“Our Word is Our Weapon”
Essays on Language, Resistance, and Revolution

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Big Questions

- How do revolutionary ideas/ideologies spread? How does one framework “win” in a given time/place/conflict?
- How much of the spread is simply due to material resources? Rhetoric? Selective/strategic literary production?
- Distinction between language “as such” (syntax/semantics) and speech acts (pragmatics): What are authors or translators doing with their words?
Zooming In: The History

The French Revolution (1789–1799)

- “Bourgeois revolution”, capitalist class against feudal nobility
- The 1789 *cahiers de doléances*, sociodemographic factors
- “Wholesale and systematic abolition” of the existing order?


- *Communist Manifesto* (1848) → Russian Revolution (1917)
- Third World decolonization post-WWII
- Nuclear weapons ⇒ no “hot” wars ⇒ proxy wars and “Ideological Interventions” in the “Cultural Cold War”
The Iranian Revolution (1978–1979)
- A wrench in the gears of Cold War international dynamics
- “Islamic Liberation Theology”: displaced Marxism-Leninism? Arab nationalism?

First Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993)
- Mass nonviolent uprising in Occupied Territories
- Political-Islamic group (Hamas) and Marxist-Leninist group (PFLP) compete for adherents
Zooming In: The Data

**The French Revolution (1789–1799)**
- 60K *cahiers* w/estate, region, manually-tagged topic
- Peasant revolts and counterrevolutionary uprisings by region

- Most translations of *Manifesto* (1848), *Das Kapital* (1867)
- Metadata on all registered translations 1932–2006
- CIA+KGB interventions, economic+military aid
The Iranian Revolution (1978–1979)

- Ali Shariati’s *Collected Works* (35 Volumes)
- Muslim Brotherhood writings (pre- and post-1979)

First Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993)

- 179 *bayanat* (communiqués): 101 from PFLP, 69 from Hamas
- Includes 18 fake *bayanat* promulgated by IDF
The French Revolution

- France, 24 January 1789: King Louis XVI summons the Estates-General, requesting “a concourse of our faithful subjects, to assist us in surmounting all the difficulties we find relative to the state of our finances.”

\[\text{tl;dr: Each of the three Estates within every Bailliage should confer and draft a book of “remonstrances, complaints, and grievances” to be brought by their representatives to the Estates-General.}\]
CAHIER
DES
DOLÉANCES, DEMANDES
ET REPRÉSENTATIONS
DE L'ORDRE DU TIERS-ÉTAT
DE L'ÎLE DE CORSE,
ARRÊTÉ
PAR L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE
DE CET ORDRE
Convoquée à Bastia le 18 Mai 1789.
The Significance of the *Cahiers*

“The only [revolution] at the beginning of which the different classes of society were enabled to present an authentic account of the ideas they had conceived, and express the feelings which animated them, before the revolution had distorted or modified those ideas and feelings.” (Tocqueville 1856, 262)
### Topic Modeling

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Table 1: 10 Most Indicative Words for Each Topic
Overview
French Revolution
Diffusion of Marxism
Iranian Revolution
Intifada

Topic Emphasis By Estate

Comparing Topic Emphases

Nobility
Third Estate

Proportion of Grievances

0.0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4
Diffusion of Marxism

- *Communist Manifesto* published in 1848, *Das Kapital* Vol 1 published in 1865
- Scraped correspondence networks of Marx and Engels
- Early schisms: First International splits in 1872, “Evolutionary Socialism” published in 1899
- Russian Revolution (1917), exile of Trotsky (1928), Chinese Revolution (1949), Cuban Revolution (1959) all introduced new “Marxisms”
International Political Economy

- Translations and “Workers’ Guides”
- Hypothesis 1: Soviet editions minimize anti-imperialist critiques, Trotskyist and Maoist edition maximize them
- Hypothesis 2: Soviet editions were tailored to nations based on GDP sector composition: emphasis on “proletarian struggle” in industrialized areas, on “peasant struggle” and agrarian redistribution in agricultural areas
- “Translation Mover’s Distance”: How much did the translation change the meaning of the original?
- Summarization Distance: How much was a section in the original compressed/removed in a summarization (Workers’ Guide)?
The Iranian Revolution
The Iranian Revolution

- Pre-1979: Marxism-Leninism and Arab Nationalism the dominant ideologies among Middle East resistance groups

- Post-1979: “Political Islam” quickly becomes dominant force (Hezbollah, Hamas, ISIS)

- Ali Shariati: “Red Shi’ism”, resistance to established authority part of Shi’ite identity

- First revolution to break with both First and Second Worlds; Afghanistan would soon follow (US-backed Mujahideen)
The Iranian Revolution

- Diachronic word embeddings with change-point detection\(^1\): does 1979 “pop out”?

The Iranian Revolution

The Iranian Revolution

Figure 1: The “rolling stylometry test” from Romanov (2018). Red lines indicate presence of “early” (1st IC) premodern Islamic style, green lines “middle” (4th IC) style, and blue lines “late” (7th IC) style. x-axis represents position of the text within Al-Dhahabi’s *Ta’rikh al-Islam*. “Early” style dies out by end of coverage of 1st IC, whereas “middle” style present throughout coverage of 2nd–4th ICs ⇒ book probably used a 1st IC source for coverage of 1st IC but a 4th IC source for coverage of 2nd–4th.

The First Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993)
The End

Thank You!