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Rituals of World Politics: On (Visual) Practices Disordering Things
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Abstract:	Rituals are customarily muted into predictable and boring routines aimed to stabilise social orders and limit conflict. As a result, their magic lure recedes into the background, and the unexpected, disruptive and disordered elements are downplayed. Our collaborative contribution counters this move by foregrounding rituals of world politics as social practices with notable disordering effects. The collective discussion recovers the disruptive work of a range of rituals designed to sustain the sovereign exercise of violence and war. We do so through engaging a series of 'world pictures' (Mitchell 2007). We show the worlding enacted in rituals such as colonial treaty-making, state commemoration, military/service dog training, cyber-security podcasts, algorithmically generated maps, the visit of Prince Harry to a joint NATO exercise and border ceremonies in India, respectively. We do so highlighting rituals' immanent potential for disruption of existing orders, the fissures, failures and unforeseen repercussions. Reappraising the disordering role of ritual practices sheds light on the place of rituals in rearticulating the boundaries of the political. It emphasises the role of rituals in generating dissensus and re-divisions of the sensible rather than in imposing a consensus by policing the boundaries of the political, as Rancière might phrase it. Our images are essential to the account. They help disinterring the fundamentals and ambiguities of the current worldings of security, capturing the affective atmosphere of rituals.

Picture 1 Copy of the treaty (*Traité*) between Alexandre Delcommune (representing *l'Association Internationale du Congo*) and King Né-Do'ucoula, 19 April 1884

Picture 2: Fogo Cruzado interface, August 2019.

Source: Fogo Cruzado.

Reposed behind this wall are the remains
of many who perished at the
World Trade Center site on September 11, 2001

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Introduction

Tanja Aalberts, Xymena Kurowska, Anna Leander, Maria Mälksoo

What do we witness in military parades and inspection of troops, state banquets with their exquisite invitation protocols and seating arrangements, annual addresses at the General Assembly, imperial durbars, welcoming home the soldiers lost at war and other commemoration ceremonies, or theatrical performances of international adjudication at the Peace Palace in the Hague, security trade fairs or the yearly Davos Summit? We see ritual in action. Core institutions of international society like diplomacy, international law, colonialism, war and economic governance are replete with rituals (Bentley 2015; Cohen 1978; Faizullaev 2013; Lee 2013; Pacher 2018; Smith 1991; Svensson 2018) - solemn and hyper visible ceremonies consisting of a series of actions performed according to a script and formalised procedure. But apart from such public and grandiose performances, rituals and ritualised activities (Bell 2009 [1992]) also pervade a range of more mundane world political practices, including handshakes to confirm alliances or agreements, border crossings, peacekeeping, universal periodical reviews of human rights, treaty-making, processing trauma and reconciliation, and torture (Amoore and Hall 2012; Debrix 2003; Dobson 2019; Charlesworth and Larking 2015; Fierke 2002; Riles 2008).

The focus of this collaborative venture is on the 'everyday' rituals in (dis)ordering various aspects of world security through their performative power. There are three 'legs' to our project. The first one concerns the role of rituals as a specific kind of practice in/of world politics. Following Alexander (2006, 528-9), we understand rituals as distinct performative practice where magic lure and affect are crucial. Crossing the boundary between the sacred and the profane, and bringing together the material and the mystical, the visible and the transcendental (Seligman and Weller 2012; Aalberts and Stolk 2020), rituals are more than

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routines and/or 'competent performances' (Adler and Pouliot 2011). They are practices energising participants and attaching them to each other.

Building on practice theory, a ritual lens focuses on a specific form of practice: a formal, recurring, situated event mobilizing the magical, sacred, taboo, aesthetic and affective. Rituals' dual dynamic of materialisation and sacralisation is evocatively captured by Durkheim's classical example of a flag as 'only a piece of cloth' but one a soldier will die for (Durkheim 1974, 87). Rituals '*re-fuse*' society (Alexander 2004:529). They 'enable expressive cooperation in religion, in the workplace, in politics and in community life' (Sennett 2012, 17). But rituals are not only productive in the positive or constructive sense. With Kertzer (1988), we also underline the significance of rituals in re-ordering or indeed dis-ordering society. Traditionally reduced to predictable and tedious repetitions aimed to stabilise social orders and limit conflict, the disruptive potential of ritualised practices remains understudied and poorly understood. We argue that a focus on rituals and ritualisation is a helpful perspective on practices and dynamics of world political (dis)ordering. This is the second 'leg' of this collective contribution: it explores the *dis*ordering work of rituals designed to stabilise the sovereign exercise of violence and war to improve our understanding of the performative effects of rituals in governing (in)security. We do so by unpacking the disruptive potential of ritual practices and thus directing attention to the scope for innovation, creativity and political change by engaging the images of various security rituals. This focus on the visual as an important part of ritual practices, and as a 'method' to analyse and make sense of the rituals we discuss, is the third 'leg' of this collective contribution.

1. *The Political Work of Rituals*

Since the post-Cold War cultural turn (Lapid and Kratochwil 1996), the social construction of reality through symbols, myths and metaphors has established itself as a key perspective to

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understand the dynamics of world political ordering (cf. Linklater 2019). Over the past decades this research agenda in its different constructivist and post-structuralist variants began by focussing first and foremost on the symbolic in the form of signs, texts, speech acts and discourse. Whereas this 'linguistic turn' has been a crucial intervention into contemporary IR theory, it bracketed out or toned down the significance of other kinds of (symbolic) action beyond the linguistic. In particular material, embodied, affective sense making practices were given a short hand (Enloe 1990; Leander 2011; Bleiker and Hutchison 2014; Austin 2019). Such practices are at play in the processes of signification and are crucial for the study of social action generally, and global politics as a lived practice in particular. This ushered in a call for a turn to practices early on (Neumann 2002). Symbols, myths and other social constructions are not 'just there' as a matter of speech, they also need to be created, enacted, and given material form (Alexander 2008; see also Zaiotti 2011).[1]

Rituals as a special kind of practice have an important role to play. They serve as a hinge of making the fictions of the world tangible, conceivable, relatable, empirically and materially available. Before a state can be known and recognised through its buildings, bureaucracies, and borders, it needs to be performed and celebrated (cf. Zizek 1993, 201). As Walzer (1967, 194) avers, 'The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolised before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived'.

Rituals organise and load the world symbolically, creating affective entanglements which shape the emergence and reproduction of power, authority and subjectivities and constitute our way of relating to the world and each other. Just as they used to be a way to establish the bond between God and his constituency (Durkheim 2008 [1964]), political rituals are a way of 'founding' or 'anchoring' – i.e. providing a basis for and 'making real'

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[1] Sometimes discourse itself can become a ritualised chorus, as Oren and Solomon (2015) argue with regard to WMD.

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and tangible – the 'necessary fictions' (like sovereignty, international community, nations, alliances) of world order that has lost its sacred and secure transcendental foundation. As ritual theorist Catherine Bell (2009 [1992]) argues, through ritualised ways of acting, 'authority, self, and society' are negotiated. In this sense, rituals can be seen as both a source of authority and a coping mechanism to overcome anxiety about its baselessness. Rituals offer a delimited space in which to work through experiences of ambiguity and sometimes resolve that ambiguity – albeit always provisionally (Seligman and Weller 2012).

This latter qualification is a crucial one. Most ritual literature focuses on rituals' 'positive' role in constructing, ordering and stabilizing community (Durkheim 2008 [1964]; Goffman 1967, Sennett 2012), as a conservation and reaffirmation of existing orders. However, as any performance, (international political) order is always in production and in the process of becoming, and hence always prone to being performed differently and being disrupted as well as disruptive (Lukes 1975; Pfaff and Yang 2001). This relates to the second 'leg' of this collective discussion. While recognising repetition as a crucial element of ritual and ritual-like practices, we argue this does not necessarily lead to stabilisation and order. Indeed, this collective article forefronts the fissures, failures and unforeseen role of rituals; it focuses on rituals as disordering practices. To be specific, our focus is not on failing rituals or ritualised practices that are not mimicked or performed well, that are themselves disrupted (cf. McClymond 2016), but rather on how rituals themselves, through their recursivity, can be disruptive of the order they supposedly help to constitute.

2. *Disrupting Rituals*

The potential for disruption is core to ritual practices. As emphasised above, rituals engage the sacred, embodied and affective. They work 'by people acting together, not by people thinking together' (Kertzer 1988, 76). As will be shown below, they further are hypervisible and beyond the full range of the bodied senses. Rituals are associated with masks, costumes,

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adrums, dancing, drinks, food and beyond. The visual and embodied practices beyond language necessarily and inescapably increase the 'interpretative indeterminacy' of ritual practices that Steven Lukes (1975, 297-300) put much emphasis on. Precisely this indeterminacy has been at the core of the success of the idea of rituals as an 'answer to the political question of order in general and international order in particular' (Mallard 2019, 5). The influence of rituals of gift exchange (as theorised by Mauss 2002 [1925]) in international politics hinges on their ability to generate and regulate obligations across diverse systems of value and meaning. However, as Mallard also shows, the interpretative indeterminacy that makes this form of order possible, also holds the potential for disruption and disorder. Interpretative indeterminacy equally risks to engender conflict and discord rather than a sense of obligation and rule.[2] The disruptive and the ordering potential of the ritual concept are in dynamic tension and hence intimately connected as the reverse sides of the same coin.

The potential for disruption related to this indeterminacy is explicitly emphasised in various influential conceptualisations of ritual practices. Even the rituals most ostensibly designating practices intended to stabilise, integrate and aggregate social orders, in a primarily conservative, preserving fashion, encompass a space for disruption. Turner's account of rites of passage is a case in point. It comprises a 'liminal stage' during which rules, taboos and hierarchies are exposed, broken, renegotiated, played and experimented with (Turner 1977, 52). As the ritual ensures order transiting from one generation to the next, it simultaneously opens it to contestation and potentially disruption. Moreover, some categories of rituals have disruption as their kernel. Take, for instance, rituals of opposition or revolution, such as those of the women at the Plaza del Mayo in Buenos Aires or of the French revolutionaries gathering at the Bastille (Chaffee 1993, Kertzer 1988, chapter 8). Another example are the

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[2] The 'Shock of Decolonization' the French experience as the Algerian refuse the assumptions about order underlines the point (Mallard 2019).

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tournament rituals in which social hierarchies and values are re-defined and communities re-formed (Appadurai 1988, 21-2; Anand and Watson 2004, also Leander below). Examples of this are trade fairs in which contemporary cultural and political hierarchies are negotiated (Moeran 2010; Leander 2020). Rai captures the omnipresent potential for disruption in rituals and its implications as follows:

> The reflection of power in ceremony and ritual, while seemingly constant over time, is constantly shifting – like disturbances in a pond, ripples of disorder roll out through the performance of these... As the traces of power in the performance of ceremony and ritual become discernible … disruption becomes a possibility. Such disruption by its very nature is not predictable and takes different forms, which can be highly creative and carry within it the potential of opening up new political spaces, vocabularies and discourses which challenge the dominant modes of power (Rai 2010, 292).

In Rai's account the 'ripples of disorder' are 'quickly contained, reverting the pond to its fragile stillness' and presumably closing down the 'potential of opening new political spaces, vocabularies and discourses'. While this may be so in the parliamentary rituals she focuses on, in our examples below the return to a fragile stillness does not happen. On the contrary, the ripples of disorder in all our cases generate more lasting disruptions and hence potential for political openings.

In post-traditional contexts marked by an accelerating de-fusion associated with social differentiation, diffusion of authority, rituals (or ritual-like performances) not only remain but arguably become *more* significant. They are core to the incessant process of drawing and re-drawing the boundaries of the political and the hierarchies within it. They generate and stabilise but also trouble and unsettle through multiple, non-linear, and contradictory intersectional relations of people, protocols, and policies in world politics. We tap into the distinct disruptions created by a variety of security rituals through a range of images and the accompanying 'caption texts' by our multi-author collective.

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3. Imag(in)ing Rituals

Image, and visuality more generally,[3] perform a particular role with regard to rituals as dynamics of world political (dis)ordering. Images are integral to ritual practices. They are mobilised to produce meaning for them in conjunction with language. More than this, images are central features of rituals because of their aesthetic and haptic qualities. Many rituals involve a re-imaging of the participants for example through masks, body-paint, or costumes. Analogously, rituals involve specific images of the where and when of the ritual. By connecting through sensemaking rather than through language these images and re-imaginations are crucial for the sacred, mystical, atmospheric characteristic of rituals. The politics of rituals is one connected not only to discourses — let alone public sphere reasoning — but to the redistribution of the sensible, to echo Rancière's overused and abused phrase (Rancière 2000). It is a politics of resonance rather than of reason.

Image and ritual share, as a consequence, affect and performativity as a core means of communication and subjectification, which collapses the division between the thinking and acting subject (Bell 2009 [1992]): both draw the body into affective rhythms of social action in metaphorical and non-verbal ways (Solomon 2019). Repetitious invocations of words or rhythmic uses of the body in ritual, similar to the haptic grip of image, operate performatively. Rituals and images generate pathways to knowing that exceed familiar modes of action by bringing together seeing, acting, and being affected.

Methodologically, we use this affinity between image and ritual to make better sense of the latter. As images are integral to rituals and their politics, we make them core to our accounts. The images below are therefore not mere 'illustrations' that provide a bit of liveliness to (possibly otherwise dull) texts. Rather, they capture something central about rituals *and* they are part of our rendering of them. Even more strongly, this article reverses the

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[3] For the role of the visual as part of the aesthetic turn, see for example Bleiker 2018 and Schlag and Geis 2017.

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hierarchy of academic communication in our logocentric culture. We allow the image to 'speak' first — to have the first word as it were — so that their affordances shape our accounts rather than the other way around. With Onuf (1989 epitaph), we would like to revisit the deeply held idea that 'in the beginning was the word' and instead to connect with deeds and more specifically with the deeds of images. We therefore focus attention through an image and then work with 'caption texts' to explore (our interpretations of) their politics.

Invested in performance and continuous production, rather than in outcome or exercise of competency, image and ritual both entail ambiguity: that of a political, aesthetic interpretation, and the possibility of disruption. Participants will never completely converge on an interpretation (of a rite or of an image). Ritualists may be reflective of their rites in ways which elude a viewer (Grimes 1988) and ritualistic effects are, ultimately, uncontrollable: again a feature rituals share with the production and reception of images.

It is this ever-present dissonance in the interstices, either within the community (and the subjectivity of its individual members) or across communities, that exposes political order as contingent, despite its outward stability. It is also this common aspect that we engage by resorting to images to make sense of the double role of rituals, as stabilising and disordering. The captions reflecting upon the images below seek to draw out and demonstrate such qualities in each instance of a depicted ritual. In the process, they concretise the significance of looking at, and thus knowing the world through, the lens of ritual and its "performative rationality" (cf. Koestler 1970), wherein theatricality, symbolism, the sacred, and the sublime are as important for social action and political order as are tangible gains, postures of competence and rational strategizing.

Introducing the contributions: Imag(in)ing disruptive rituals

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The images decoded below through a ritual lens draw attention to three types of disruption in action. The rituals of signing colonial treaties and of digitally mapping gunshots with which we open our discussion are *disruptive primarily because of the material contradictions built in*. Colonial treaties have it in the form of marks as signatures on paper that are disruptive of the doctrine of international legal order that they help to constitute (Aalberts, below). The maps of Fogo Cruzado have it through the indeterminacy of replication by coding that disrupts the certainty associated with digital technologies (Lobato, below). The following two rituals we discuss build in *disruption through unlikely assemblages* they involve. Locating the dog in 'the killing machine' of the state disrupts the image associated with sovereign violence by introducing the indeterminacy of the more-than-human affect (Kurowska, below). The connecting of different mourning rituals generates tensions disturbing the rituals that become disruptive of the projects they were supposed to serve (Heath-Kelly, below). The third and final set of rituals we discuss are *disruptive in spite of themselves*. The meeting of Prince Harry with Estonian troops in the context of joint NATO exercises while intended to enshrine a collaboration among equals lays bare a steep power inequality (Mälksoo, below). The Wagah-Attari ceremony envisioned to enshrine the firmness of the Pakistani-Indian border ends up enacting a more 'peaceable and amiable' version of the border (Svensson, below). Finally, the decentralised, individualised ritual of pod-cast listening *Alteryx* facilitates for its data analyst clients, in spite of itself, unsettles and redefines understandings of community, subjectivity and order, as well as the role and form of the rituals stabilizing and renegotiating them (Leander, below).

Ritual Markings and Colonial (dis)ordering

Tanja Aalberts

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The bottom of a piece of paper, crawled at the edges, with handwritten notes, apparently composed with some haste, a date (19 April 1884), a place (au village de N'Ero….?), a beautiful signature and three crosses. This picture of a seemingly insignificant object –stored in an unorganised folder (A1/1377) with numerous similarly casual papers in the archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels[4]– exemplifies the disordering work of the legal practice of treaty-making during the colonial expansion and the Scramble for Africa in particular.

>>PICTURE 1<<

Copy of the treaty (*Traité*) between Alexandre Delcommune (representing *l'Association Internationale du Congo*) and King Né-Do'ucoula, 19 April 1884. Source: Picture taken by the author. The original copy is available in the archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels: File A1/1377, document 1/2/a.[5]

Despite its informal looks we can recognise this paper as a treaty: not only as it says '*Traité*' at the top, but also because of its particular composition with two articles, certification by an interpreter and a witness, identification of a place and date, and obviously the various signatures. It is the product of treaty-making as a key ritualised practice of modern legal ordering to negotiate 'authority, self, and society' and (re)produce 'realities of power and authority' (Bell 2009 [1992], 8, 81-8). Through the combination of these composite elements this ordinary sheet of paper becomes a title deed with legal power: 'a written bond "in black and white" [as] a sacred thing, binding in a peculiar way on those who deliberately sign it' (Lugard 1893, 53). As the legal basis for sovereignty claims over colonial territories (and

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[4] This particular treaty is one of series of 9 treaties, held together by a piece of rope, each identical in terms of their text and provisions, drafted on the same day, but concerning different territories, and signed by different kings (who are all identified as 'roi de Boma').

[5] 'Article I. Le roi Né-Doucoula cède à l'Association Internationale du Congo ses droits de souveraineté sur tous les territoires soumis à son autorité' (King Né-Doucoula transfers to the International Association of Congo his sovereignty rights over all the territories submitted to his authority), followed by a specification of villages. Article II identifies the payment of 'vingt pieces d'étoffe' (twenty pieces of cloth) as well as 'deux feuil cadeau' (two gift sheets)?

through which huge amounts of land are legally transferred) such papers are ritualised objects – they have magic power, and are material and sacred at the same time.[6]

This particular object is the formal legal title deed through which a huge territory of Boma (part of what is currently known as Congo) was legally transferred from King Né-Do'ucoula de Boma to l'Association Internationale du Congo, the private colonial enterprise of King Leopold II of Belgium, as represented by Alexandre Delcommune, on 19 April 1884, in exchange for twenty pieces of fabric. It is part of the colonial enterprise as a 'race for title deeds' to legitimise and prove one's legal claim to colonial territory vis-à-vis the European competitors (Alexandrowicz 1973, 7) and representative of King Leopold's instructions: 'the treaties must be as brief as possible, and in a couple of articles must grant us everything'.[7]

Whereas the treatymaking practices as such predate the Scramble for Africa, they became increasingly important due to a paradigm shift in legal doctrine in the 19th century (Anghie 2005). As opposed to the premodern naturalist grounding of law in transcendental values and God's will, legal positivism recognised law as a manmade institution, grounded in rules formulated and agreed upon by sovereign states (as the key subjects of international law) to regulate their interactions. Consent, as represented through the signature, became the ultimate foundation for legal obligations in the modern international legal order.

If we zoom into the signatures, at their aesthetic face value they seem representative of a second key element of 19th century legal ordering, the infamous Standard of Civilisation. The cross of Roi Né-Do'ucoula, apparently holding a pen for the first time in his life, stands in stark contrast to the baroque signature of Delcommune. But if we analyse the performative nature of treaty-making as a ritualised practice, the crosses reveal something more fundamental and ambiguous about colonial legal ordering. Within contemporary legal

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[6] Recognising the the magical power of paper to take away their lands, Native Americans referred to treaty-making as 'pen and ink witchcraft' (Calloway 2013, 20-1, 52).

[7] Letter of King Leopold II to his assistant Colonel Strauch, 16 October 1882 (quoted in Jeal 2007, 282).

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doctrine, these colonial treaties were at once crucial and problematic: crucial as the authorisation of legal title; yet problematic as the 'savage' indigenous rulers allegedly lacked the required civilisation to have sovereignty and legal personality in the first place. The magical power of the crosses lies herein that through the same strike of the pen, King Né-Do'ucoula is constituted as the sovereign, giving away the sovereignty that, according to the Standard of Civilisation, he did not have prior to the act of signing.

Here then is the (dis)ordering paradox: As civilised sovereigns, members of the Family of Nations, the kernel of the international legal order, European powers had to obtain their colonial territories via proper legal titles. This is not so much in order to legitimise their title vis a vis the colonial subjects themselves (who, after all, were not part of the Family of Nations), but rather to prove and settle one's colonial possessions vis-à-vis European rival powers in the Scramble for Africa. Crucially, however, even if this 'scramble for title deeds' served first and foremost an exogenous function (Mickelson 2014), it could only fulfil this purpose through its relationship with the 'savages', and through engaging in the proper ritualised practices. After all, the Europeans needed the savage's signature to create the legal basis for their colonial endeavour as civilised sovereigns. Thus the very legal practice through which they constitute themselves as civilised sovereigns also reveals and is dependent on some kind of sovereignty –in a more limited sense of legal capacity– *of* the colonial, which, according to the same doctrine, it could not have as a savage. This in turn means that the Europeans can only obtain their full sovereignty *over* the colonial *from* the colonial itself – thus precluding the fulfilment of sovereignty as an absolute and originary European foundation of the Family of Nations, and disrupting the international legal order while constituting it.

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'Algorithmic' rituals

Luisa Lobato

An app that shows a real-time mapping of shootouts in Rio de Janeiro, registering a seemingly contradictory coexistence with bullets. Orange and blue icons that communicate the daily number of gunshots and differentiate between police operations and other source-events. Quite tragically, hearing gunshots is a part of the city's lived experience: people walk and chat normally even with a shootout happening just a few kilometers away. But fear of being victimized by guns is not absent here (IPEA and FBSP 2019). Shootouts are widely heard for hours, during work, early in the morning or in the middle of the night, resulting in dead bodies, road and school closures and a lot of public panic. And yet, this violent routine seldom makes into official statistics (Fogo Cruzado data analyst, personal interview, March 20, 2019).

>> PICTURE 2<<

Source: Interface of web-app "Fogo Cruzado" (Crossfire) from August 2019. It depicts a map of shootouts and police operations in Rio de Janeiro. Source: screenshot taken by the author. The app can be downloaded in Android and iPhone app stores and its web version accessed at https://fogocruzado.org.br/

This "Waze for bullets" is the outcome of ritualized algorithmic practices that give thickness and meaning to violence. There is little doubt as to the order-production work of practices of counting and mapping (Porter 1994; Pickles 2004), here attempting to consolidate an unaccounted object of (in)security. Less evident is its disordering aspect – in this case, attempting to reconfigure the line of sight of public policymaking over daily violence in the Global South.

These algorithmic rituals are characterized by a sense of procedurality and automation, invoking images of complex, almost magical, semi-autonomous processes which not always speak to an algorithm's practical work. In Fogo Cruzado, they construct the gunshot as an object that both assuages anxieties (you can know and avoid harm) and intervenes politically (by confronting official accounts to an unaccounted category of violence).

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Often, there is more than one thing which might be called algorithmic: it can be a set of mechanical rules (Daston 2019), including machine learning techniques, to the beings and practices 'behind' automation (Bogost 2015). Rigid obedience to protocols can be enacted by both code and flesh, as it occurs when Fogo Cruzado's map is updated: the map is updated not by a sensor that automatically 'hears' gunshots, but by a sense which is performed by human perception (who hears/witnesses the gunshot) and speed of reaction (how fast the data analyst identifies people talking of gunshots and validates the information to add it to the map), as well as an ensemble of practices, from setting the parameters and filtering what will make into a map, to liaising with community members to gather information and building objects out of a collective anxiety to socialize events. Whatever the case, "algorithmic" does not designate a unified group of machinic entities, but a multiple, made both of flesh and electric circuits, that becomes enmeshed in our systems of knowledge and experiences (Seaver 2013, 6; Seyfert and Roberge 2016; Bucher 2018; Finn 2017).

As McLuhan (1994) notes, in a social environment populated with media techniques and visions, signification is produced by a system of objects, rather than by a human agent alone. Usually, because official statistics work with established crime categories (homicides, robberies, etc.), gun violence is only ever computed if part of a criminal act. There is a side of it to which official numbers remain blind — for example, prolonged shootouts with no victims that nevertheless disrupt the routine of the city, thereby increasing the feeling of insecurity.

Very practically, 'algorithmic' rituals negotiate a gunshot's participation in security governance, providing legitimacy through rigid protocols (an event only becomes "gunshot" in the system after validation by a data analyst) that are repetitive and formal (the data analyst must follow established procedures, e.g., using linguistic analysis or 'manually' surveying

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group chats after reports, validating the information and feeding/filtering collected data), but indeterminate (Hui 2019; Chun 2008).

The indeterminacy of algorithmic rituals is a source of instability, first to the ritual itself and, second, to local security politics. In the first case, the "looping movement of returning to itself to determine itself" (Hui 2019, 27) may result in bias, errors, failures and absences: what happens when the event is not a gunshot? Or when the gunshot cannot be heard? Or when the reported place is wrong or absent in the map? What if the same event is computed twice?

Almost ontological, these questions prevent the gunshot from becoming an established, uncontested category (Fogo Cruzado data analyst, personal interview, August 21, 2018; D.E., personal interview, July 4, 2019). In the second case, disruption stems precisely from this openness; more specifically, from the act of confronting the gunshot with statistical categories ratified by public authorities. In seeking to reconfigure the state's 'sight', the gunshot negotiates what counts as violence and how it can be known, without overtly proposing a radical turn away from the security politics in place.

Transgressive Affectivity of a More-than-Human Weapon
Xymena Kurowska

Service dogs and their handlers become weapons of sovereign violence and war, as an instrument of direct application of force, and as a deterrent. The dog's nose is highly efficient at tracking bodies, making the dog–handler dyad a superior tool in search and rescue operations, or insertion/extraction, as seen in the image here. According to border guards, the dyad excels, in particular, in detecting irregular migrant bodies, doing so with a higher success rate than digital technologies, while being significantly cheaper. The most crucial indicator of operational performance is the quality of cross-species intersubjectivity (Kirk

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2014); that is, the affective and visceral attunement, only partly deriving from verbal commands.

>> PICTURE 3<<

A U.S. Marine and his multipurpose canine hang from a UH-1Y Huey assigned to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 167 during special patrol insertion/extraction training at Stone Bay, Camp Lejeune, N.C., 23 September 2015. Source: U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Austin A. Lewis/Released to public domain under United States copyright law.

The more attuned, and hence more-than-human, the dyad becomes, the better it is made an operational weapon. This 'operational effectiveness' is achieved and perfected through rituals of training. The rituals of training create the very bond where the human and non-human learn to feel each other without words, while never fully seeing from the other's perspective. Both remain partly opaque to each other. Rituals also instill machine-like reflexes in the human and non-human animal. This multilayered bodily connection, as a necessary foundation at the conscious level and an affective tie that makes split-second responses possible, is sacrosanct. "The bond is unreal,"[8] as police handlers say. The rituals of training serve to perform—that is, re-experience and re-confirm through becoming together—the magic in which the more-than-human dyad weapon is produced, collapsing the divide between the embodied/material and the sacred.

The image here depicts "a ritual moment" (cf. Koster 2003) par excellence - when, in the instance of hanging from a helicopter in the expectation of the hunt, or the mission, singularity is suspended and we can see that the marine and the military dog make each other and cannot be disentangled (cf. Haraway 2003). The ritual moment epitomises the constitutive affective experience and the more-than-human effervescence (cf. Durkheim 1995 [1912]) in which state violence is reasserted and the operation of the weapon perfected. The social rhythm (cf. Solomon 2019) of the sovereign pulsates through the cells of the dyad-weapon.

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[8] Coppers. 2012, Episode 7, police dogs. Channel 4. 20 February, 21:00.

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In all this, while the dog of course recognises the domination of man and its own position within an anthropocentric species hierarchy, and viscerally commits to it, it is unsusceptible to human militarism, that is, to logo-centric discourses of violence. There is no totalitarian, or liberal for that matter, dog (cf. Cherkaev and Tipikina 2018). It remains partly unpredictable and uncontrollable, being, at heart, a wolf. This makes the dog a transgressive influence within the dyad. On the face of it, we witness an act of subordination to the sovereign - the moulding of a ritualised body (Bell 2009 [1992]) on the altar of state violence. However, the cross-species relational affectivity forged in ritual to serve the state also becomes the very crack in the act of weapon production. Even as the bond is made in the name and for the state, the state cannot fully appropriate its affective pull. Nebulous more-than-human intersubjectivity literally cannot be regulated. It also must not, as it is precisely its magic power that state violence has to cultivate. Military and law enforcement handlers are instructed to leave the dog behind if the mission requires it. They will cringe and might, deep-down, question the order, thus questioning the order of the state (cf. Cudworth and Hobden 2015). The dog may not leave the handler behind for any reason. It may, however, diverge from habits and protocols in ways that the ideologically disciplined, or self-regulated, human would not. The dog is part of a killing machine but it is also oblivious to that machine, which opens an uncharted area of disruption within the continuous production of the dyad-weapon. The dog can, of course, be disposed of instantaneously. But this will not happen without heartbreak; and heartbreaks, as ritualistic as they can be, are dangerous to any ideology as they ultimately erode its grip and produce resistance.

This relational affectivity in the making of the dyad-weapon resembles Bell's image of the production of the kneeler – in the very act of religious kneeling, a subordinate body comes to being; however, it would be limiting to see the act as subordination only. For it can also embody a bifurcation between the external show of subordination and an internal act of

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resistance (Bell 2009 [1992], 100). In the coming-to-being of the ritualised more-than-human weapon, bifurcation yields to uncontrollable affective domains which are mostly harnessed to the state purposes but cannot ever be fully controlled by the state.

It is also here that the ritual perspective yields richer insights than the practice approach, as conventionally adopted in International Relations. Practices of military dog training, and also those of the dyad-weapon, can be studied as competent performance where competent means unreflexive. What the ritual can capture and what remains invisible in the focus on competency is the intense more-than-human 'magic' and its opaque character, inscrutable not only to the participants that experience and perform it but also to the observer who studies it and the state which fosters but cannot fully determine it (cf. Kurowska, 2020).

In sum, the canine component of the dyad-weapon must be recognised as an agent in its own right. Not only with regard to its actions in the service of its masters but as a disruptive force, too. Dogs dislocate carefully laid plans; their capacity to do so is part of what makes them useful. Most profoundly, however, the mysterious affective connection required in order to discipline a semi-wild animal into human service creates moments of disruption in the ideologically disciplined masters themselves. The connections that are formed with the subordinate element of the more-than-human (and more than merely 'animal') dyad may draw these masters into feelings of disorder and resistance quite in spite of their own conscious wishes and intentions.

"Here Lies….': The Curated Dead of September 11

Charlotte Heath-Kelly

The National 9/11 Memorial and Museum opened in Manhattan in 2014, on the site of 2,600 deaths inside the World Trade Center in 2001. Amidst the supersized relics of that day's

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destruction (including a fire engine and twisted steel girders, displayed in a cavernous

underground space once used as a car park), a small sign goes relatively unnoticed by visitors.

Reproduced in the image below, it reads: 'Reposed behind this wall are the remains of many

who perished at the World Trade Center site on September 11, 2001'. Within the Office of the

Chief Medical Officer, unidentified fragments of office-workers, airline passengers and

rescuers are perpetually stored – awaiting advances in forensic technologies which might

allow identification (Aronson 2018).

<div align="center">**>>PICTURE 4<<**</div>

The curation of human remains at bedrock originally received the assent of some victims'

families but was complicated by the reworking of the site masterplan in 2006. The memorial

was moved above-ground, and the museum below – meaning the unidentified remains were

now stored in the museum-space. Some families of victims have engaged in vocal protest at

this new positioning, which invokes a hybrid – and disruptive - combination of military and

civilian death rituals. Dealing with dead bodies is a fundamental, ritual human practice. As

Pogue Harrison shows (2003), societies of Judaeo-Christian heritage developed burial

practices not as a disease-prevention measure (bacteria were unknown for most of human

history) but as the ritual through which temporality could be performatively staged –

compensating for the hole left by the departed. Through the burial ritual, the present, past and

future are delineated as separate domains. The present-tense of decomposition is hidden from

view, by depositing the body into the past (through burial). The present tense is distinguished

as what happens above-ground, while future generations are addressed through the marker

placed above the burial site. The burial marker is a call to future generations to witness those

gone before; a compensation for human finitude which consolidates ideas of linear

temporality (Pogue Harrison 2003). It re-presences us both as witnesses and as subjects of an anticipated future gaze.

David Simpson (2006) and W.T.J. Mitchell (2011) have shown that commemorative architecture in the War on Terror performs a similar political re-grounding function. They argue that the excessive mediation of the 9/11 attacks (and the event's own 'replaying' of the 1993 WTC bombing) disoriented many televisual witnesses, prompting the re-presencing of American power through visceral bombing campaigns abroad, and grand memorial architecture on the sites of 9/11. The reality of the present was consolidated through juxtaposition with the visceral past. Similarly, they argue, commemorative spaces anticipate and stage the gaze of future generations, stabilising and reconfirming our existence in the present.

This re-presencing ritual has military heritage. Memorial landscapes first emerged to honour the war-dead, resolving their disappearance from the civilian world (and the present) with an invocation that future generations heed their sacrifice (Foote 1997). But by constructing grand memorial architecture to the dead of terrorist attacks, the war on terror transfers the ritual of commemoration from military bodies (who 'belong' to the state) to civilian bodies.

This transference of military ritual to the storage and display of civilian bodies in the 9/11 Memorial Museum becomes disruptive. Some families of the unidentified victims have formed organisations which protest the display of human remains in the museum as exploitative – themselves employing ritualised practices of family ownership, wearing and bearing photographs of their dead. They reject the Museum Director's argument that human remains are not 'on display', as they are respectfully hidden behind the scenes. Our image thus becomes contentious in their reading of the visibility of remains. If the museum does not display human remains, why does it advertise their presence to visitors? The families object to

what they perceive as the monetisation of sacred human remains, where tragedy is integrated within a business model that attracts tourist dollars (Aronson 2018). Their objection makes visible the contested ownership of the dead, whereby civilian bodies are traditionally buried privately – and not incorporated into sovereign exercises of remembrance and war. But family resistance also makes visible the internal disorder of the hybrid ritual assemblage – which conflates the tombstone with public architecture.

By appropriating the private burial marker for a public site, the National 9/11 Memorial Museum amalgamates the public and private rituals surrounding body disposal. The appropriation of military commemoration motifs which utilise the dead body (for example: the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the blood sacrifice motifs are both evident in the 9/11 Memorial Museum's curation of human remains) do not translate smoothly to civilian victims. Instead the protesting families object to the city taking possession of their dead, flaunting them as eternal victims whose loss (and vengeance) belongs to the state.

While the marking of burial sites and the construction of commemorative architecture are both rituals which re-produce linear temporality, the integration of civilian human remains into the 'site' of 9/11 disorders and disrupts the commemorative performance of 9/11. Curation is not burial, even in an underground tomb.

In Allies We Trust: Ritualised Deterrence in NATO's Eastern Flank

Maria Mälksoo

>>**PICTURE 5**<<
Prince Harry meets troops from the Estonian army in the Spring Storm/Steadfast Javelin 1 NATO military exercises in Sangaste on 17 May 2014. Source: Joe Giddens/PA Images, reproduced with permission.

This deceptively straightforward meet-and-greet ceremony[9] lends itself to various

interpretations embedded in the cultural and historical contexts of the Estonian-UK bilateral

relationship, intra-NATO dynamics and deeper political streams between the East and the

West of Europe, with the former having historically been prone to Orientalist categorisations

and representations, routinely cast as inferior to the West (Mälksoo 2010; cf. Said 1978).

First, this vivid illustration of transnational organisation of military power could be read as an

early evidence of ritualised deterrence practices the Alliance committed itself to after Russia's

meddling in Ukraine, thereby disrupting NATO's self-celebrated post-Cold War

transformation into a more complex, multi-layered and cooperative security community. It

shows a seemly performance of allied commitment to the defence of its north-eastern flank

countries – a commitment that had entailed rather little military substance until 2014 in fear of

thus provoking Russia. The military exercise Prince Harry visited in Estonia came under

NATO's lead half-way through the said drill as a response to Russia's annexation of Crimea

and the increasing concerns over the deteriorating security situation in NATO's immediate

neighbourhood.[10] The unassuming greeting rite we witness here hails in a sea change in

NATO's practical commitment to the defence of the Baltic states, deemed as most vulnerable

to Russia's potential encroachment in the post-Crimea political environment. In 2016, this

pledge found a concrete expression in NATO's deployment of a multinational battalion to

each of the three Baltic states and Poland as part of its Enhanced Forward Presence (efP)

strategy, marking therefore a departure from the political commitment stipulated in NATO-

Russia Founding Act (1997) not to position a significant number of combat troops on the

territories of new members. After decades of emphasis on out-of-area crisis management

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[9] I follow Shirin M. Rai's (2015) take on ceremony as a hyper-visible activity infused with ritual significance. Ceremony, 'provid[es] the solemnity, formality and grandeur (gravitas) to rituals, which are more often seen as the performance of everyday routines, behaviours and activities that reproduce and reinvent power' (Rai 2015, 153).

[10] For further images of the visit, see https://www.postimees.ee/2797328/video-ja-suur-galerii-prints-harry-kulastas-kaitsevae-suuroppust-kevadtorm?gallery=34954&image=3037952. Last accessed 27 April 2020.

operations and cooperative security aspirations in relations with Russia, NATO's efP has

emerged as the largest reinforcement of the Alliance's collective defence in a generation. The

ritualised recital of allied commitment depicted in the image symbolises the practical

alteration of NATO's physical presence in the Baltic-Polish region and provides a cognitive

shorthand for the concerned parties to orient themselves in the post-Crimea world. The

depicted post-sovereign rite of exercising allied reassurance and thus forewarning extended

deterrence to the putative challenger also signals the *re-ordering* of NATO's post-Cold War

reading of Russia's intentions and the tweaking of Alliance's force posture in response to it.

The image of Prince Harry greeting Estonian soldiers further presents itself as a

representation of an 'interaction ritual chain' in action (Collins 2004). It captures the symbolic

loadedness of the UK-Estonian defence cooperation and the mutually accumulated debts in

this security relationship with solemn poignancy. An Estonian infantry company from the

Scouts Battalion served under British operational command in Helmand province in support

of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan in 2005-

2014. Having personally served alongside the Estonian troops in Afghanistan, Prince Harry

praised the 'professionalism and bravery in the most testing conditions' of the Estonian armed

forces in his speech at the Estonian parliament, complimenting the Estonian military on the

ability to 'get the job done with minimal fuss' (Prince Harry 2014). In the framework of

NATO's efP, the UK is now the lead nation of the multinational battalion in Estonia. Estonia,

in its turn, is part of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, publicly launched as a NATO

initiative at the Alliance's 2014 Wales Summit. In the context of this symbolically significant

Allied military exercise in Estonia, the image is a proof that military training goes beyond

learning to efficiently function together as a transnational force unit: it is, above all, about

'establishing identity with the group who carry out their skills collectively' (Collins 2004,

91); a visual mediation of an affective investment, producing the ritual participants'

commitment to it. Military exercises produce 'ritual effectiveness', loading the participants with energy and attaching them to each other (Alexander 2006, 29-30), thus doing ritual work 'by people acting together' (Kertzer 1988, 76).

Yet, due to the 'double-edged character' of political rituals, the intended framings and purposefully evoked scripts might nonetheless be accompanied by disordering effects (Pfaff and Yang 2001). Ritual performances are 'not entirely encoded by the performer' (Rappaport 1999, 24). The image in question remains prone to a standard Orientalist reading of an encounter between a civilised (Western) 'superintendent' and wild (Eastern) 'subaltern servicemen', reaffirming (rather than overturning) a 'natural' hierarchy. While we are witnessing a ritualised performance of allied solidarity, gratitude and commitment (along with a subtle political enactment of allied deterrence vis-à-vis Russia), the depicted ceremony still mirrors a deeply asymmetric security relationship between the Western 'core' and the Eastern 'periphery' of the North Atlantic Alliance: the newly strengthened deterrence practices in NATO's north-eastern flank are only validated by the symbolic visit of a symbolic figure from the traditional (Western) centre of the Alliance, keeping its relative upper hand therein. Prince Harry's ritualised respects to the Estonian army are supposed to gloss over the steep power imbalance in the bilateral security relationship, as well as to add affective oomph to the emerging NATO's forward force posture in the region. Still, the particularities of the attire and mimicry of the immediate participants of this ceremonial reaffirmation of trust and allied commitment refuse to let the lop-sidedness of the UK-Estonian defence cooperation link to disappear from the public gaze. The solitude of Prince Harry's greeting of the 'beasts of the East' epitomises the symbolic, rather than militarily sufficient, nature of the Allied posture at its north-eastern flank.

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Wagah-Attari border ceremony

Ted Svensson

The image depicts the daily border closing ceremony on the Wagah-Attari border between India and Pakistan, two states that are entrenched in a conflictual relationship that is constantly on the verge of re-emerging as a full-scale war. Even in periods of de-escalation, the unsolved issue of Kashmir always threatens to facilitate a return to intensified conflict. As the image conveys, the daily event at the border crossing is a highly public affair. It draws large crowds, especially on the Indian side, and through its sheer sensuous gravity and blatant pageantry it holds an anchoring and 'sacralising' function in the continuous, repetitive affirmation of the border. In the public imaginary, the border closing ceremony—as iconised by this and similar images that are widely circulated—is the most corporeal manifestation of the India-Pakistan border as a territorial state border with a high degree of perceived impenetrability and permanence. The image, thereby, contributes to the countervailing of an otherwise dominant impression that the border is too porous, open to 'infiltration' and insufficiently policed. What the daily ceremony as well as its photographic depiction, conversely, aim to produce is an impression of the border as properly managed and domesticated.

At the same time, the image seemingly attests to how the choreographed, synchronous character of the guards' movement on both sides of the border, as well as the curated pomp and spectacle that their outfits and stylised postures signify, both set the ceremony apart from more ordinary and everyday occurrences and from the possibility of the unexpected and spontaneous to take place. It is, hence, not so much an event as a ritualised practice (in Catherine Bell's sense of this term [1992]). While the image, and by extension the border

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closing ceremony as such, at first appears to represent the extraordinary, excesses of sovereignty claims and a securitised response to what is deemed an existential threat, it, in actuality, denotes an urge to express the opposite: certainty and predictability—i.e. whatever happens elsewhere, the border closing ceremony will still occur according to script. This making of what is strictly a daily, routinised recurrence into something that is neither equivalent to the quotidian nor to the extraordinary is an interesting endeavour in and of itself.

Given the above, the standard interpretation of the image's portrayal of mutual bordering practices would be, first, to conceive of it as displaying both states' willingness to exhibit traits of preparedness, military strength, potency and wakefulness and, second, that the manner in which the border ceremony is enacted makes it a microcosmos of the wider conflict. Like the border ceremony, the conflict remains and stays the same. As such, the image helps to sustain the narrative of the so-called 'long partition' (see Zamindar 2007), which began in 1947 and is yet to end. It, moreover, projects an imagery of popular involvement. Besides demonstrating how the participating guards are assigned clear roles, the picture prompts an impression of the attending crowd as being drawn into what might be called 'affective atmospheres' (see Closs Stephens 2016). However, as with all images, much is framed out. While it shows parts of the audience and the stadium on the Pakistani side, it does not contain the even larger crowd on the Indian side, and it fails to capture the chanting, singing and dancing, i.e. all the movement and sound, that also make up the experience of attending the ceremony. The image does not then fully convey how the crowds are made to perform and confirm the border's existence and cannot, on its own, induce critical reflection on how such ritualised involvement is made to symbolise popular participation in, even celebration of extant border practices.

Although pertinent to some extent, it is insufficient to render the ceremony in the above sense only. In consonance with this article's overall insistence on the disordering work

of rituals that seem to be employed to stabilise the sovereign exercise of violence and war, a more apt construal of what the ceremony stands for and does is to point to how it—concurrent to manifesting hostility, military pride and a long history of incommensurability (Kulkarni 2018)—establishes affinity, alikeness, playful mimicry, and so forth (see Menon 2013). For the border guards and the spectators alike. In the image, we see how the former mirror each other by carrying out their performances in tandem and come to depend on one another for both a sense of sameness and alterity. They are, in the very moment the photograph portrays, caught up in an instance of relational situatedness and immanent tension that leaves room for self-affirmation as well as self-doubt. What the image makes less tangible is how the spectators are allowed to attend an exceptional moment of parity and mutuality between the two states, of bodily presence and immanence of an otherwise abject other, and hence of a rare humanising of the neighbourly guards and crowds.

It then seems as if the metaphysical or more abstract framing of the image, would place it within the broader cosmos of a perpetual, stagnant conflict, whereas an emphasis on the embodied and material aspects of what it depicts instead leads us to accentuate how the ceremony both orders and disorders, confirms and undercuts the otherwise taken-for-granted distance and enmity between the two states and their populations. The border closing ceremony, thus, revolves around an unanticipated element, *viz.* the harbouring and furthering of the disruptive and creative potential of ritualised behaviour. Through the border closing ceremony—with its concomitant ritualisation of masculine militarisation and a promise of more peaceable and amiable relations—the border is concurrently made tangible *and* relativised. At the site of the main and most publicly accessible stage of India-Pakistan hostility, where a daily act affirms the solemnity and perpetuity of it, we also encounter clear signs of intimacy, proximity and similarity. It simultaneously places bodies in prescribed

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postures and completely out of place. As the image makes manifest, it turns strangers into neighbours, and distant others into co-creators.

Joe Mako me crazy: Rituals of the AlterEverything Order

Anna Leander

>>PICTURE 7<<

Tune in to our latest Alter.Everything **#Podcast** and hear **#AlteryxACE** legend **@joemako**, **@tuverino** and **@alteryxalex** chat about vulnerability in the **#analytics** world. It'll give you all the feels. Source: https://twitter.com/alteryx/status/1095356814110031873 (accessed 14 August 2019).

The above image and accompanying text is a tweet by the company *Alteryx* advertising its podcast. I first came across *Alteryx* in one of the many security trade fairs where the values informing and rules governing contemporary security and uses of sovereign violence are being negotiated (Leander, 2018). *Alteryx* was there marketing its Cybersecurity services, embracing and enacting the accelerating de-fusion of societal authority and responsibilities. On its own account, *Alteryx* is 'a leader in the self-service data analytics movement with a platform that can discover, prep, and analyze all your data, then deploy and share analytics at scale for deeper insights faster than you ever thought possible'. It advertises itself as a 'platform' designed for a broad 'community' of members ranging from large organisations in e.g. oil and finance to citizen analysts, academics and non-profits. Access to the platform and its tools is not free. For example, the basic 'Code-Free meets Code-Friendly Data Analytics' designer tool is priced $5,195/year. The basic package for the *Alteryx* server is $58,500/year. You can pay extra for datasets, connections/collaborations, consultancies, and training. *Alteryx* is a self-service platform. *Y*ou combine and pay for the access, use, and participation you want.

'AlterEverything' is *Alteryx*' motto. 'Alter the way you feel about analytics' is the greeting welcoming visitors to its homepage. These advertising slogans express the *Alteryx* ethos. They also capture something fundamental about the current thoroughly commercialised

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order where an accelerating pace of socio-technical transformation is associated with a technological innovation and creativity (among many Wolin 2008; Rosa 2013; Reckwitz 2018). But how can I/we live with the flux and instability of such an *AlterEverything* order, without it 'mako me crazy' as the twitter advert for the *Alteryx* blog asks? Rituals are part of the standard answer. A look at the podcast listening ritual *Alteryx* facilitates shows how it pans out in this context. It is the 'grain of sand' through which we see the world as Strathern (2018, 62) might have put it in conventional ethnographic fashion.

Alteryx* facilitates a number of rituals, to help the members of its 'community' negotiate and find their place in the *AlterEverything* (non-)order they aspire to create. Some are conventional. The yearly *Inspire* Convention e.g. is an in-person gathering enacting a community of 'you amplified' who have 'disrupted the status quo, dissolved data conventions and altered everything we knew about analytics'. The ritual of listening to the *Alter.Everything#Podcast* is much less conventional. It not only accommodates the accelerating de-fusion of a thoroughly commercialised society but integrates its individualised, digitally mediated, flexible aesthetic into the ritual itself. As conventional rituals, the podcast promises the opportunity to stabilise, renegotiate and enact community, locating the self as part of it. It promises to help us not go crazy. 'It'll give you all the feels' by allowing you to 'chat about vulnerability in the #analytics world' as the caption details. However, and as the transforming of words and the re-configuring of letters signals, this ritual works in a manner so unconventional that it contests even the basic conventions of writing.

This is episode 26 of a series of podcasts covering a wide range of ever shifting topics depending on what is now important. The empty headset — to be grabbed by shifting anyones such as you and I — invites a shapeshifting ritual community to define what exactly that might be. It invites competitive individuals linked by their striving to become ever more proficient; a collective of singular data-analysts rewriting and revolutionizing data-analytics.

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Their aim is to constantly refashion and redesign the data-analytics. This must involve redrawing also the boundaries of the community associated with it, its hierarchies and the own place in it. But such matters are left implicit. The blog instead insists that it is decentralised, bottom-up, and user-driven. Members of the community participate when, where, how and if they want to. They can enact the community simply listening (as would the faithful to a ritual sermon) or by engaging their extended online selves, retweeting, posting, or participating through the chat (as in a ritual prayer or dance). The members of the community probably will not have listened to all the episodes preceding ep.26 advertised above. Nor are they likely listen to all those following it. That is not the point. It is a community à la carte. As other rituals, the ritual of podcast listening 'energises' subjectivities and 'attaches' them to communities to speak with Alexander (2004). However, subjectivities and communities alike are in flux. The fluctuating, invidualised ritual of podcasting is stabilizing an order in perpetual (accelerating) change.

The *Alter.Everything[#Podcast](#)* curators are unlikely to know of Turner. However their idea of order has much in common with liminality as he conceived of it. He took special interest in the liminal phase of rites of passage where societal rules, taboos and hierarchies are lifted and renegotiated in what he termed an 'anti-structural breathing space' (Turner, Abrahams, and Harris 2017, vii). This resonates with the design of the *Alter.Everything[#Podcast](#)*. Everything about the podcast, even the rules of the ritual itself, are up for negotiation. The *Alter.Everything[#Podcast](#)* may even be read as 'institutionalizing liminality', making liminality more permanent and central to societal ordering. This is something Turner was particularly interested in — and keen on — because he connected liminality to creative personal development, freedom and to progressive politics. He also held that the erosion of conventional structures made it a real possibility. These arguments about liminality became the foundation for the exploration of a hopeful politics that has travelled

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into various disciplines including performance studies, international relations and security studies.

The *Alter.Everything#Podcast,* however, is interesting precisely because it shows the limits of equating constant change and fluidity with progressive politics in a neo-liberal context. Even if the podcast ritual is designed to enact an order reminiscent of Turner's liminal 'anti-structural breathing space', it is not associated with the formation of a *communitas* — that is a community preserving space for contestation and thereby preempting injustice and hierarchies from emerging and becoming entrenched — Turner reasoned was foundational for this. Instead, the *Alteryx AlterEverything* community is competitive and individualistic, permeated by inequalities justified as expressions of differences in merit, achievements and talent. In the *Alteryx for Good Co-Lab* 'a volunteer network of *Alteryx* experts provide 'analytic expertise' to nonprofits and educators.' Charity — not solidarity — is the response of the *Alteryx* community to inequality and injustice. The *AlterEverything* community may even (conservatively) cement and reinforce these inequalities. *Alteryx* creativity and change gains its significance through its partial connections with other contexts such as those of the security professionals, visiting the *Alteryx* stand in the trade fair where I first encountered the company. Partially connected to these contexts, the constantly shifting predictive data-analytics and data-vizualisation tools —central for the *AlterEveryting Alteryx* Community— have (unsurprisingly) often reinforced rather than countered prevailing racial and gendered hierarchies (Nakamura 2013).

The ritual of *Alter.Everything#Podcast*-listening that the *Alteryx* platform facilitates our involvement in is designed to help us enact, navigate and locate ourselves in the *Alteryx Community* united by its commitment to an *AlterEverything* ethos. It is a ritual designed to enact an individualised, creative order in constant flux; so much so that the ritual itself takes a fluid, individualised and fluctuating form. However, on closer inspection, and very much in

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spite of itself, the *AlterEverything#Podcast*-listening ritual may consolidate a (constantly rearticulated) order permeated by conservative intersectional hierarchies. By designed amnesia, the ritual naturalises the significance of these hierarchies within and their partial connections to worlds beyond the *Alteryx AlterEverything* world. However, things could be otherwise, always. Who knows, perhaps the space for creativity and innovation will be occupied by redesign initiatives correcting this amnesia, ensuring that the AlterEverything order does not 'mako me [or us] crazy' as in struck by political amnesia?

Conclusion

Tanja Aalberts, Xymena Kurowska, Anna Leander, Maria Mälksoo

Our collective venture re-interprets the politics of security and war by putting in the spotlight the performative effects of ritual as a specific kind of practice in/of world politics. In the Introduction we highlight two dimensions of rituals: they are a specific kind of practice by their formal structure, repetitive nature and magic pull; and they can be simultaneously stabilising and disordering. Our methodology has involved making sense of ritual in conjunction with image because both these things elude the logocentric, unidimensional, and mono-normative logics of social action that pervade International Studies, including Critical Security Studies (CSS). Ritual and image embody interpretive indeterminacy and "performative rationality" in that they visualise the simultaneity of what might appear to be contradictory forms, making magic and affective lure the currency of contextually apposite behaviour. As our caption texts show, this manifests in paradoxes, ever-present dissonances, and bewildering social outcomes that surpass homogenous frames of reference.

Such limited frames would not, for instance, capture the dual dynamics of a ritual handshake concluding a joint military exercise as a symbol of both partnership and reinforcement of an ingrained superiority (Mälksoo, above). How come a savage cross

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disrupts the civilised legal order (Aalberts, above)? In our discussion, the capacity of the ritual lens to perform this analytical feat comes into particularly sharp relief when compared with a dominant conceptualisation of practice in the field as a routine and/or as 'competent performances' (Adler and Pouliot 2011). In our collaborative undertaking, aimed furthermore at broadening the analysis of symbolic action and power in international politics beyond the logocentric to the aesthetic, rituals are practices that open up to the working of affect and thus energise rather than automate communities and their subjects. They attune to incommensurabilities and potentialities beneath what seems the obvious import of a social act. Here, a military border practice becomes a space of generating affinity and camaraderie among apparent adversaries (Svensson, above), the more-than-human dyad, trained as a weapon of the state, subverts the sovereign exercise of violence (Kurowska, above), and a seemingly individualised ritual of listening to a podcast redefines a community of practice (Leander, above). The ritual lens sees 'theatre in the middle of a crowded fire' (cf. Strong 1978, 250) but also acknowledges such 'theatre,' in the form of a security threat for example, as a necessary form which allows for the community to enact and go on living its necessary fictions, albeit without full closures. The actual indeterminacy of digital technologies does not prevent it from structuring the governance of urban security (Lobato, above). The performance of state commemoration similarly absorbs the internal disorder of the hybrid ritual assemblage of mourning (Heath-Kelly, above).

In its decentring of the logocentric and mono-normative logic, the ritual lens offers insights for established literatures in CSS. Rituals engage affect and performativity as a core means of communication and subjectification in a certain defiance of theoretical frameworks, such as the classical rendition of the Copenhagen School of securitisation theory, that rely on speech as the means of creating social reality. The ritual approach to threat construction nuances the workings of language as, on the one hand, part of 'a politics of resonance' more

than that of the content of the speech or of reason and, on the other, as potentially always disruptive of the order it supposedly helps to constitute. State rituals performed in connection with the Corona virus both reproduce the community and reveal its fissures at the discursive and affective level. The ritual of sovereignty is recognised as necessary, it resonates with historical security imaginaries and enlists the subjects who incantate the speak of the threat to the nation state. The ritualistic promise of protection gives fleeting respite to anxiety while it also, however, simultaneously opens up to its own failure, with anxious subjects sensing the 'theatre' behind the performance. The approach that we suggest captures such instantaneous co-occurrence of social dynamics, without falling back on a single logic of action.

Maintaining tension, and to return to our methodology, also speaks to the synaesthetics between text and image that each of our captions embodies, each being an interpretation. This is, arguably, less of a limitation to our approach and more about syncing with the logic of ritual and directing attention to the scope of innovation, creativity, and capacity for surprise that the ritual sensibility enables. While it asks for a deferral of mastery over meaning, it affords a research agenda on security and world politics that explores rather than obscures the simultaneity of the ordering and disordering dynamics, and therefore precarity, that are found in its foundational rituals. Such a research agenda, characteristically and in contrast to early critical attempts, shifts away from the abstract and metaphysical towards the concrete, material, situational, and affective. For its interest in disruptions and budding political openings, it is potentially emancipatory in novel ways.

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Rituals of World Politics: On (Visual) Practices Disordering Things

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