Recrudescence of Fanaticism and Progress Fetishism. "But when will you do that?" asks Suleiman, followed by an announcement that Egyptians have not (yet?) succeeded in conducting themselves in ways that are conducive to democracy. When Suleiman asks "but when," he is invoking a temporality that situates SWANA's subject-in-revolt at the beginning of democratic transition as opposed to the West's full maturity "where the very same aspirations [of democracy] have blossomed for a longer time" (Borg 2016, 220). This "Progress Fetishism" reveals an assumed "liberal subject who is yet to mature" (*ibid.*, 212) along Western developmental time. Moreover, by implying

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that Egyptians do not have the culture of democracy, even (and especially) when millions of Egyptians protested against authoritarianism and practiced democratic values in their revolutionary organizing (see Amar and Prashad 2013), the yet-to-become democratic Egyptian subject is immediately fixed as the "'primitive'" Arab [who] always will be tempted to irrational, *fanatical* behavior" (Borg 2016, 215, my emphasis).

Three pertinent questions arise in analysing the deployment of CRD in contemporary Egypt: (1) how does CRD, which denies the agency of SWANA's subject-in-revolt, interact with neoliberal rationalities that incite self-responsible and aspirational subjects; (2) how exactly do governing discourses produce people's subjectivities; and (3) how do discourses around normativity—around, for example, what Egyptians are ready for and what they are not—affect the potential of social mobilization?

Under neoliberalism, the regulation and management of populations involves the prioritization of market mechanisms and individual responsibility. Lemke (2001, 202) notes that neoliberalism "encourages individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form." Neoliberal governmentality shapes subjects as entrepreneurial, responsible for their own well-being, and emphasizes the centrality of the everyday dimension of governmental power in the (re)production of neoliberalism. In other words, neoliberal governmentality, by constructing and acting on the conditions of choice of individuals, produces and shapes subjects in ways that align with neoliberal global orders. More specifically, neoliberal governmentality aims to "cultivate desirable attributes of enterprise and competition" (Dean 2019, 331) and encourages modes of self-management for the cultivation of the self *as* enterprise. As such, structural inequalities are understood, not as a failure of government, but as "the failure in the enterprise of selfhood" (Sawicki 2013, 83). Neoliberal governmentality actively seeks to construct particular forms of freedom that condition the possible field of action in ways that ensure the naturalization of the market and the depoliticization of complex political issues, limiting the possibilities of imagining and producing new futures (Zembylas 2021, 4).

Egypt witnessed a shift in the immediate post-Cold War era of neoliberal globalization, which was characterized by an intensification of the internationalization of Egypt, and therefore, "internationalized social conflict" (Bisley 2004, 54). During and since that time, we see a rise in market logics in the governing of populations. Against the standard account that reads neoliberalism as a unidirectional and monolithic project, emanating from the global North and is diffused toward the so-called global South, Paul Amar (2013) illustrates that the global South is not a passive recipient of Western hegemony. Amar argues that governing in the era of neoliberalism in the global South, is not only enacted through market policies, but through moral politics (*ibid.*, 16). This way of governing consolidates and expands its "reach and authority by constructing stigmatized sexualities and gender expressions as threats to moral security and public safety" (Richter-Montpetit and Weber 2017, 232).

In parallel, we see a rise in instrumentalizing LGBTQ + rights in parts of the West as a marker of progress against *Others* that are portrayed as less tolerant and accepting of queerness and queer individuals, what Jasbir Puar calls homonationalism (2007). Yet, homonationalism does not only take hold, emerge "or is rooted in a US [or Western] context" (Liinason 2023, 88). Homonationalism is inherently transnational, since the legibility of this marker of progress requires the construction of its binary opposite. The construction of deviance in Egypt and the problematization of sexual difference in the national imaginary, is one such example of this transnational phenomenon that is homonationalism. But the January Revolution in Egypt, and the decades of resistance before it, were partly characterized by struggles against homogenization and exclusionary practices that deem some Egyptians less worthy of citizenship, for example, queer individuals (see Abdelhamid

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2020). Therefore, the January Revolution was not just a product of transformations in domestic social relations, but in fact, these relations "are *necessarily* international" (Bisley 2004, 54, emphasis in original). By reinserting multiplicity in the social imaginary, both domestically and internationally, the January Revolution disrupted these homogenizing transnational logics.

Yet, this marker of progress that homonationalism mobilizes was different under colonialism. As many scholars noted, same-sex desires in Egypt and the wider region were seen by the West as emblematic of a culture of immorality and backwardness that is yet to modernize (see e.g., Massad 2007; Jacob 2010). At the time, striving for independence from the colonizer necessitated the production of an intelligible subject. In the dominant social imaginary, Egyptians must conduct themselves (and were to be conducted) in ways approximate the "modern subject." Eventual formal independence was in part premised on adopting a "global bourgeois conception of heterosexuality and its attendant gendered subject for a national project" (Jacob 2010, 668). This is part of what David Scott theorizes as colonial governmentality (1995). Scott is most concerned with the governing of the conduct of the colonized. He argues that a form of power emerged "at a moment in colonialism's history [. . .] which was concerned above all with disabling old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable—indeed, so as to oblige—new forms of life to come into being" (*ibid.*,193, emphasis in original).

CRD has sustained the practices and institutions of colonial governmentality, particularly in relation to the ways in which the political rationalities of colonial power impacted the conduct and resistance of the colonized. Colonial governmentality fixed modernity—with all the attendant meanings of democracy and freedom that are attached to it—at Europe, and attempted to conceal the political and economic asymmetries between the colony and metropole that have been a result of extractivist practices with a "prevailing liberal discourse to effect [Europe's] own historical legibility as unique" (Jacob 2010, 667). The discourse on Europe's cultural, social, (and therefore) political, and economic exceptionalism "connoted a whole host of metaphysical and unprovable assumptions about the history, identity, experience and agency of not only Europeans but also the Other, especially the Orient" (Azeez 2014 68). Simultaneously, the possibility of an *eventual* independence and "universal emancipation into, and identity with, the modern" was kept open (Jacob 2010, 667). The potential of eventual independence was itself one of the governing mechanisms of colonization, where the colonized subject, instead of struggling toward reclaiming their old forms of life and their trajectory, had to *prove* to the colonizer that they are able and willing to get rid of their assumed fanaticism, that they are agential and modern individuals, or at least on the trajectory towards European modernity.

The promise of eventual independence was supplanted by the promise of eventual economic development in the postformal independence era. The new promise dominated the nationalist imaginary and justified and enabled authoritarian practices. More contemporarily, the promise of independence—now deployed through a pervasive anti-Western script—along with the promise of eventual economic development, spearheaded by the state, are accompanied by a promise of eventual democratization. This new promise, and under neoliberalism, mobilizes a discourse of aspiration and incites a particular type of a neoliberal aspirational citizen who is "eager to take on greater responsibility for themselves and (what they understand to be) the well-being of their communities" (Raco 2009, 436). These aspirations are largely based around middle-class values and norms that require populations to focus on changing their conduct and the conduct of others to reach their aspirational status rather than resist inequitable social structures and hierarchies. However, aspirational politics in Egypt go beyond class mobility, or the subjectification of entrepreneurial citizen-workers, or the incessant demand to look toward the future rather than concern oneself with the present. There is a parallel object of aspiration

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here, that being "honorability," understood as patriotism, docility, heteronormativity, loyalty to the regime, and nostalgia to a precolonial "authentic" past.

The figure of the honorable citizen, which emerges in 2011 in discourses around the January Revolution, is the latest iteration of a long-standing state project of suppressing internal difference by producing an "essentialized and homogenous national identity in contradistinction to the West" (Pratt 2005, 77). This figure, through creating a standard(ized) sense for evaluating certain behaviors and measuring them against a number of norms perceived to be authentic and Egyptian, enables the construction of the threat of deviance and its effectiveness as a political rationality that limits possibilities for social mobilization.

While Foucault's (and others) theorization of governmentality is based on the experience of the liberal West, it is important to note that the construction of forms of freedom under neoliberal governmentality is not necessarily at odds with authoritarianism. In fact, inherent to neoliberalism is a readiness to forgo any democratic ethos for the sake of constructing and implementing conditions of choice that are conducive to a global free market (Dean 2019). Authoritarian and illiberal politics are already embedded in neoliberal governmentality, where authoritarianism is not only "the exercise of brute coercive force," but it is also "observed in the reconfiguring of state and institutional power in an attempt to insulate certain policies and institutional practices from social and political dissent" (Bruff 2014, 115). In the context of the Egyptian counter-revolution, we can see the intersections between authoritarianism and neoliberal governmentality in the ways in which Egyptians are incited to conduct themselves in alignment with honorability. While honorability is incompatible with democracy, and in fact, it is the view of the state that Egyptians will "misuse democracy" (Abdelfattah 2012), Egyptians are nevertheless called upon to strive for active self-regulation towards certain socially useful ends. These ends are always distant aspirations that one can never arrive at, yet within them, there is a promise of *eventual* democracy, but only if Egyptians focus on changing their conduct. This form of neoliberal aspirational citizenship has no legal recourse to ensure its fulfillment, but is instead used merely to "express abstract ideals" (Cole 2013, 17) that maintain Egypt's backward positioning in international hierarchies, by ensuring the resonance and internalization of an Egyptianness that is indeed "not ready for democracy."

Scholars after Foucault have expanded the focus of governmentality to study its applicability and limitations in other contexts, i.e., in authoritarian settings. For example, working on authoritarian governmentality in Egypt, Salwa Ismail (2011, 847) argues that the underlying rationality of authoritarian government "is the necessity of governmental penetration everywhere with the implied assumption that the governed populations lack certain capacities for government of the self that is continuous with the government of the state." Ismail contends that the state's representation of Egyptians as "lacking intelligence, ignorant, etc." (*ibid.*, 852), and the constant deployment of security checkpoints for the purpose of surveilling the population, provide the grounds for the disciplinarization of society. In Ismail's analysis, there is an emphasis on disciplinary power, which operates in ways that subordinate capacities for action to the expectation of docility. Successful disciplinarization entails successful internalization of the sovereign will in the process of the self-government of individuals, whereby individuals censor and conduct themselves in ways that would not trigger the state's exercise of sovereign power.

However, I would like to take the analytic of authoritarian governmentality further. I am not only interested in how Egyptians are conducted in disciplinary sites to avoid the heavy hand of the state. Rather, I am more interested in the ways governmental power encourages an *Egyptianness* that is constantly trying to figure out *how best to be Egyptian* through the perpetual mobilization of normal/deviant binaries. These binaries result in the production of counter-revolutionary subjectivities

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who deem those who do not strive towards the same goal of "honorableness" as "unsafe citizens" (see Weber 2008).

I identify the interactions between the above governing rationalities, the discourses and figures I introduced earlier, and the normal/deviant binary distinction that animates them, as central to the shift in government in the post-Cold War era in Egypt. Counter-revolutionary discourse (CRD) informs the practices of these new governing rationalities, particularly in how Egyptians have internalized the general mistrust in their capacity for self-government; however, CRD is part of a wider ensemble of mechanisms for governing conduct. I call this wider ensemble CRG. CRG has shaped the way Egyptians act by introducing new conditions for enabling and disabling conduct through the encouragement and regulation of how best to be Egyptian, as well as the delineation of how not to be Egyptian. CRG is a rationality of government that aims at the *forsaking of multiplicity* in order to form counter-revolutionary subjects, "honorable" citizens. By mobilizing normal/deviant binaries, CRG attempts to close off the field of possibilities for collective action across difference, through (1) the mobilization of "honorableness" as the trajectory towards the conduct of ideal Egyptianness, and (2) the mobilization of "deviance" to incite acting upon the self, but more importantly, acting upon others who deviate from this trajectory, either to bring them back onto the right path, or to enforce and justify their excision. The forsaking of multiplicity occurs through the repetitive performance of what society *should* and *should not* be.

The figure of the honorable citizen promotes the singularity and supremacy of the "true" honorable Egyptian citizen and mobilizes the normative discourse of citizenship "that presupposes universality, and therefore exacerbates and negates difference" (Brandzel 2016, 176). Figures of deviance on the other hand, which advance the notion that revolutionary protesters are unpatriotic Westernized homosexuals, reinforce differential policies toward citizens, where "segments of the population are differently linked to global circuits of production, competitiveness, and exchange" (Ong 2005, 97). In other words, they discredit the January Revolution by associating it with the hegemonic order.

In the next section, I discuss my methodological engagement with the concept of figuration.

Conducting the Counter-revolutionary Subject

In this section, I argue that figures facilitate the ways in which governing discourses construct and conduct subjectivities. Examining the genealogy of a figure such as the honorable citizen, illuminates how counter-revolution acts as a governing rationality that subjectifies and works through reinstating, amplifying, and restabilizing a regime of knowledge that so readily binarizes West/East, and deviant/normal, and therefore, succeeds in foreclosing possibilities for collective solidarity.

Before I expand on the notion of figuration, perhaps it is apt to briefly note what I mean by solidarity. By solidarity I mean the coming together of action, while acknowledging contradictions among individuals, a solidarity that takes "action with those contradictions intact" (Butler 1990, 20), challenging the fundamental premise of CRG that emphasizes unity and homogeneity as the basis for legitimate political action. In other words, challenging CRG means creating and cementing "relational identities, meanings that did not precede the encounter, ways of life that transcend nationalisms, root identities, and other simplifications of our imaginations" (Lugones 2006, 84). Solidarity also means working toward "*a deep coalition* of mutually transformative subjectivities, rather than a coalition resulting from negotiating intersecting interests that leaves the participating subjectivities intact" (Medina 2020, 215, emphasis in original).

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The circulation of figures of normalcy and deviance is an important mode of subjectification that "infringe[s] upon the likelihood of protest by creating subjects trained to attribute the causes of problems to the individual" and their conduct (Baumgarten and Ullrich 2012, 10). Following Weber (2016) and Haraway (1997), I am using figuration to delineate the process by which state and societal discourses and processes figure normativity and deviance. Figurations are "performative images that can be inhabited" (Haraway 1997, 11), they emerge out of "discursive and material semiotic assemblages that condense diffuse imaginaries about the world into specific forms or images that bring specific worlds into being" (Weber 2016, 29). I am tracing figurations of deviance and normalcy through the honorable citizen as they are articulated in contemporary Egyptian discourse. These figurations act as ordering devices that serve a counter-revolutionary agenda and displace resistances.

Ordering devices produce shared meanings and values that connect the personal and the subjective to the dynamics of revolution and counter-revolution. These ordering devices are operationalized through "tropes, temporalities, performativities, and worldings" (Leigh and Weber 2018, 84). For example, tropes that figure the male homosexual or the antiregime protester as a Western product imagine "authentic" Egyptianness to be grounded in hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality. This gendered and sexualized understanding of Egyptian "sovereign man" (Ashley 1989) and sovereignty is embodied in the figure of the honorable citizen, the ideal Egyptian to aspire to. The honorable citizen is in fact temporally situated in the past and imbued with tropes of "backwardness" and unreadiness for self-government, i.e., democracy. Here, CRD's analytical tool of "Outsourcing Agency" (Azeez 2015) is central to the tropes that figure (sexual) difference and resistance as foreign, e.g., "foreign funded."

The desire to be "a culturally intelligible" and "viable subject" (Butler 2011 [1993]), is encouraged by the ongoing purchase of CRD and its totalizing tendency to figure Egyptianness as monolithic. Becoming a culturally intelligible viable subject is a legacy of the citation of norms, whereby "the subject produces its coherence at the cost of its own complexity" (*ibid.*, 77), and in the process, forsaking not only its own multiplicity, but the multiplicity of Egyptian identities. This culturally legible subject *performs* belonging to Egypt through the repetition of acts, behaviors, and rituals, what Butler (1990) refers to as performativity. Aspiring to embody the "honorable citizen" encourages the repetition of acts and behaviors and the performance of Egyptian citizenship in accordance with certain societal norms and expectations. For example, Egyptian citizens enable the regulation of citizenship towards honorableness through their repeated performance of "anti-queer animus" (Thoreson 2014), and their participation in counter-revolutionary protests.

What the above tropes, temporalities, and performativities project when combined, is a worlding whereby Egyptian sovereignty is reproduced for, and by the honorable citizen, a figure who is made to appear as natural and fixed. Worlding refers to "the ways we imagine and try to represent the world through the figurations we have conjured up" (Leigh and Weber 2018, 85). In the following section, I reflect on some of the ways in which Egyptianness has been figured in the past and how they relate to the contemporary moment.

Antecedents

> They shout because there are men shouting, revolt because there is a revolt, without having the vaguest idea of the cause of shouting or revolution (Le Bon in Azeez 2015, 248).

> If I resign today, there will be chaos (Mubarak in Wright and Awad 2011).

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In Mubarak's above statement, Egyptians are told they must accept the status quo or else chaos will ensue. Chaos is a reference to an "inept" alternative, namely the Muslim Brotherhood—conventionally viewed as the only organized opposition to the Mubarak regime, yet popularly regarded with suspicion—whose opposition to the regime is couched in orientalist discourses around their "terror, destruction and fanaticism" (Azeez 2015, 123). More importantly, however, chaos here is strongly predicated on the perceived *inability* of Egyptians to govern themselves. These orientalist figurations are exactly what informed Le Bon's declaration in the late 1800s that revolution in the SWANA region is irrational, and it is the same figurations that informed the Foreign Office of the British Empire in 1919 that the "leading spirits" of the 1919 Egyptian Revolution are foreigners (in *ibid.*, 128).

The 1919 Revolution and the resultant 1923 Constitution produced the earliest nationalist discourse on citizenship and instigated a series of contestations around identity. A central dynamic during this period was the negotiation of who "was "authentic" and who could claim a stake in the nation by fighting the British colonizers" (Ibrahim 2015, 2589). However, despite the broader context in which this resistance had been enacted, i.e., against British colonialism, Egyptian citizenship was still largely being defined within and through colonial rationalities. Colonial discourses aimed at reconstituting the colonized subject directed resistive capacities toward expelling the colonizer by proving that Egypt is capable of self-government. Within this affirmation of Egyptian autonomy, there is an underlying privileging of hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge frameworks around modernity and progress.

For example, once in power in the 1920s, Egypt's nationalist liberal political party al-Wafd, sought to convince the British that "Egypt was capable and deserving of full independence and national sovereignty" (Naguib 2020, 22), which was predicated upon the state's ability to regulate its subjects and move them along *Western time* toward modernity. The figure of the modern Egyptian subject was officially consolidated in Egypt's Nationality Law of 1929 and provided a "legal answer to the question of who was an Egyptian" (Shamir 1987). The most prominent characteristic of this law is its commitment to principles of ethnicity in defining nationality and its concern with parentage. This ethnic identification of citizenship—which has had a pronounced impact on the formation of Egypt's contemporary "sovereign man"—was in large part a result of the ideological–ethnic deportation of "foreign" Ottoman subjects under colonialism (Naguib 2020).

As Rim Naguib shows, many Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and others migrated to Egypt under the Ottoman Empire and were keen on working with indigenous workers against capitalist and imperialist encroachments. In the 1920s, and against the backdrop of the Bolshevik Revolution, the British carried out and encouraged the deportation of "non-Egyptian" Ottoman subjects in an attempt to remove "socialists and internationalists" from Egypt (Naguib 2020, 7). The deportations of these "foreign" subjects were not only instituted as a colonial imperative but were also couched in the "façade of Egyptian sovereignty" (*ibid.*, 8). Indeed, Egyptian "press and nationalist government associate[d] leftist ideologies with foreigners, depicting them as threats to the social order and national sovereignty" (*ibid.*, 22). Al-Wafd Party, once in government, "embarked on reappropriating British fears of "Bolshevism" [. . .] by deeming freedom of expression and association, socialism, and syndicalism essentially unsuitable for Egypt and Egyptians" (*ibid.*).

The Wafdist government hoped to align Egypt's attitude toward Bolshevism with Britain's in order to demonstrate Egypt's readiness to transition to modernity and independence. Foreignness was depicted as a threat to the sovereignty and the unity of the nation. In a process of "forced homogenization of national identities" the wider SWANA region, and Egypt specifically, witnessed the expulsion and ostracization of "radical militants of foreign origins [. . .] for the reason that they were not "true" nationals" (Challand 2013, 5). The anticolonial revolution of 1919 amplified and transformed nationalism into a collective and homogenized Egyptian identity

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(Gershoni 2019), which in turn Otherized and demonized all forms of collective action but one: mobilizing against British occupation. Bolshevism, socialism, and anarchism were framed and attacked in the Egyptian semicolony by the British colonizer and these attacks were later "integrated into the laws and practices of the Egyptian postcolonial state" (Naguib 2020, 8).

National unity and ethnic homogeneity narratives have confined and displaced the political expression of other identities, other ways of belonging to the nation, and other resistances. For the national government, Egyptian resistance should only be targeted against British occupation, and for both British colonialists and the Egyptian elite, the "Egyptian mentality" was incompatible with resisting internal forms of exploitation. Wafdist leaders went as far as attacking "communists as foreign troublemakers misleading patriotic Egyptian workers" for their own agendas (Naguib 2020, 27). Social and cultural transformations in 1920s Egypt targeted the construction of modern Egyptian subjects who will eventually be ready for independence, and part of this has been the normalization of "heterosexuality as key to Egyptian modernity" (Jacob 2010, 666). The salience of the nuclear family in consolidating the notions of modernity and tradition lies in the regulation of the "youth" as the yet-to-become-subject, the "sovereign man's" ontological young self.

The figure of the "youth" was problematized in the 1930s and intimately linked to "raw" sexuality. This figure caused considerable anxiety in Egypt and was mobilized in a range of ways, most prominently, in the emergence of adolescent psychology in interwar Egypt, where "[t]he fear of youth as unbridled political and sexual subjects foreshadowed the emergence of a discourse of adolescent psychology" (El Shakry 2011, 592). Within this discourse and the new socio-political reality of the time, youth were constructed as future bearers of Egyptian patriotism and Arab nationalism. Youth were depicted as *apolitical* subjects to be moulded to reflect national priorities. They were figured both as a "promise and peril" (*ibid.*), to be examined and regulated, but more importantly, to be depoliticized and unified to reproduce normative citizenship and to be properly assimilated "through the production of normative gendered, heterosexual, and ethical subjects" (*ibid.*).

In parallel, there was a growing presence of demographic theories, which "marked a shift from a focus on the transformation of large social structures to the transformation of individual behaviors and the medical management of individual bodies" (Bier 2010, 409). It is with the rise in these two paradigms that normative citizenship started attaching itself to heterosexuality, and to youth as the bearers of the future of the nation/people, a biopolitical asset to *reproduce* the nation. The identity of the young heterosexual ethnic Egyptian yet-to-become-citizen-subject, even though it has been imbued with anticolonial sentiment, was still very much a product of and a response to colonial governmentality. Colonialism particularly constructed gendered and sexualized figures of perversion in order to define the normative subjects of empire and to justify intervention and exploitation.

In the next and final section, I demonstrate how the above figurations of normativity have been modified and mobilized against the backdrop of the January Revolution.

How Best to Be Egyptian?

> An "honourable citizen" is [...] generally obedient to authority, defend[s] all government decisions, and have ready justifications for government violations [...] An honourable citizen does not only practice imposed social norms but also ensures others' adherence to those norms (Awad 2021, 159).

> The homosexuals appeared in Egypt for the first time in 2001 and stirred public controversy after security forces arrested 52 homosexuals on charges of practising debauchery (Al-Masry Al-Youm 2017).

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The separation between Egyptians and the "perverted" West, and between Egyptians and democracy became one of the main threads of revolution and counter-revolution. The regime labeled freedoms and *certain kinds* of rights as threats from the "West" to Egyptian sovereignty. Government accusations that protesters were homosexuals and were paid in "US dollars and KFC meals" (Kirkpatrick 2012), aligned protesters with Western behaviors, attitudes, and materialist desires. This attempt to stabilize an essence to Egyptianness in line with honorability is a fundamental premise of CRG, which as discussed before, emphasizes unity and homogeneity as the basis for legitimate political subjectivity and political action. Moreover, it is an attempt that is a direct response to the January Revolution's assertion of autonomous and plural subjectivities. The perpetual mobilization of an undeliverable honorability, and therefore, an undeliverable democracy, shows that the premise of government in Egypt rests on the precarious balance between on the one hand, the construction of vigilant and aspirational moral citizens whose unreadiness for democracy means that they might themselves be duped at any time. On the other hand, the continuous emergence of failed citizens who obstruct the aspirational trajectory towards honorableness is necessary for governing more and more through normativity. This produces a dangerous "political consensus that excludes the possibility of fluidity and heterogeneity" (Pratt 2005, 70).

This is clear in the moral panic around the arrest of 52 allegedly gay men in 2001. In May of that year, the State Security Police and the Vice Squad raided the Queen Boat, a "gay discotheque," moored in the Nile. All arrested were charged with practicing "habitual debauchery," a loose term that allows for the prosecution of homosexuality. In the final part of the Queen Boat verdict, the judge presiding over the case wrote:

> … the Court wants to renew the appeal that Lot, Prophet of God, the peace being upon him, made to his people, in order to prevent them doing forbidden things […] immoral sexual acts […] reprehensible […] and bad acts […]. But, as long as they continued in their deviance, arrogance, perversion and ingratitude to God, He punished them in a way they didn't expect, among all the punishments they couldn't defend themselves from, and made them a bad example between his creatures, an example that *rational* people should avoid (Tolino 2014, 55, my emphasis).

Implicit in this passage is the idea that homosexuality itself can be forgiven after repentance; what is not acceptable, however, is the failure and refusal to be brought "back to the right path" (Tolino 2014, 55). The right path is achieved through pinning people into place, that being honorable Egyptianness, not allowing them to move outside of that trajectory of honorableness. This is why the "male homosexual," who refuses this trajectory all together—effectively obstructing honorableness—is pinned down in another space, one that is Western and perverse.

In this way, homosexuality becomes problematized both within and beyond the state and defined as a problem of government. Once called upon in the nationalist imaginary, the "male homosexual" invokes the regulatory structure of heterosexuality in appropriating the political and cultural experience of the normative Egyptian citizen. Now that homosexuality is a problem of government(ality), and not merely of the state, and against the backdrop of the Queen Boat, the figure of the male homosexual becomes a national security threat (Pratt 2007) for *all* honorable Egyptians to act upon and "'perform' a discourse of national security through which national sovereignty was (re)produced" (*ibid.*, 129). Most effective in this problematization of homosexuality is the constant invocation of the nuclear family and the deployment of a patricentric discourse, which has long characterized Mubarak's regime (Sawaf 2013).

For example, in his third and final speech as President of the Republic of Egypt, Mubarak addressed his "sons and daughters" on television, in which he assured them that he never has and never will listen to "foreign dictations whatever may

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be the source or pretext" and that "We, the Egyptians, will prove we could achieve the Egyptian people's demands through a civilized dialogue and consent. . .we will prove that we are not followers of any one and that we do not take instructions from anyone" (Mubarak 2011). Mubarak was keen to emphasize Egypt's "unique and *eternal* identity," and to speak in relatable terms to the "youth of Tahrir": "I was a young man like today's Egyptian youth when I learned the Egyptian military ethics, loyalty to the homeland and how to sacrifice for it." Mubarak's invocation of the family metaphor does not only serve a disciplinary function where Mubarak is figured as a father providing guidance and direction to his children, it is also a way of calling upon the family to reabsorb its "sons and daughters" from the different squares. A move that incites the "head of the family" to conduct *himself* to be the honorable citizen and the governor of the family, reflecting the plurality of forms of government (see Foucault 2007).

The speech also targeted the family and made it discursively visible into an agent "for conveying the norms of the state into the private sphere" (Donzelot 1979, 58). Moreover, in this speech, the family was not just a target of "responsibilization" for the actions of the "youth," but it was also a target of the January Revolution itself, the family is under threat *because of* the January Revolution as protesters were accused of being disrespectful to their "father" [read president], for not enacting a particular politics of respectability that emphasizes respect for the elderly and for "blood" ties, and of being homosexual. Sawaf (2013, 2) points to "the kind of division of responsibility and interdependence prevalent among families in contemporary Egypt," which underscores discourse that figure youth monolithically. She emphasizes the centrality of notions of relatedness and continuity to the reproduction of the family/nation project particularly the non-Western self in contrast to "the 'Western individual'" (*ibid.*). The non-Western self is actualized "only by way of others and constituted through relationships with others, past and present, living and dead" (Holy 1996, 159).

The continued use of this figuration of the nation as a family does two important things, (1) it establishes an affective and biopolitical relationship among all Egyptians that renders subjective differences minimal and makes it easier to figure "Egyptianness" monolithically; and (2) it legitimizes the "right" of privileged classes, institutions, and individuals to lead/take control of the *feminized* nation and its people, the same way parents are seen to have a legitimate right to raise their children. Thus, we see a continuation of the interactions between colonial and neoliberal governmentalities reproduced most prominently in the figure of the young protester of January 2011. In state and media discourses about the January Revolution, there has been a clear distinction between "legitimate" resistance, carried out, for example, by the "pure youth of Tahrir," and "illegitimate" resistance carried out by "foreign and subversive elements" (SCAF in Abdelfattah 2012). Separating the two are clear binaries between on the one hand, the authentic conduct, attitudes, and demands of Egyptian subjects, and the inauthentic behaviors, beliefs, and agendas of traitors and spies. SCAF celebrated the "pure youth of Tahrir and the great Egyptian people and their revolution" but cautioned against "civilians who misuse democracy" (*ibid.*). In doing so, SCAF mobilized "purity" as an attribute of the "youth" who led the "great Egyptian people," where purity stands for innocence, morality, and unworldliness. Combining purity with "youth," SCAF's messages signaled a distrust in the "pure youth's" ability to identify and capture those civilians who "misuse" democracy. Coupled with earlier statements about Egyptians' unpreparedness for democracy, SCAF's narratives were indicative of a closing off of revolution. These discourses were followed by (mostly) violent antirevolutionary demonstrations by "honorable citizens," or were simply sufficient to reverberate across Egypt and demobilize most of the support and solidarity that characterized the early revolutionary period. To this day, President Sisi and others frequently blame the "chaos"

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of the January Revolution, instigated by youth, for derailing the economy and undermining Egyptian sovereignty (see Hamzawy 2017).

At the same time as Egyptians, and youth in particular, are figured as lacking, easy to mislead, docile, and responsible for "revolutionary chaos," they are also called upon to take initiative and become entrepreneurial. In a 2017 interview, Sisi emphasized that "entrepreneurship is the key to the future. We need young people to be creative and to think outside the box. We need them to be innovators and problem-solvers. That is how we will build a better Egypt" (Al-Galy 2017). Sisi also stressed the need to encourage youth "to take risks and to be bold" (*ibid.*). This use of "global discourses of active entrepreneurship" puts the responsibility for building "a better Egypt" on the inventiveness and labor of youth, regardless of structural barriers, and acts to "legitimize intensifying neoliberal reforms to mask the failures in the functioning of key institutions of the state" (Sobhy 2015, 806).

These contradictory figurations demonstrate the operations of CRG. On the one hand, we see colonial political rationalities at play in constructing Egyptian subjectivity as lacking and lagging behind in Western time, *aspiring* to catch up, but never arriving due to the obstruction of this trajectory by deviant Others, and due to the failure of Egyptians to conduct themselves honorably. On the other hand, we witness neoliberal governmentality producing an Egyptianness that is self-responsible, aspirational, and entrepreneurial. These contradictions are part of a (neo)liberal, "post-imperial globalization of citizenship" (Hindess 2002, 139), which is "predicated on a view of the subject population as considerably less civilized than their rulers" (*ibid.*, 137). A fundamental aspect of neoliberalism is that "market interaction itself may function as a means of improving the character of less civilized peoples" (*ibid.*, 135), reinforcing the prevailing counter-revolutionary logics that individualize collective action and legitimate the mythical promise of an eventual democracy premised on individual, honorable conduct.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the discursive construction of the Egyptian January Revolution as a threat to Egypt's sovereignty and national security is an important factor in the success of the counter-revolution in Egypt. This is because the discourses of *an Egypt under threat* have constructed counter-revolutionary subjectivities who have *resisted* revolution owing to their understanding of it as a disruptive Western imposition on an otherwise harmonious and sovereign national space. Discourses that attach deviance to the January Revolution invoke and sustain a long-standing anti-Western script in Egyptian political and moral life, and has enabled the characterization of antiregime protesters as Westernized dupes, or worse yet, collaborators. This script has reduced, and at times denied, the originality of the January Revolution by circumscribing its demands, conduct, and attitudes to the desire to be Westernized. Within this script, deviance, figured through the "male homosexual," is read as a sexualized threat to national security and Egyptian sovereignty, and has served as an interpretive counter-revolutionary framework that encourages the population to fear and distrust the new practices, ideas, and realities of the January Revolution.

Moreover, I have argued that the mobilization of the "honorable citizen" in the discourses of the January Revolution has acted to fix and stabilize an *authentic* and *eternal* Egyptian subjectivity, that which is loyal to the regime, vigilant against external forces, and heteronormative. The honorable citizen is, therefore the fulcrum of normative regulation, and is central to our understanding of how Egyptians might be internalizing, embodying, and acting on *how best to be Egyptian*. Figures of deviance and normalcy emerge as part of what I have called *CRG*, which through the interactions of neoliberal and colonial governmentalities, naturalizes the conception of the population as homogenous and externalizes deviations as a threat in ways that severely limit acceptable forms of resistance.

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In a way, this article tells an unconventional story about counter-revolution and International Relations, because it takes place in Egypt, a part of the world that is not usually perceived as an originator of stories about international relations, and because it takes seriously the often taken-for-granted sexualized hierarchies that maintain and privilege Western modes of socioeconomic and political organization. But I also want to note that by showing how colonial logics are updated, modified, and reproduced in the postcolonial neoliberal Egyptian state, that the "responsibility of ongoing oppressions must be appropriated between colonial and postcolonial regimes" (Rao 2020, 9). This article also challenges the view that "authoritarian states [are] laboratories for the perverse machinations of gender, sexual, and racial regulation and repression" (Puar 2022, 3). Authoritarian states are not mere laboratories where the West tests out their illiberal politics; they are not passive subjects in a Western experiment. Rather, authoritarian states have their own historical, cultural, and political contexts that shape their governing rationalities, and should be seen as *active* players that influence the trajectory of global politics, even within the borders of the West.

Finally, one of the implications of this article is that Egyptians have always been active subjects of their own destiny, and not mere passive victims of Western hegemony or state violence. This reading risks making Egyptians the authors of their own domination (see Scott 1995). However, the constructions of "Egypt" and "Egyptianness" are not foreclosed categories, and in fact, they are constantly being subverted and contested. This is why there is a need for a substantial engagement with ongoing resistances that disrupt and challenge figurations of normalcy and deviance, which is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this paper.

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Abdelhamid, Amira (2024) How Best to Be Egyptian? The "Honorable Citizen" and the Making of the Counter-revolutionary Subject. *International Political Sociology*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olae014

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