The Age of Rages

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Introduction

The Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) organised a Workshop on 'The Age of Rages' on 26 and 27 February 2019 at Marina Mandarin Singapore. The CENS Workshop was intended to: a) enhance our understanding of rage from a multi-disciplinary perspective; b) examine structural, cognitive and cultural drivers of rage, and c) explore potential solutions for positive change.

The Workshop consisted of four panels. The first panel looked at various structural reasons and sites of rage. It was followed by a panel looking at forms of populism in Europe and the US. The third panel looked at rage from a historical perspective. The last panel discussed rage online and offline.

Twelve speakers from institutions in Australia, France, Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States shared their insights. Workshop participants included members of the Singapore civil service, the private sector, and academia involved in examining race relations, religious conflict, hate speech and other national security topics.

This report summarises key points from the panel speakers' presentations. Key takeaways made by participants during the syndicate discussions and by CENS staff are included at the end of each panel section.

Welcome Remarks
Shashi Jayakumar, *Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

- Dr Shashi Jayakumar, Head of the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), opened the Workshop by thanking the speakers and distinguished guests for making the trip to Singapore, and the participants for taking time out of their schedules to join the discussions.
- Societal disillusionment, disorder and manifestations of rage in society are now common afflictions in a range of nations. The Workshop aimed to uncover sources of discontent by assessing cultural, inter-religious, and territorial factors, and the contextual dynamics at play in specific case studies. Taking a historical perspective can be useful as it reveals trends and patterns. Deciding whether events today are episodic or cyclical can help mitigate the dangers of unknowns, prepare for crises, and in some cases to avoid them altogether.
- Jayakumar noted the stellar cast of speakers would run the entire gamut of critical issues in the field, and reminded participants to take full advantage of the networking breaks to share ideas and build professional relationships.

Panel 1: Road to Rage: Sites and Structures

Historical Cycles of Polarization and Rage
Jack Goldstone, *Professor, School of Policy and Government, George Mason University*

The sharp rise in ethno-nationalism and authoritarianism amid economic uncertainty in the current global climate bears striking resemblance to the 1930s. Conditions may now be ripe for another global conflict.

- We may be heading into times both familiar and dangerous. The 2020s will look much like the 1930s, with rising nationalism and increasing international conflict. At the end of the Cold War, observers assumed the US would become supremely powerful and that China and Russia would liberalise as they developed. Social media was touted to be a great force for democracy in the world, and deregulating banking and finance would produce greater overall prosperity. None of this has happened.

- Today the world is gradually recovering from a systemic global financial crisis. Inequality and anxiety are growing, economies are slowing and emerging debt bubbles threaten further shocks. Ethno-nationalist politics and self-interested

capitalism are ascending among the major global powers. Large sections of societies in both emerging powers and leading developed nations fear that immigrants, international competitors, and the global financial elite are eroding their national culture and economic opportunities.

- Authoritarian leaders throughout the world are riding a wave of populism and xenophobia to extend executive powers, while constituencies are becoming frustrated by the perceived failures of multi-party competitive democracy. The United States is becoming isolationist and conciliatory toward dictators. China is rising quickly, and similar to Germany in the 1930s, appears set on redressing past geopolitical humiliation.

- Amid such conditions, multiple fronts of transnational contention present hazards for global peace and stability. A clash between the US and China over the South China Sea or Taiwan could be followed by Russian expansion into Eastern Europe, Turkish incursion into northern Syria, and a Saudi-Israeli war with Iran. Further global migration crises are likely, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa, due to political or environmental disasters along with ongoing rapid population growth.

- The stage is set for a period of intensifying global conflict, rising nationalism, and diminishing international economic cooperation. Once considered a natural progression following modernity, liberal democracy is now under considerable threat.

Is Religion the Problem?
Mark Juergensmeyer, *Professor, Department of Global Studies, UC Santa Barbara*

Declining secular nationalism, political marginalisation, and identity politics in the post-Cold War era have brought about a 'religionisation' of politics and laid fertile ground for extremist ideologies to flourish.

- Since the end of the Cold War the world has witnessed different kinds of ideological assaults on secular democracy – many of them associated with religion and exclusionary ethnic identities. A common explanation is that wily politicians employ religious rhetoric to manipulate their audience, but this is not often the case. Rather, the rise of religious nationalism can be seen as the weaponisation of politics for the advancement of certain religious doctrines.

- Radical orators from a range of the world's major religions have frequently delivered rousing speeches to crowds of impressionable followers. The message is generally the same: 'Young people have lost direction in life; they chase after materialistic lifestyles and need to be shaken awake. There is a war is going on between good and evil, and the time has come to take the sword of faith and fight for what is just'.
- Impressionable audiences share a sense of marginalisation and seek empowerment. Individuals often feel adrift in a sea of secular globalisation where identities are open to question. The sectarian violence that arose after the US invasion of Iraq was essentially ethno-nationalist, whereby the Sunni minority feared Shi'a repression in a democratic majority-rule government.
- For young ISIS recruits from Paris, Brussels or cities in Northern Africa, joining the movement was a way of becoming somebody through contributions to a revolutionary millenarian struggle. Despite the end of the organisation's territorial project, Western Iraq remains ripe for another jihadi formulation due to the local need for an empowered identity in a world where nationalism is increasingly defined by ethnic terms.

- When religious preachers assert narratives of a cosmic war between right and wrong it changes the equation of political conflict by intensifying emotional fervour. The issue is a 'religionisation' of politics, in which mobilisation is powered by faith and belonging, and savage acts of violence can be related to the great religious struggles of the past.

Urban Rage
Mustafa Dikeç, *Professor, École d'urbanisme de Paris, Université Paris-Est*

Violent urban uprisings in recent years cannot be explained by individual pathologies, but rather structural inequalities and grievances stemming from perceived harassment and discriminatory practices among law enforcement.

- Cities throughout the world have witnessed large-scale protests in recent years. Incidents often turn violent but escalations essentially represent a backlash towards repetitive acts of repression from local authorities.
- London experienced its worst urban violence for generations in 2011. The UK capital was at the time one of the most unequal cities in the developed world. Police were increasingly

employing stop-and-search tactics, which many felt were humiliating and informed by racial profiling. Statistics also reveal a disproportionately high rate of Black British deaths in state custody in the UK.

- Grievances stemming from heavy-handed police practices are exacerbated by the creeping militarisation of urban law enforcement agencies. Whereas officers once confronted a demonstration with a wooden baton and whistle, today's riot police may reach a scene with semi-automatic weapons and armoured vehicles fit for warzones.

- Such exhibition of intimidating might was on display during protests in the US city of Ferguson, following the killing of an unarmed black teenager at the hands of a white police officer in 2014. Researchers uncovered deeply entrenched racist sentiments among officers in the city's police department. Leaked emails between senior police officials exposed crude racist jokes, suggesting a toxic culture of racial discrimination among local law enforcement.

- Furthermore, investigations into the incident and ensuing violence found the Ferguson police department and municipal court had been strategically employed to increase revenue streams for local government. Fines and

forfeitures had increased to record heights by 2014. One judge managed to issue 9,000 arrest warrants for 33,000 offences in the year before the uprising. Essentially local authorities preyed on disenfranchised young black people to bolster the city's economy.

- Urban uprisings are commonly blamed on pathological drivers and the negative influence of popular culture, yet grievances are genuine and largely fuelled by structural inequality and disempowerment. Riots represent political incidents that expose fractures and problems within our societies.

Syndicate Discussions

- <u>Issue: Loss of faith in the nation-state.</u> The rise of ethno-nationalist and religious identities in many societies is due to the lack of suitable alternatives available to express a community's frustrations towards the government. These are then perceived by individuals to be the only 'legitimate' identities through which they can project their frustrations, therefore moving away from secular nationalist identities promoted in nation-building projects.

- Issue: Distinguishing extremism from religion. Extremist interpretations of religion often come from sources on the margins who have gained traction amongst their followers. Most extremist groups are not led by mainstream members of religious clergy, but by those who exploit ideology. However, religion as understood in the West has been perceived negatively due to bias in reportage. Islamophobia, for example, in the United States and Europe is partly due to public reaction against widespread reports of 'jihadism' and religious extremism in the news.

- Issue: The rise and fall of democracy. The world is currently observing the decline of democracy in many states where populist rhetoric coupled with growing nationalism has instead gained traction. Individuals are likely to endorse populist governments or politicians in order to achieve a sense of security and stability. There needs to be a significant global political or economic event to bring about change in these states.

- Issue: Expressions of rage in different countries. Outbursts of protests while usually seen as spontaneous are actually an indication that certain belief systems have been violated. Rage indicates the conviction that a person believes he

or she has not been treated fairly. Police violence, rising inequality and discrimination are some common reasons behind expressions of rage across different countries. While structural reasons behind expressions of rage tend to be similar, underlying reasons may differ. For example, colonial history formed an important reason behind youth violence in the French suburbs.

Distillation

- Secular liberal democracy is under assault from a variety of sources. The rise of populist politics and politicians' excessive pursuit of self-interest may explain why democracy is in a state of retreat.
- The Trump administration's isolationism and distancing from traditional allies has enlarged a global power vacuum, creating a new multi-polar world that involves several contested spheres of influence, which could escalate to global conflict.
- Structural racism establishes a vicious cycle where the downtrodden reach breaking point. Understanding the role of the police and police violence in cases of urban rage is crucial.
- Identity insecurity and structural marginalisation are potent ingredients for radicalisation. When individuals believe they do not belong and feel

excluded from societal opportunities, exclusivist ideological networks offering empowerment and purpose present attractive alternatives.

- Having said this, religion appears to be less important to youth than a form of spirituality that combines basic morality, citizenship and acute sensitivity to contemporary challenges such as global warming.

Panel 2: Rage of Rages: Culture Wars

Populism(s) and Emotions in Europe since the Financial Crisis

Marina Prentoulis, *Senior Lecturer, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia*

Emotions are unifying forces behind populist movements that flourished in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis in Europe. Rage, indignation and populism have mobilised mass support for riots, protest movements and electoral political demands.

- Emotions are unifying forces behind political movements that took place in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis in Europe. Rage, indignation and populism are ways of 'acting out' citizens' subconscious demands, with their full implications only realised in retrospect.
- In the absence of conscious political demands, rage was the connecting link between rioters who took to the streets. The crisis shook the sense of security of working and middle classes, and intensified the feeling of alienation from both national and transnational elites. In 2011, for example, extensive rioting took place in London, an uncommon occurrence in the UK. The rioters

mainly comprised youths who felt excluded from the promises of capitalism and the education system. The riots in Greece around the same time were unusually violent, catalysed by the killing of a young anarchist by a policeman in Athens. Participating in violence during the riots created affective bonds, which would prove instrumental in the mobilisation of subsequent movements.

- By 2015, indignation became the dominant sentiment behind protest movements that took place in countries such as Greece, Spain and Britain. Demand for political representation, now vocalised though not yet in a specific manner, characterised the emotion of indignation during this period. The protest movements during this time were also notable for its diversity, combining demands across different social, economic and political groups.

- Populist sentiments expressed through electoral politics followed the protest movements. By playing up divisions between groups, populist parties that emerged during this time attempted to create strong emotional bonds and appeal to a diverse range of demands in order to mobilise support. In Spain, a new party emerged from the Indignados Movement and successfully captured the majority of the votes in several elections.

The Politics of Hate: International implications of the political strategies of US Christian Right
Angelia Wilson, *Professor, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester*

The US Christian Right are sophisticated political actors. Flexible communication strategies enable Christian Right groups to maintain constituents, build political alliances, and educate internal and external audiences.

- Religious lobby groups operate in similar ways to interest groups. Besides sophisticated use of finance and resources for lobbying purposes, these groups also play a zero-sum game that aims to destroy their opponents. The US Christian Right movement has adopted a conscious strategy of shifting its political language from one of overt racism to embrace the softer language of cultural warfare in order to achieve its objectives.
- American Christian Right groups are sophisticated political actors, employing flexible messaging that alternates the message communicated to their in-groups and external parties. To garner internal support, a common theme among the email messages communicated was that the group was under threat. During election campaigning, the topic of abortion, for

example, tends to be emphasised in an effort to create in-group awareness among constituents. Internal communication also appeared to obscure certain details such as the specific bill that they were lobbying for. A common thread among groups' external communication such as press releases and lobbying reports was the demonstration of their strength as an electoral bloc.

- The notion of 'co-belligerency' allowed the Christian Right movement to establish political alliances with other religious and political groups. Against the backdrop of extreme social unrest in the 1960s, some Protestant and Catholic leaders cooperated as 'co-belligerents' on specific political issues. The movement gave rise to a group of strategically-savvy Christian Right with political power in Washington D.C. and other US states, and who are seeking to expand their reach globally. More recently, Christian Right groups in Poland cooperated with neo-Nazi, Muslim and other groups seeking to push back against Brussels.

- The Christian Right movement also aimed to export their ideology globally. By intentionally looking for countries believed to be fertile soil for cultural unrest and sending political activists to train local political actors, the movement aims to

conduct theologically-based political interventions in countries such as Uganda.

Lessons from the Alt-Right's Rise and Fall
George Hawley, *Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Alabama*

The Alt-Right's clever usage of the internet helped establish itself as a legitimate political movement for a time, but there are limits on what can be accomplished by a political movement online.

- The Alt-Right is the most recent manifestation of the white nationalist movement in the US that gained traction online. The Alt-Right was able to gain outsized attention from the mainstream press because of its skilful manipulation of online spaces. It relied primarily on irony and humour, rather than frustration and rage, to spread its message to disaffected young white Americans.
- Using these tactics, the Alt-Right made itself more appealing than earlier expressions of white nationalist ideology, which emphasised the belief and maintenance of a white national identity. The Alt-Right managed to put itself across as an umbrella term uniting various white supremacist and anti-Semitic ideologies. The ambiguity of its name also meant that many participants may not

have been aware of its racist agenda. The fact that its name had been shortened to a hashtag on Twitter also meant that it was able to increase its reach as an anonymous online mob.

- Despite initial success, the Alt-Right was unable to effectively move from the Internet into the real world. Several incidents led to negative perceptions toward the movement and ultimately, its downfall. The first major Alt-Right conference after the 2016 US Presidential election, for example, led to the Alt-Right being seen as a neo-Nazi movement and its denouncement by US President Donald Trump. The Unite the Right rally of 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia which resulted in bloody clashes with left-wing counter-protesters and one death led to massive 'deplatforming' or abandonment of online accounts associated with the movement, diminishing the movement's ability to use the Internet to organise and raise money. Individuals associated with the movement who were previously anonymous were publicly exposed (doxed) and suffered severe social consequences, including loss of employment. This led to a new hesitancy among people to become involved.
- The Alt-Right is currently defunct as a movement. However, the ideas that motivated it are still in circulation and could revive the movement given

the right conditions. In future, white nationalist ideologies may learn lessons from the Alt-Right and become more successful at galvanising real-world actions from online movements.

Syndicate Discussions

- <u>Issue: Outreach by Christian Right groups in the US.</u> Outreach mechanisms and political strategies used by Christian Right groups in the US, such as emailing and social media campaigns, are not different from the mechanisms favoured by other non-religious interest groups. They engage in outreach and vocational activities, and attempt to influence political behaviours of their supporters by giving voting recommendations and advice on electoral procedures. There are also Christian Left groups in the US with some influence, but the outreach of these organisations is more limited than Christian Right groups.

- <u>Issue: Issues raised differ across communication media.</u> For the Christian Right movement in the US, emails are seen as channels to educate and inspire their supporters on certain issues of interest. Issues about LGBT rights and abortion were those most frequently discussed via email, while anti-Muslim sentiments seldom appeared

within messaging. Negative portrayals about Islam are more apparent in other forms of communication such as rallies, where middle managers are trained to discuss and lobby for specific issues.

- Issue: Media coverage of social movements. Mass media outlets should prevent excessive reportage on social movements to limit the attention given to them. For example, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech against the Alt-Right resulted in a spike of interest in the movement after it was excessively reported in the media.

- Issue: The future of European Union politics. EU elections are not a priority to its residents, compared to respective state elections. People are disengaged from EU politics and remain more interested in national politics instead. This explains why turnouts for EU elections are constantly lower than that for national elections. This observation suggests that the upcoming European election in May 2019 may have Eurosceptics and/or far-right forces well-represented.

<u>Distillation</u>

- Emotions such as rage are important in mobilising mass support. While there may be common reasons which can cause a protest or riot, there may be exacerbating factors. Disproportionate reporting of social movements, for example, could result in an exaggeration of their role and importance that impact wider societal dynamics.
- Domestic populist politics may cause political instability. The UK's future is still unstable, as it continues to be unclear if they will go forth with the Brexit deal.
- Religious lobby groups employ flexible strategic messaging depending on who they are addressing. They also establish political alliances with other religious and political groups to achieve common objectives.
- There are differences in behaviours and attitudes of different segments of the Christian Right. It may be worthwhile assessing if there are similar trends in terms of messaging, outreach and messaging channels used by the Christian Left, or other Christian groups.
- Further research can explore the concept of 'co-belligerents' and the type of alliances that form around a specific cause.

Panel 3: Roots of Rage: Past and Present

The Uses of Rage in Contemporary Egyptian Politics: A Feminist Decolonial Analysis
Lucia Sorbera, *Senior Lecturer and Chair of the Department of Arabic Language and Cultures, School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney*

The feminist movement in Egypt is one of the many victims of the Egyptian regime's repressive policies. While feminists were fully involved in the 2011 revolution, they are currently paying a heavy price for their political and societal positions along with prominent intellectuals and human right activists.

- Feminist women who played an active role in the 2011 revolution did not explicitly draw on feminist values during the first months of protest. They focused on the objective of political change rather than feminist claims. However, several women who stood up for their rights after the revolution gained a high profile politically. Such is the case of Aliaa Maghda El-Mahdy. This college student posted nude pictures of herself online to denounce the patriarchal nature of Egyptian society and women's exclusion from the public

sphere. Her online activities caused great uproar in Egypt, including among feminist militants.

- The space of political freedom that appeared in Egypt after the 2011 revolution has been gradually curbed. In particular, the 2013 coup led by the military had a devastating impact on fundamental rights. This explains why the Egyptian population and Egyptian feminists have many reasons to feel enraged. For instance, the largest feminist organisation in Egypt known as Nazra for Feminist Studies was forced to stop its activities.

- State repression also targets sources of information. Most independent media have either been shut down or blocked. The most famous example is the closing of Mada Masr, an independent online newspaper specialising in investigative journalism. The website of Mada Masr was created in 2013 but has been censored since 2017. Similarly, several intellectuals were compelled to choose between prison and exile.

- The indifference of the international community towards the plight of pro-democracy militants is illustrated by the EU and the US' support to the Egyptian regime. This explains why cases of physical abuse and enforced disappearance have become widespread. Human rights organisations in Egypt document these cases to rehabilitate

victims and fight the common use of political persecutions. Such organisations are primary targets for the current regime. Given the high level of state repression, it is not surprising that most feminists identify themselves through their opposition to the state.

Hysteria, Stereotypes and Moral Panic: Engineering Fear Campaigns from the Colonial Era to the Postcolonial Era
Farish Noor, *Associate Professor, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University*

The role of rumours in promoting fear campaigns is as common today as it used to be in the colonial era. Rulers of colonial empires attempted to promote credible narratives of inclusiveness to maintain hegemony over entire countries and regions. Success was limited as colonial subjects shared different identities that, in some cases, were at odds with such narratives.

- The complex relationship between the colonial power and the colonised subject is illustrated by Gandhi's position towards the British Empire in the early 20th century. Gandhi expressed support for the British empire because he thought Indians

had to ensure that the British empire existed for them to demand their rights. In other words, the fight for independence was not only based on protest or violence, it also included negotiations with the colonial power.

- Colonial empires were all confronted with the problem of creating a narrative that included the colonial subject on the one hand, while retaining hierarchy between the coloniser and the colonised on the other. Conflicting identities of the colonial subject could be problematic. For instance, Muslim Indian troops were garrisoned in Singapore during World War I. Fearing to be sent to the Ottoman Empire to fight their co-religionists, these troops mutinied for seven days in 1915.

- This episode illustrates two difficulties. First, the maintenance of an inclusionary narrative that is universal. Second, the ability to hold together different competing identity claims that include the cultural, historical and religious identity of the colonised.

- There does not seem to be a clear rupture in the logic of identity politics from the colonial era to the postcolonial era. News headlines in Southeast Asia are all about how governments in the sub-region are grappling with this problem of maintaining a sense of collective national identity in the context of multicultural societies.

- The widespread influence of social media helps us understand why the propensity to fall back on narrow identity politics is stronger now than it used to be in the past. Mass communication technologies make it easier for individuals to stress the primacy of religion or race. This can stir up intolerance and hatred between different communities.

Legitimizing Rage: How Hatreds Come into the Open
Hans-Joachim Voth*, Professor, Department of Economics, Zurich University*

Various factors contribute to disinhibiting individuals and lead them to believe that radical or extremist views can be expressed in public spaces. These elements include social interactions, public demonstrations and narratives.

- Pluralistic ignorance refers to a situation where individuals wrongly assume the nature of other people's beliefs and convictions, thereby basing their social behaviours on false assumptions. It is illustrated by a university experiment where interviewers asked participants whether they agreed to give money to an anti-immigration charity. 54% of the subjects were happy for the

money to be given on their behalf. However, when full anonymity of contributors was not guaranteed, this percentage dropped to 35%. Interviewees then told participants that they lived in states where Donald Trump was guaranteed to get all the votes during the 2016 US presidential election. The number of participants who agreed to give up on full anonymity rose significantly.

- Pluralistic ignorance before the 2016 election kept public expression of anti-immigration views in check as some participants assumed that the majority of people did not hold anti-immigration views. However, massive electoral support for Donald Trump led them to believe that these views were actually shared by many people.

- Expressions of rage can be legitimised through social connections. Social networks create social capital through which rage can thrive, and lead people to believe that expressing anger and resentment in public is acceptable. For example, there was a rapid rise of Nazi party support in German cities where networks of clubs and societies were already dense during the interwar era. Demonstrations also act as a show of strength that entice people to think that many other individuals share their beliefs and convictions.

- Narratives are a legitimising force seemingly borne out of incontrovertible facts. For instance, one anti-Semitic story that the Nazis used in the 1930s was how Jewish people were controlling and destroying the German economy. Such a message was powerful at the time of the banking crisis. This illustrates how narratives can have a strong impact on feelings of rage and how these feelings are expressed in the public sphere.

Syndicate Discussions

- Issue: Governmental regulation of social media. While states have been criticised for trying to regulate social media companies and content on social media, there may be a case to be made for the support of regulation. In Indonesia, the Saracen Group used social media to allow an online 'fake news syndicate' to thrive. However, any manner in which the government tries to regulate content on social media may be seen as draconian and an infringement of rights. Regular dialogues must instead take place between ministries and technology companies to prevent fake news from spreading.

- Issue: Intervention against expressions of rage. Legislation presents one possible means of

intervention to stop public demonstrations. The law shapes beliefs that a society is founded upon. Legislation thus creates a higher barrier of entry for those who choose to express a divergent viewpoint and creates awareness that a particular viewpoint is not to be welcomed within that societal context. Intervention such as legislation is therefore a powerful means of communicating what is publicly acceptable.

- Issue: Societal decline and moral panic. When societies go into decline due to social, economic or political crises, the spread of narratives or rumours comes into play. This heightens panic and the perception of threat, and society falls back on suspicions and worries. Politicians may also take advantage of societal instability for their own objectives. This is mirrored online, where echo chambers amplify panic and suspicions, and where misinformation and/or disinformation are disseminated.

- Issue: Politics and feminism in Egypt. There are transnational political themes within Egyptian feminist movements, such as support for a Palestinian state. When Arab women realised that national liberation agendas were compatible with women's causes, they became more interested in

Asian and Arab solidarity. A delegation of Egyptian women was thus sent to The Bandung Conference in 1955 and Arab feminist organisations were created. In the 1990s, the Egyptian feminist movement was more focused on challenging Hosni Mubarak's regime, as well as stereotypes in the West suggesting the inferior image of Arab women.

Distillation

- Movements within a locale can be inspired or influenced by transnational events and domestic politics. For example, Egyptian feminists have been active in expressing their voices from the moment their country became an independent state.
- The expression of citizens' identities, rumours and narratives are challenges rulers of Southeast Asian nations faced before. Social media, fake news, globalisation and technology give these issues a new dimension today. States, however, find it difficult to take a maximalist approach to governance and will therefore need to find suitable solutions in governing across societal differences.
- People tend to mention radical or extreme views in the public sphere if they perceive it as socially

acceptable. The combination of personal connections, massive demonstrations and well-tailored narratives can thus have a powerful effect on public manifestations of rage.

- Individuals can take advantage of online panic and suspicions on social media platforms by manufacturing offense, creating a ripple effect online with misinformation and rumours.

Panel 4: Rage against the System: Online and Offline

Civic Activism Transformed

Richard Youngs, *Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe; Professor, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick*

Democratic idealism sits side by side with democratic fatigue in today's citizen activism. The current era is both an 'age of rage' and an 'age of surveillance'.

- Despite common perceptions that protests are often disruptive and ineffective, there are instances where they exceed the initial aspirations of protestors. Protestors, despite often facing severe government suppression, are also adapting, learning and becoming more effective.
- Most protests elicit reforms and concessions from governments but often stop short of causing far-reaching systemic change to a country's politics and economics. In recent years, governments seem to be evolving in their approach to protests and have increasingly been willing to accommodate change in response to protests, often to buy themselves more time and to stave off fundamental and far-reaching changes.

- Although the common perception of today's protests involves leaderless, rudderless and unfocused movements that are rarely able to engage constructively with mainstream politics, this is increasingly becoming an unfair caricature. Many protests today have well-defined aims, concrete grievances and manifests that address the structural political problems that contribute to the discontent with government and a deficit of trust with ruling elites.
- Protests also do not fizzle out eventually as often assumed. Increasingly, more thought is going into sustaining the momentum of protest demands toward concrete change. Protests filter into new political parties, new partnerships between social movements and political parties or deeper cooperation between new networks of activists and established NGOs. There is also increased realisation that protests and people power need to dovetail with mainstream politics, not shun it.
- The heterogeneity and breadth of demands and ideologies of these protests make them a prominent and essential part of modern global politics. While this diversity often leads to internal divergence, it also signals the vitality of democracy.
- Indeed, democratic idealism sits side by side with democratic fatigue in today's citizen activism. The

current era is both an 'age of rage' and an 'age of surveillance'. The Janus-faced nature of this dynamic will only serve to strengthen the other and will be powerfully present in our future.

The Psychodynamics of Online Rage
Aaron Balick, *Director, Stillpoint Spaces*

The application of psychoanalytic and other psychological theories to human emotions and the online ecosystem can help us better understand how rage is expressed through social media platforms.

- The basic elements of human emotion have not changed since the dawn of civilisation. However, the context around human emotion has changed enormously. The development of global online connectivity enables the expression of these emotions through a whole new context. This relatively new environment for emotional expression has consequences on both the individual and whole societies. Using psychoanalytic and other psychological theories to human emotion and the digital sphere enables us to better comprehend how emotions manifest via online platforms.
- Anger or rage are core human emotions. They are productive when expressed as a mode of self-

protection. However, when its expression becomes pathological, it can override normal functioning, affecting interpersonal relationships and wider social networks.

- Social media creates an amplification of the expression of anger by way of the online disinhibition effect, which enables modes of expression that are generally more inhibited in face-to-face situations. In short, an individual experiencing rage online will be more inclined to share it, unprocessed, with a large audience, who may then spread it like wildfire.

- Although online expressions of rage accelerate exposure, this generally does not translate directly into actual group violence. However, the emotional contagion of anger can enable the habituation of anger across societies, leading to cultures of anger and outrage. This allows for self-reproduction of rage and is extremely dangerous.

- Social networks can function as digital manifestations of an individual's psychological self and people often express key aspects of their personalities through online avatars, viewing them as an extension of their identity. This sense of identification means that people become vulnerable to psychological consequences when their online profiles are attacked, and defensive and quick to take offense in their online

interactions. Together with the online disinhibition effect and the public nature of social media, this heightened sense of identification creates a culture of exaggerated offense, anger and rage in the online public sphere.

Divisive Disinformation and Hate Propaganda

Cherian George*, Professor, Department of Journalism, Hong Kong Baptist University*

Laws that prohibit untruths and offence will not be able to cope with disinformation-assisted hate propaganda without the promotion of civic values and an increased commitment to democratic principles. They can also be weaponised by hate propagandists.

- The most virulent strain of disinformation is hate propaganda, used by identity-based political parties and movements to mobilise supporters by cultivating a fear of others, as well as to intimidate and marginalise their opponents.
- The challenge for governments is to fight disinformation-assisted hate campaigns, while avoiding kneejerk reactions that potentially create a different set of problems. There is a real risk of moral panic, such that we overreact to a few salient features of the problem, ignore other important aspects, rush to judgment, and opt for quick legal fixes. The following thoughts are offered not as solutions as such, but as ways to think about the problem more productively.
- Countries which do not have a tradition of strong free speech protections need to be especially

mindful of unintended consequences of regulation. There is also a need to guard against placing undue faith in techno-legal solutions. There is no doubt that social media platforms are currently too hospitable to disinformation, and that policy must catch up with new digital technologies. However, the most formidable hate propagandists are not entirely dependent on digital media.

- The most harmful hate propaganda campaigns are often layered, comprising mutually reinforcing indirect messages from multiple sources that commonly dwell in the realm between truths and untruths. Structured in this way, hate campaigns pose intractable regulatory conundrums that make them impossible to adjudicate with direct laws. Hate propagandists ingeniously use both conventional hate speech and a companion strategy of offence-taking. This tactic involves manufacturing righteous indignation against perceived insults by weaponising laws that prohibit offence and insult. They are thus highly versatile and resilient masters of political spin.

- Fake-news laws will not be able to cope with disinformation-assisted hate propaganda unless we address the root causes of people's preference for untruths. There is urgent need to promote civic values to grow people's openness

to reason, along with their commitment to the democratic values of equality, reciprocity and human rights for all.

Syndicate Discussions

- Issue: Offense as a political ploy. Groups may weaponise existing laws and use them against those vulnerable. In this regard, there is a need to distinguish incitement from offense. Incitement refers to speech that goes beyond acceptable boundaries. Incitement constitutes legitimate grounds for state intervention if its causes and consequences are clear. Offense, on the other hand, refers to the wounding of racial and religious feelings of others. Understood in this way, offense can be exploited by groups.

- Issue: Activism and social media. Digital technology and social media can play a role in galvanising political support and activity. However, the debate on the relationship between activism and social media is constantly evolving. Activists are looking at: (1) how their online activities can feed into their offline activities; (2) how to protect themselves from state intervention by relying less on the digital sphere, and (3) putting more resources into digital security.

- Issue: Socio-economic affluence and activism. There is weak correlation between poverty and protest. Economic and financial difficulties do not account for the diversity of individuals who challenge their governments through protest. In any demonstration, there will be some individuals who joined as a result of economic marginalisation as well as individuals from higher socioeconomic strata who demonstrate because they seek non-material gains.

- Issue: 'Aperture' and identification with online communities. 'Aperture' refers to people's perception of each other. Two people who have a face-to-face discussion have a wide aperture. By contrast, the aperture is much narrower when an Internet user reads a two-sentence text posted online by another Internet user they do not know. Groups created on social networks increase feelings of solidarity within the in-group. However, the downside to such collectives is that individuals draw clear lines between in-group affiliation, and out-group rejection. This exclusivity happens because hashtags, which are built around a specific idea, cause or a person, usually exclude those with different viewpoints or backgrounds.

Distillation

- It is essential to understand how anger manifests within individuals, groups and societies, and how they can be fashioned to effect social change as well as weaponised to discriminate and endanger vulnerable subaltern groups in society.
- Social media platforms and access to these platforms may play an important role in galvanising youth support around a specific cause.
- The Internet has modified how individuals conceive issues related to free speech as they may feel entitled to the expression of opinions without significant repercussions. Regulation of content on social media, however, could change this perception.
- Using 'aperture' as an analogy to people's perceptions of each other shows how there is no real human contact in the online sphere and misunderstanding across technology platforms are bound to occur.
- Offense politics threaten social diversity as it can be exploited to achieve various political agendas. It is as such essential to foster a more resilient and self-governing society, armed with greater knowledge and the ability to mobilise for positive change.

Closing Panel/Moderated Discussion

Norman Vasu, Deputy Head, *Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*
Terri-Anne Teo, Research Fellow*, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*
Jack Goldstone, Professor, *School of Policy and Government, George Mason University*
Hans-Joachim Voth, Professor*, Department of Economics, Zurich University*
Mustafa Dikeç, Professor, *École d'urbanisme de Paris, Université Paris-Est*

Rage is a political phenomenon, which has to be explored at the levels of individual, technology and state. Responses to contemporary rage involve supporting progressive politicians, monitoring the Internet, prioritising community welfare and elevating people's understanding of democracy by engaging them in direct democracy at the local level.

- Manifestations of rage should not be cast aside as impulses or irrational behaviour. Emotions are rooted in social and cultural contexts and practices, and they shape people's perception of the world. Rage and emotions encompass cognition and judgment, and they rely on beliefs.

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Thus, they need to be approached politically rather than pathologically.

- There are three sites of rage: individual, state and technology. At an individual level, rage stems from a quest for meaning and reason, and the desire to be a part of something bigger. At the state level, it is failing to respond to problems of racism and inequality. At the level of technology, social media platforms can generate echo chambers of outrage and rage, and the use of these platforms may amplify rage.

- Sources of anger are twofold. First, material conditions, which refer to the current, tangible state of how things are. Second, the superstructure of collective ideas, beliefs, expectations, and aspirations on how things should be. The rage of recent years stems from the superstructure rather than the material conditions.

- Southeast Asia appears to be moving away from Enlightenment ideals. For example: Hindu nationalism in India and Nepal; Islamic nationalism radical in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia; Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka; Han Chinese nationalism in China, and authoritarianism in Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia are on the rise. Laos and Vietnam remain as stable party-states. Also in Southeast

Asia, states pursue politics of managed difference rather than a civic identity shared by citizens. In Asia-Pacific, Australia, with six prime ministers in a decade, is showing signs of dysfunction. Singapore remains a competitive democracy with freedom of expression, stable pluralism and governance.

- The nation-state will persevere amidst people's search for identity. For nation-states to perform the way they did in the past two hundred years, it is necessary to restrict the mobility of people as it brings identity-related challenges.

- In the early 1900s, a generation of progressive politicians argued against large corporations' market power concentration, targeted the concentration of wealth with initiatives such as progressive taxes, and worked towards the preservation of natural resources via the national park system. They aspired to build international alliances instead of seeking national advantage through competitive nationalism. The negative trends witnessed today can be countered if we support progressive politicians, monitor the Internet, and prioritise community welfare.

- If the ideal is to uphold democracy, it is necessary to teach people how to experience democracy. Practicing direct democracy at a local level is a way to achieve this as it may allow people to make

responsible decisions at the national level. It is also important to question how much free speech and anonymity we can afford.

- Future research may explore the silent majority and hybrid identities. It is important to understand the silent majority's approach to values and ideologies to have a better view of the landscape of emotions. Hybrid identities, on the other hand, will likely rise with the increase in inter-marriages and migration, and it is essential to explore how people with hybrid identities will influence our understanding of rage in the future. Future research may also study the cathartic effects of online ranting.

Workshop Programme

Venue:
Taurus, Leo & Capricorn Ballrooms, Level 1
(unless otherwise stated)

Tuesday, 26 February 2019

0830–
0930hrs

Registration and Light Breakfast

Venue : Taurus & Leo Ballrooms
Foyer,
Level 1

0930–
0945hrs

Workshop Welcome Remarks by
*Shashi Jayakumar, Head, Centre of
Excellence for National Security
(CENS), RSIS, NTU*

0945–
1045hrs

**Panel 1: Road to Rage: Sites and
Structures**

Chair : *Shashi Jayakumar,
Head, Centre of
Excellence for National
Security (CENS), RSIS,
NTU*

Speakers : **Historical Cycles of
Polarization and Rage**
by *Jack Goldstone,
Professor, School of*

Policy and Government, George Mason University

Is Religion the Problem? by *Mark Juergensmeyer, Professor, Department of Global Studies, UC Santa Barbara*

Urban Rage by *Mustafa Dikeç, Professor, École d'urbanisme de Paris, Université Paris-Est*

1045-1100hrs	**Networking Break**
1100-1200hrs	**Interactive Syndicate Discussions**

Syndicate 1
Venue : Capricorn Ballroom, Level 1

Syndicate 2
Venue : Libra & Gemini Ballrooms, Level 1

Syndicate 3
Venue : Aquarius & Pisces Ballrooms, Level 1

1200-1300hrs	**Lunch**	
1300–1400hrs	**Panel 2: Rage of Rages: Culture Wars**	
	Chair :	**Norman Vasu**, *Deputy Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*
	Speakers :	**Populism(s) and Emotions in Europe since the Financial Crisis** by **Marina Prentoulis**, *Senior Lecturer, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia*
		The Politics of Hate: International Implications of the Political Strategies of US Christian Right by **Angelia Wilson**, *Professor, School of*

*Social Sciences,
University of Manchester*

Lessons from the Alt-Right's Rise and Fall by **George Hawley**,
*Associate Professor,
Department of Political
Science, University of
Alabama*

1400-1415hrs	**Networking Break**
1415–1515hrs	**Interactive Syndicate Discussions**

Syndicate 1
Venue : Capricorn Ballroom, Level 1

Syndicate 2
Venue : Libra & Gemini Ballrooms, Level 1

Syndicate 3
Venue : Aquarius & Pisces Ballrooms, Level 1

1515hrs   **End of Day 1**

| 1800–2000hrs | **Workshop Dinner (By Invitation Only)** |
| | Venue : Peach Blossoms, Level 5 |

Wednesday, 27 February 2019

| 0830–0930hrs | **Registration and Light Breakfast** |
| | Venue : Taurus & Leo Ballrooms Foyer, Level 1 |

| 0930–1030hrs | **Panel 3: Roots of Rage: Past and Present** |

Chair : **Terri-Anne Teo***, Research Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

Speakers : **The Uses of Rage in Conte mporary Egyptian Politics: A Feminist Decolonial Analysis** by **Lucia Sorbera**, *Senior Lecturer and Chair of the Department of Arabic Language and Cultures, School of Languages and*

Cultures, University of Sydney

Hysteria, Stereotypes and Moral Panic: Engineering Fear Campaigns from the Colonial Era to the Postcolonial Era by **Farish Noor**, *Associate Professor, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University*

Legitimizing Rage: How Hatreds Come into the Open by ***Hans-Joachim Voth***, *Professor, Department of Economics, Zurich University*

1030-1045hrs	**Networking Break**

1045–1145hrs	**Interactive Syndicate Discussions**

Syndicate 1
Venue : Capricorn Ballroom, Level 1

Syndicate 2
Venue : Libra & Gemini Ballrooms, Level 1

Syndicate 3
Venue : Aquarius & Pisces Ballrooms, Level 1

1145-
1245hrs **Lunch**

1245-
1405hrs **Panel 4: Rage against the System: Online and Offline**

Chair : *Teo Yi-Ling, Senior Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

Speakers : **Civic Activism Transformed** by **Richard Youngs**, *Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe; Professor, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick*

The Psychodynamics of Online Rage by *Aaron Balick, Director, Stillpoint Spaces*

Divisive Disinformation and Hate Propaganda by *Cherian George, Professor, Department of Journalism, Hong Kong Baptist University*

1405–1420hrs	**Networking Break**

1420–1540hrs	**Interactive Syndicate Discussions**

Syndicate 1
Venue : Capricorn Ballroom, Level 1

Syndicate 2
Venue : Libra & Gemini Ballrooms, Level 1

Syndicate 3
Venue : Aquarius & Pisces Ballrooms, Level 1

| 1540–1600hrs | **Closing Panel** |
| | |

All participants and speakers will be able to discuss as a group some of the key issues and takeaways uncovered during the course of the Workshop

Chairs : **Norman Vasu**, *Deputy Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

Terri-Anne Teo, *Research Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), RSIS, NTU*

1600hrs **End of Day 2**

1800–2000hrs **Closing Dinner (by Invitation Only)**

Venue : Aquamarine, Level 4

LIST OF SPEAKERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

SPEAKERS

Mustafa Dikeç
Professor
École d'urbanisme de Paris
Université Paris-Est

Jack Goldstone
Professor
School of Policy and Government
George Mason University

George Hawley
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Alabama

Mark Juergensmeyer
Professor
Department of Global Studies
UC Santa Barbara

Farish Noor
Associate Professor
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Nanyang Technological University

Marina Prentoulis
Senior Lecturer

School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and
Communication Studies
University of East Anglia

Lucia Sorbera
Senior Lecturer and Chair of the Department of Arabic
Language and Cultures
School of Languages and Cultures
University of Sydney

Angelia Wilson
Professor
School of Social Sciences
University of Manchester

Hans-Joachim Voth
Professor
Department of Economics
Zurich University

Richard Youngs
Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe;
Professor, Department of Politics and International
Studies
University of Warwick

CHAIRPERSONS

Shashi Jayakumar
Senior Fellow and Deputy Head
Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS)
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

Terri-Anne Teo
Research Fellow
Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS)
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Teo Yi-Ling
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Norman Vasu
Senior Fellow and Deputy Head
Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS)
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

About the Centre of Excellence for National Security

 The **Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS)** is a research unit of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Established on 1 April 2006, CENS raison d'être is to raise the intellectual capital invested in strategising national security. To do so, CENS is devoted to rigorous policy-relevant analysis across a range of national security issues. CENS is multinational in composition, comprising both Singaporeans and foreign analysts who are specialists in various aspects of national and homeland security affairs. Besides fulltime analysts, CENS further boosts its research capacity and keeps abreast of cutting edge global trends in national security research by maintaining and encouraging a steady stream of Visiting Fellows. For more information about CENS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg/research/cens/.

About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** is a professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate education and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Region Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific. For more information about RSIS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg.

About the National Security Coordination Secretariat

The **National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS)** was formed under the Prime Minister's Office in July 2004 to coordinate security policy, manage national security projects, provide strategic analysis of terrorism and national security related issues, as well as perform Whole-Of-Government research and sense-making in resilience. NSCS comprises three centres: the National Security Coordination Centre (NSCC), the National Security Research Centre (NSRC) and the Resilience Policy and Research Centre (RPRC). Please visit www.nscs.gov.sg for more information.