

Abstract

The aim of this research project is to contribute to the understanding of the right-wing politics in the United States (US) from a gender perspective. Before the 2016 US presidential election, two key influences were apparent: first, a shift to the right in the US politics, and second the allegation that Russia influenced the outcome of the election. This allegation falls into a category of explanation that focuses on individuals' motives. However, it is not clear whether the use of Russian sponsored media and/or the Kremlin's contacts with far-right groups in the US had an independent causal influence. This research suggests a different perspective on the current role of 'Russia' in Western politics. Drawing on a feminist poststructuralist theory, this study presents an alternative account of Russia as a discursive construction—a referent object—whose meaning is preconditioned on the construction of the alt-right US self-discourse.

Introduction

On the 8th of November, 2016, to the surprise of liberal media and its readers across the world, Donald J. Trump was elected as the 45th President of the United States of America. Few anticipated a Donald Trump victory. Both the polls and electoral forecasts said it would not happen this way.

One weakness of the 2016 liberal readings of the US presidential polls, in which forecasters predicted Hillary Clinton as winning this election, is that they underestimated the segment of those who did not respond to polling surveys or of those who were not honest about whom they intended to vote for. They misread this post-Obama landscape in part because they failed to see how prejudices in favor of normative understandings of race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation are intersectionally integral to and inseparable from the self-identification of America as a white, Christian nation (Weber, 2016).

This effect was only partially grasped in public discussions on the Trump presidency. Indeed, the afterthoughts on the election result as captured by liberal online journalism can best be categorized into two responses: the fear of a Trump presidency and the suggested cause behind Trump's win. One key explanation that left-wing media had focused on is the

account of Russian hacking. However, by presupposing a particular background as already in place, explanation of this kind is significantly incomplete. For one, there is little evidence empirically to suggest that, if indeed Russia was behind the hacking, its tampering has *decisively* affected the election outcome. Moreover, it eschews a critical analysis on the broader cultural context of the current US political landscape.

In fact, analysis that causally pieces events together abides by a knowledge practice, wherein, Doty argues (1993), “certain background meanings, kinds of social actors and relationships” are already pre-established. So principally, what is problematic is how commentators regard Trump’s election win as a mere result brought about by the events preceding it, which leaves the broader, already existing, conventions of US political discourse unexamined. One may see a degree of what Norton (1993: p.43) coined, “cultural conflation of truth” in these commentaries, transforming a highly cultural practice into a naturalistic account.

In short, online liberal media reporting seeks to explain the Trump presidency with concepts that are inadequate to the task. Contrary to the conventional languages, such as ‘democracy in crisis’, inherited to give the impression of recent political upheavals in America simply as they are, a more nuanced reflection is needed.

This research relates the effort to produce a more nuanced perspective to the larger literature on performativity and national state identity – bridging the two bodies of theory by arguing that through the lens of performance, current US political realities, which were brought into motion through sets of cultural enactment, may be observed. Instead, this project addresses one urgent question: “How has a particular “US sovereign subject, who could authorize a Trump presidency”, emerged?” (Weber, 2016). One could even ask: ‘How was Trump more representable of the far-right and/or conservative value’?

By carrying out a discourse analysis on Breitbart news articles, an alternative explanation, based on Doty’s seminal 1993 text on post-positivist analysis of US foreign policy, will be put forward. To do so, I offer close readings of texts with a concern in particular for the hyper masculinized figuration of the sovereign subject. My argument will suggest that

representations of hegemonic masculinity is crucial to the emotionality of texts, wherein the “emotional intensities”, which have allowed ones to become invested in a particular outlook of the world, may be traced.

This project further suggests locating sets of alternative right-wing narratives that express the figuration of American-ness to understand how they generate the effects that they do. As such, the analysis offered here does not follow the restrictive guidelines of contemporary political theory that still understands the outside world much more narrowly *as it simply is*. In so doing, it addresses the issues of knowledge, subjectivity and figural collectivity in a new digital media age.

Background

A partial explanation for the rise of the radical right can be found in Stuart Hall’s celebrated essay, *The Great Moving Right Show* (1979). Hall examined the political-ideological dimensions of the historical emergence of the radical nationalist right in the UK and identified how political restructurings of the 1970s was brought into practice through the combined effect of traditional ideologies and deployment of discourses—in short, how specific conservative modalities of governance and citizenship became national common sense. In this way, he suggested the importance of examining the power of ideology and representation and what those representations make possible.

However, borrowing Hall’s analysis in the era of Trump is not fully satisfactory. Even though the descriptive and informative value of Hall’s writing is not disputed, it does not adequately help commentators to understand Trump’s presidency. This study suggests thinking beyond Hall’s account, which glosses over how the political leader functions in his or her role. It suggests that the president performs a representative function, namely to be understood first in semiotic and second in executive terms (Norton, 1993: 87). The connotation of the leader as a figure is useful in the sense that it bridges the thematic vocabulary of the embodiment of the state—that is, “the state has *figured* in the political imagination in terms traditionally associated with *the human*” (emphasis added) (Neocleous, 2003, p. 5).

Throughout the 2016 US presidential campaign, Donald Trump consistently praised Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, for his strong leadership qualities. In his effusive praise of Putin, Trump rejected decades of political orthodoxy, which is a unique articulatory experience for a presidential candidate in the US. This positive representation of Putin is also shared across the far-right media in the US.

This research suggests that the 'Russia' discourse may be either a small or a large injunction, and that it functions alongside other discourses to create an impactful discursive formation. For Doty (1996) and Neumann (1996), this concerned the way in which a specific Self has constructed itself by constructing a certain Other. Adopting a discourse analysis approach entails a textual focus on the signs, tropes, and narratives concerning 'Russia' and/or 'Putin' that are available. This highlights the practice of representation involved, which is evident not only in the way that alt-right news writing present Russia's Putin, but also in how they represent aspects of the world in which 'Putin' is situated.

Analyzing discourses that are present in the news writings reveals how people come to take a certain event, or an entire social reality, for granted. By employing an active understanding on the workings of this cultural power, one may begin to trace how a shared cultural understanding, which informs a certain reading of the world, is constantly (re)produced by users' unreflexive participation in ways that users agree or disagree with Breitbart News. According to Luke (2002, p. xxv), they are cultural in the sense that they can be defined as "the conventional understandings common to specific social groups, which are made manifest in their shared acts." So, while the questions of whether readers identify with the statements concerned, and to what degree, lie beyond the scope of this study, it suggests that a close examination of the representational practices that are evident in Breitbart News will shed new light on how people categorize and understand their world.

Method

In order to understand the effect these representations of Russia achieve in US politics, this research project conducted a discourse analysis in two parts, the first of which examined news articles from Breitbart.com that were published between 1st January, 2016 and 8th November, 2016, in order to track the logic articulated, and the preferred meaning often

associated with 'Russia' on Breitbart.com. This stage can be understood as an open process seeking the theoretically significant core. The analysis of the texts within the period concerned involved the delineation of what Foucault (1970) considered the key body of regulatory statements that singularly "establish the connections [between all] statements" (Andersen, 2008 p.14). Specifically, this can be described as locating the signs, concepts, tropes, and metaphors that are repeatedly presented and has become temporarily normalized in the texts concerned (Dunn and Neumann, 2016).

Data Collection

This paper employs an analysis of Breitbart.com in order to evaluate the current situation of the Trumpian conservative movement. Breitbart News was selected as an important news platform for analysis because its influence became clear following Trump's appointment of the executive chairman of Breitbart.com, Steve Bannon, as his campaign CEO in August 2016; he later appointed him as his Chief Strategist in 2017. Rather than exploring how readers respond to curated media, this paper concerns the way in which the representation of Americanness is expressed by Breitbart News. This involves conceiving online news media as a site wherein the power/knowledge nexus operates.

Initial Findings

The presence of 'Russia' and/or 'Putin' is strongly linked to the corruption claims against Clinton, her campaign team and the Democratic Party. The news was replete with stories about the "Russian reset", the "Uranium deal", E-mail controversy, and the Clinton Foundation, to which "Russian money appears to have been funneled" (Delingpole, 2016). These articles are very similar in terms of content, all widely reporting on Hillary Clinton's E-mail scandal, her failed foreign policy, and supposed connection to Russia. For example, descriptions, such as "queen of corruption", "hawkish", "warmongering", "the political elite", and "Clinton money machine", are prevalent. These articulations proceed to undermine Clinton's credibility and her record as secretary of state.

Under this pretext, many were cautious and feared that a Clinton presidency would lead to "a nuclear war" (Hahn, 2016), "an unprecedented constitutional crisis" (Pollak, 2016), "refugee crisis", impeachment crisis, and "crisis in the entire region [Middle East]" (Waked,

2016). These descriptions were part of a larger discursive context that framed what a Clinton presidency would stand for, for one commentator even suggested that “if we expect this to continue, we are rapidly approaching a Third World kind of government” (Hayward, 2016).

These crises-statements demonstrate how discursive representations of Clinton’s vulnerabilities produce background knowledge that made possible a certain reading of Russian interference without compromising one’s patriotism. While the left-wing liberal newspaper endlessly reported Russian hacking as a direct threat to US national security, Breitbart responded by implying that although the Russian hacking may be plausible – or a fabrication, the focus should be on the leak’s content.

The hacking and leaking of Democratic officials called into question the identity of the United States as a respected hegemonic power. Reflecting on America’s declining global influence under the leadership of Obama, Breitbart repeatedly quoted Trump for his comment on Russia’s interference: “[Putin] doesn’t respect our president. And if it is Russia – which it’s probably not, nobody knows who it is – but if it is Russia, it’s really bad for a different reason, because it shows how little respect they have for our country, when they would hack into a major party and get everything” (Pollack, 2016).

In contrast, Russia is re-invented in these narratives. While Russia is not a central figure in these texts, taking ‘Russia’ out of the context would change the over-tone of the narration. This demonstrates how it is through ‘Russia’, discursive representations, which produce background knowledge to assist the reading of Clinton as corrupt and weak, were made available. The representational practice examined thus far illustrates the discursive construction of a particular kind of unwanted leadership. One may begin to question just what kind of strong leadership would be signified in a situation in which the US was expected to appear *otherwise*.

Reading Russia, Reading American Manhood

“I think if I were Vladimir Putin, I’d rather deal with a weak American President than a strong American President, even as we look at the campaigns, with what Trump says

about Putin. Putin has to understand he's a strong figure, and that can cause trouble for Putin down the line" (Hayward, 2016).

There was more to 'Russia' than simply exposing the political impotence of the Democratic Party and its presidential candidate. In her book *Faking It: US Hegemony in a "Post-Phallic" Era*, Cynthia Weber (1999) characterizes US state identity as going through a hegemonic-masculine crisis. By likening US-Cuban relationship as a failed courtship, Weber related this very failure to woo Cuba as one that made apparent its lack of a feminine object in which to *reflects* its masculine identity.

Within Breitbart News, Russia has always been found in a masculine position vis-à-vis the United States. From this angle, a similar argument can be made about the construction of the US-Russia bond, which is viewed favorably by the alt-right conservatives. As Weber would have suggested, Russia was positioned to reproduce US hemispheric ideals and to affirm a US masculine identity (i.e. the US is a real man because it has a real man, Putin, as a buddy). One can even argue that what the alt-right recognizes in Russia is the hegemonic image the US once possessed mirrored back. This all the more suggests that Russia is endowed as having certain desired characteristics.

The positive representation of Putin is significant in Breitbart News, in the way that there are replete references to Putin's hypermasculinized leadership, from the description of Putin's "transport fleet [featuring] doors 10 times thicker than a normal car" (Huston, 2016) and his popularity with the Russian people (Hayward, 2016; Breitbart London, 2016), to his foreign policy decisions in Turkey, Israel, and China and Russia's increasing diplomatic-military influence in Iran, Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. While Russia's annexation of Crimea was frowned upon, Putin's hyper-masculinity was all too readily affirmed and appreciated by this community.

For many, Russia is said to become "the rising military star in the region [the Middle East] while the US is perceived as a failing star" (Danan, 2016). These representations of Russia's military and economic strength simultaneously exposed US impotency in these regions and, bizarrely, reproduced a distinctly American understanding of regional hegemony. The

promotion of alt-right values in America is to be found in Putin's Russia. Further reading into Breitbart suggests a **completely different understanding of the material world from that of a liberal view**. In this 'world', Russia does not emerge as a threat, but a potential ally. This is readily affirmed in the text, which can best be examined under two representations of Putin's Russia.

In the first category, 'Russia' appeared in contexts that positioned 'Russia' and 'China' closely. However, the claims about the cultural and political nature of the two countries differed. China was represented negatively in all accounts and was described as a "dangerous military foe" (Martel, 2016). Its positive association with the 'Middle East' illustrate this point clearly (Xenakis, 2016; Hayward, 2016; Mora, 2016), as in the case of China having signed "new economic and military agreements, [which] *link the countries* [Pakistan and Saudi Arabia] *together*" (Xenakis, 2016, my italics). While 'China' emerged as "a threat to its own people, its neighbors, and to Japan and to the US" (Yon, 2016), Russia was said to "no longer kills or imprisons citizens en masse" (Yon, 2016).

However, the clearest expression of this shift can be found in the narrative which emerges concerning terrorism and geopolitics (also see: Pinkerton, 2016). One example, which is worth quoting in length, demonstrates this perfectly:

"We [the US] have interests that converge with Russia, in the case of certain elements of Islamic terrorism. We have interests that diverge, particularly on strategic weapons, and the overall global arrangement of things. The Obama administration's gotten it completely wrong. They won't cooperate with Russia on the bigger picture of terrorism, and they try and cut arms-control agreements that end up entirely in Russia's advantage." (Hayward, 2016).

This optimism about working with Russia on terrorism is not without reason:

"Like many other media outlets, Russia's RT.com speculates that the prospect of increased Russian activity against ISIS in Syria, coordinated with the US, is the reason for the videotaped threat" (Hayward, 2016)

This is indicative that Russia, too, has suffered Islamist extremist threat; and, Indeed, both countries have experienced similar terrorist attacks on their own soil in the past. These comments clearly argue that US and Russian interest align and should cooperate to defeat a common enemy of 'Islam'. Rather than being single incidents, these statements exemplify Breitbart's long-held position that Russia and the US are on the same side in the war on terrorism and that the US should forge closer ties with Russia to fight an Islamist terrorism.

And as the same author, Hayward, argued elsewhere with regard to his disagreement with the US-Russia ceasefire deal, brokered by the Obama administration:

“The Russian spokesman also claimed “terrorists” had used the US-brokered ceasefire to ‘regroup, replenish their arsenals and obviously prepare for offensive actions.’” (Hayward, 2016)

This comment is making the suggestion that as Obama wavered on Syria, ISIS terrorists in Syria benefited from the administration's diplomatic decision. It implies that Putin administration has far greater credibility in carrying out effective counterterrorism efforts in the region than those of the Obama administration.

Meanwhile, Russia's strength has been explicitly raised elsewhere with regard to its increasing military strength:

“A US military official said that Russians flew four Tu-22 Backfire bombers to an air base in western Iran, marking the first time Russia has used a third country to attack rebel targets inside Syria. The move is said to be the result of clandestine cooperation between Russia and Iran to boost their military capabilities” (Danan, 2016)

In this ideal paradigm, Russia and the US would be able to cooperate against jihadist organizations, jointly developing counterterrorist practices. This new narrative constantly represents Russia as a *game changer*, a *qualified* partner to the US in the global

counterterror fight. With a general shift in the portrayal of security, Breitbart also transformed the portrayal of US identity.

By now, it is evident that 'Russia' seems to have taken the place of the USSR (or 'Communist Russia') as the Other against which US identity is stabilized—an identity that can be validated under the right leadership. This may well explain why when Trump bid for presidency, voters were all too willing to listen. In Trump's major foreign policy speech on April 27, the masculine identity attributed to Putin was transferred onto Trump, for the American people saw in Trump the kind of strength that is befitting to their imaginary of the presidency figure. Trump spoke of the relations with Russia in these terms:

“I believe an easing of tensions, and improved relations with Russia from a position of strength only is possible, absolutely possible. Common sense says this cycle, this horrible cycle of hostility, must end and ideally will end soon.”

The following section will argue that the connection made earlier between the representations of Clinton's corrupt global establishment and the desire to restore the American people's 'interest' further exemplify how texts performatively enact a certain cultural understanding. Security and immigration concerns, understood under certain light, have been used to promote the latter's positions. A close reading of three Breitbart news texts (Hahn, 2016; Hayward; 2016; Tomlinson; 2016) that are published a week prior to the election day will be used to illustrate this point. These texts reveal how national identity *is* enacted performatively, especially through their active construction of reality.

Discussion: a close reading of texts

It will begin by noting that the view of reality as represented in Breitbart rejects the narrative of liberal news, with the same set of facts rearranged to compose a different story line. This is exemplified in the analysis above. The following analysis will argue that the connections *made* between the representations of Clinton's corrupt global establishment and the desire to restore the American people's 'interest' further exemplify how texts performatively enact a certain cultural understanding. Security and immigration concerns, understood under certain light, have been used to promote the latter's positions. A close

reading of three Breitbart news texts (Hahn, 2016; Hayward; 2016; Tomlinson; 2016) that are published a week prior to the election day will be used to illustrate this point. These texts reveal how national identity *is* enacted performatively, especially through their active construction of reality.

Fear is a key emotion that emerged in relation to immigration after 9/11 in the US. The tensions are not new. Immigration discussions tend to emphasize the need for immigrants to assimilate into American culture. Some immigration reform critics, like Huntington, have argued (2004) that the latest wave of Hispanic immigration is fundamentally unlike previous waves of European workers. This specification of race effectively leads to a means of practising exclusions. For Huntington, the erosion of the American creed, and the blurring of lines intended to differentiate peoples, cultures, and the borders between America and Mexico foment fear. In times of anxiety, the presumed cultural difference becomes the keystone for justifiable violence and exclusionary practices, within which racist discourses have the capacity to connect “issues of national identity, immigration, and xenophobia” (Doty, 2003: p.24). In the aftermath of 9/11 justifiable racism against Muslim and the Arab population ignited demonization of Arabs and Muslims and this trend persisted.

This point on a nationalist strand of racism was effectively illustrated when an article, titled ‘Putin blames lack of traditional values for the acquittal of sexual emergency migrant’, quoted Putin from *Österreich*, a national tabloid Austrian daily newspaper, for saying that a nation that refuses to defend its children has no future,

“In a European country a child is raped by an [Iraqi asylum seeker]. The court acquitted him for two reasons: *he speaks the language poorly* and he did not understand that the boy didn’t want this. This *is* the result of the dissolution of traditional national values” (Tomlinson, 2016)

A close reading of the coverage reveals how conceptions of the racial dimension have been critical to maintaining the generalized representation of refugees. Central to establishing the pretext is the figure of the vulnerable, white, little boy and girl, for the news article entry enacts a moral outrage to protect the youth from harm. The body of the youth, in

terms of its association with potential endangerment, has become a discursive vehicle in the rhetoric of the conservative-right. As Berlant (1995) argued that a similar moral panic is evident in the US national culture more generally around discourses on sex, she (1995: p.390) also contended that “we should understand that these disturbing figures are fetishes, effigies that condense, displace, and stand in for arguments about ‘who the people are.’”

Stoked by the rhetoric of the terrorism, fear is evident, and xenophobia is on the rise. Fear not only allows certain seemingly foreign bodies whose acts, values, identities and identifications to be framed, but also justifies the exercise of greater state control. This article entry can be analyzed alongside a news coverage on Russia refusing to grant refugee status to Syrians,

“Voice of America News interviewed some refugees from the Aleppo area at the end of October. They noted Russia seemed like a natural choice for asylum, given the solid relationship between Damascus and Moscow, but instead most of the refugees in Russia are overstaying temporary visas and hoping they don’t get deported.”
(Hayward, 2016)

As an Arabic translator Khadizh Ismail Muhkamed Basil Adib, who lived in Russia for some twenty years before receiving his Russian citizenship testified,

“Unfortunately in Moscow [migration service doesn’t] receive Syrians at all. If Syrians go to apply [for legal status] they say they’ll deport them out of the country.”
(Hayward, 2016)

As the racial expression of a cultural discursive structure makes the connection between immigration and national security, it became possible for the US to position itself to make the argument, which has far-reaching consequences in its domestic and foreign policy, that men (especially those of migrants, immigrants, illegal aliens and terrorists) behave badly, because they are bad by nature and this is why conflicts and domestic terrorism occur. This line of thinking is indicative of a view that suggests the American people have reasons to fear the borderless nature of a world in an age of globalization. An explanation, as Doty

suggested (2003: p.52) is that the linking of crime and immigration posed non-white immigrant as a dangerous element of society, “an enemy within, that was a threat to the order, stability and identity” of the US. It suggests that the domestic concern with social order, which is most apparent in fears of crime, requires the US government to lay down exceptional rules and security practices. This call for a greater state security control is illustrative of the third Breitbart text:

“This election, we are not only deciding what kind of world we will have, but whether we will have a world or not going forward. We stand up loud and clear and we have a political base for this social movement that is coming together across this country...” (Hahn,2016)

As Weber (2005) argued, what makes a Waltzian world order, which is akin to the worldview of Breitbart.com, function is its cultural connection to the notion of fear. “Culture has to do with how we make sense of the world and how we produce, reproduce and circulate that sense” (Weber, 2005: p.3). As Edensor has observed, there is a reification of the nation at the level of culture (2002: p. 1), where nationally-rooted cultural normalization is not considered as performative enactments in process. Here, Butler’s (1990; 1993) notion of performativity can be employed to explain how this theory is related to identity, a collective perception to security and security-related practices.

As with the dichotomy of sex/gender, to suggest that they are both discursive construct, will lead Butler to argue that there is no sex that is not already gender: “This production of sex as the pre-discursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*” (Butler, 1993). With this in mind, Weber has observed that Butler’s discussion on gender and sex through performativity is equally relevant to develop a more nuanced understanding of state and sovereignty (Weber, 1998: p. 82); that is: if one follows Butler’s (1990) work on sex and gender, nation-state and sovereignty should, equally, be thought of as co-constitutive. This point, together, with performativity has provided the lens of interpreting the discursive construction of state and subjectivity as brought into being through repetitive cultural enactments of specific ways of doing and acting (1993).

It is important to bear in mind that these reiterations are a sign that the materialization of the given cultural intelligibility is a process (Lloyd, 2007). Key to understanding this process is the fact that performativity (Butler, 1993) always involves normative discourses that materialize an understanding of cultural intelligibility, which fixes the ways in which people “understand the materiality” (Weber, 1998: p.80), to the perform activity of national identity. Following Weber on this point, it is possible to think about the forging of Americanness under a different light—how it is about enacting an approved moral America(n) that does not exist in a cultural form prior to these enactments (2018). At stake is how the underlying belief, privileged by patriotic US discourses, performatively forges a national concern for the internal security problem. Evidence from this research suggests that decisions can arise in numerous ways and at various sites and scales. Therefore, it suggests that a state practice of contemporary exceptionalism and a desire for a societal security is neither controlled by the elites or the state.

Conclusion

Many liberal online news media has suggested that Breitbart.com is the darling of Russian propaganda effort. This understanding resonates positively with the phrase ‘Putin’s Puppet’ that appeared in major liberal newspaper headlines. Amid the allegation of Russian meddling, radical right-wing news media, including that of Breitbart.com, is said to have purposively disseminated messages that are deemed to benefit Kremlin. This level of analysis became the cornerstone for an explanation of the 2016 election result that cited Russia as having influenced the outcome.

However, a central criticism throughout the project was that there is a need to think about the role of ‘Russia’ in Western politics differently. Researchers would not gain much critical insight by assuming from the outset that Breitbart.com is affiliated with Russian government-controlled television network RT. Theoretically, there is more to uncovering how ‘Russia’ has become so central to US left-wing and right-wing discourse in the era of Trump and what the ‘content’ of these textual representations specify.

The research undertaken in this project was able to confirm that Russia has emerged as a central and positive concept in Breitbart.com. In the news coverage, where 'Russia' appears, there exists a larger social and historic *textual* context—or, a background knowledge, which is mostly accepted by right-wing readers of Breitbart.com as given truths. A terrain of discursive meanings is therefore traceable in language and through this lens, it presents an alternatively different reality from that as appeared in liberal news media coverage. This is demonstrated in the result of the textual analysis that is presented in the previous section. By tracing how 'Russia' appears as meaning textually, this project was able to point to how the meaning of sovereignty has shifted. This project also suggested that these textual identifications indicate a simultaneous co-construction of the conservative-right US self-discourse and the Russian other-discourse. In other words, these news resources mobilized to tell homogenized stories about the conservative-right US self and in turn elevate the same news resources as more than competing stories, but as the truth. Textually, they were able to mobilize a particular understanding of US self; it is one that undermines a particular understanding of American sovereign space as constituted by liberal norms.

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