Epilogue

Mapping the Topography of Oppression

Jenny White

Abstract: During today's crisis in Turkey, victimhood authorises oppression, oppressors see themselves as victims and the oppressed are not only the poor, but educated middle classes. Citizen and state are imbricated in the same political and discursive fields where people mobilise against one another, some moving up and others down, creating unexpected landscapes of victimisation and oppression that do not fit comfortably in literature that analyses 'politics from below'. How do we conceptualise this in a way that respects people's understanding of their coordinates in a complex landscape of power? This article interrogates some basic assumptions of this literature, including the impact of the observer's position and the oppression/resistance framework, replacing it with a model of politics as a shared horizontal topography of action across a terrain of values.

Keywords: oppression, politics from below, resistance, Turkey, victimhood, victimisation

It seems an act of bravado to publish an issue on the theme of Turkish politics from below when in 2018 public discourse is taken up with the reverse, the heavy hand of the Turkish government pushing out, quite literally, difference, dissent and opposition, not just among the poor and powerless but at all levels and in all sectors of society. And what are we to make of the attempted military coup in 2016, impeded by citizens who were asked by the country's leader to take to the streets. Is this populism? Is it politics from below? In a more general sense, two related questions come to mind. In times like this, how do we study the intersection of politics and society, and how can we do this as impartial scholars? Rather than posit a model of oppression from above and resistance from below, I suggest that political life is better understood as a horizontal field across which individuals and groups cooperate and compete in complex

and morally ambiguous ways. When examined at the micro level and followed over time, they do not lend themselves to easy categorisation as oppressors and victims but rather require the researcher to examine each on its own merits and sidestep implicit liberal aspirations that analytically privilege resistance from below as an analytical lens. The contributors to this issue, though using the language of up/down politics, speak to these ambiguities and discontinuities in today's Turkey.

Let me set the historical stage on which the articles in this issue play out. Since Turkey's first free elections in 1950 until 2002, some version of secularist parties or coalitions had been in power that alternately co-opted or shunned religious conservatives in the public arena. The overarching state ideology was Kemalism, which implemented a radical program of social engineering that, after the French model of *laïcité*, aimed to eradicate religion in the public sphere and develop a modern, secular lifestyle. Within that vision, there was space for piety, but it was an Islam shaped by the state through the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which controlled mosques and religious education. Headscarves were banned in parliament, the civil service, public institutions, courtrooms and for a time at universities. Much of the industrial sector was in the hands of government-allied families living a secular lifestyle emblematic of the national elite.

Citizens, like obedient children in a patriarchal family, were expected to conform to the nation's norms, values and preferred national profile, the boundaries of which shifted in different periods to exclude particular ethnic, religious and other characteristics such as ideological orientation and sexual preference. Non-Muslims, Roma, Kurds and the minority Islamic sect of Alevis, among others, were excluded socially and politically and at times targeted, sometimes violently. During the 1980 military coup, people associated with leftist ideologies were arrested, and many fled the country. In other words, the vulnerable in Kemalist Turkey were not only the poor but also included the educated and middle classes, Kurdish businessmen, leftist teachers and civil servants, lawyers, writers and journalists.

In 2002, the balance of power changed with the election of the Islam-rooted Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), a party that has been continually re-elected since then with a plurality of votes under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The AKP's success and economic changes in the 1980s that allowed provincial businesspeople to flourish gave social and political control to pious conservatives, who then set about disempowering the secular elites. Social exclusion, poverty and chronic unemployment had bred resentment of Kemalist governments among the pious population and accounted to some extent for AKP's popularity. The AKP government showed respect for conservative majority values and gave them hope that they could better their lives. It expanded social services; built roads, subways, bridges and other infrastructure; and in the first ten years of governing expanded the middle class. Poverty remains a problem, and the

unemployment rate continues to hover around 10 per cent, with youth unemployment much higher, but AKP supporters, who make up about half the population, feel empowered socially, politically and economically, even if individuals themselves may not be doing quite so well.

The new Muslim bourgeoisie has developed its own publishing, fashion and leisure industries and dominates many of the sectors previously populated by secular Kemalists. Kemalist political ideology and lifestyle has become increasingly embattled. Having said this, it is important to point out that, as a result of the marketisation of lifestyles, secular and pious lifestyles have in many ways converged. Choices and attitudes among pious youth do not necessarily correspond to the ideal norms propagated by the AKP, something the government has sought to address through its missionising of women (*vaizeler*) employed by the Diyanet to advise households on the most intimate subjects (Maritato, this issue; White 2013). In its first years of rule, the AKP government reached out to previously marginalised minorities, including non-Muslims, Alevi and Kurds before reinscribing exclusionary nationalist boundaries.

On 15 July 2016, an attempted military-led coup against the AKP failed. In response, the AKP declared a state of emergency, which was continually renewed, allowing the government to rule by decree. Since the coup attempt, the AKP has carried out massive purges at every level of society. As of this publication, more than 170,000 people have been dismissed from their positions, including journalists, writers, doctors, 6,000 academics, and 4,400 judges and prosecutors. More than 142,000 people have been detained, and 81,000 people have been formally arrested (Turkey Purge 2018). While visiting inmates in Silivri Prison in 2017, MP Şafak Pavey recalled that when an inmate requested a book from the administration, he was told, 'The book is not available, but the author is here if you are interested' (Pavey 2017).

The charges levelled against those detained are usually vaguely defined accusations of 'terrorism' that can be based on the flimsiest of evidence or anonymous denunciation by a neighbour, co-worker or even family member – something that the government has encouraged. Despite the AKP's pro-faith policies, pious Muslims remain vulnerable if they fall afoul of the government. This has particularly affected followers of Hizmet, a global Muslim movement centred on education and business and organised around the writings of a charismatic Turkish preacher, Fethullah Gülen, who lives in self-imposed exile in the United States. In recent decades, followers of Gülen and graduates of Hizmet schools took up positions in the civil service and state institutions, particularly the judiciary and police, and developed broad business networks (Hartmann, this issue). The AKP government worked closely together with Hizmet to consolidate its power but fell out over a variety of issues, including the AKP's outreach in 2012 to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has been at war with the Turkish state for three decades. Hizmet, which exhibits a form of piety firmly rooted in Turkish nationalism, did not approve of this attempt to broker peace. Because of its extensive presence in the police and judiciary,

Hizmet is widely believed to be behind the attempt to derail the process by arresting the government's emissary. The AKP struck back, accusing Hizmet of having forged a 'parallel' state, in 2015 designated it as a terror organisation and the following year blamed it for orchestrating the coup attempt. Even members of Erdoğan's inner circle and former top officials in his government have found themselves pushed out and made vulnerable to accusations of disloyalty and other charges that could imperil them and their families. An extraordinary presidential election in July 2018 fundamentally changed Turkey's political system to one in which the president holds paramount power, sidelining parliament and uprooting previous institutions and power holders. As a result, the boundaries between oppressor and victim, between the powerful and the vulnerable, are subject to unpredictable seismic shifts.

In rereading some of the classic literature on politics from below, such as works by James Scott and Asef Bayat, I struggled to apply these frameworks to the circumstances described above, a landscape in which groups of people that often share the same social backgrounds and discursive fields mobilise against one another, some moving up and others moving down in a continual rollercoaster of opportunity and vulnerability. The oppressed in contemporary Turkey arguably are not only the poor but, as before, also include part of the educated middle classes, teachers, lawyers, professionals, writers and civil servants, just as the oppressors can be found among these same cadres. Judges and prosecutors adjudicate in trials of other judges and prosecutors who have fallen prey to political labelling, along with doctors, lawyers, writers and others cast out by members of their social and professional tribes. Joakim Parslow powerfully describes this in this issue.

The parameters of the ideal national profile propagated by the state may have shifted to privilege pious Sunnis, but piety alone is not a determining measure for being positioned 'up' or 'down'. Pious Sunnis of any social class who are accused of association with Hizmet or being critical of the government are pitched into extreme vulnerability that can include arrest; permanent loss of job, social security and insurance; the confiscation of all property; cancellation of passport; and social shunning. This has created enormous fissures in the ranks of the devout. Ida Hartmann, in this issue, describes the devastating effect on the Hizmet community and their reactions. What stands out to me in the present situation is the imbrication of oppressor and oppressed in the same political and discursive fields, particularly those related to nationalism and Islam, but also cultural understandings of family and community. These discourses can unite people, but they can also serve as cudgels to categorise, divide and demonise groups of people who otherwise are similar in background and belief.

What 'quiet encroachment', in the words of Bayat (2010), can survive this level of increasingly random repression and mutual suspicion? I think about the people I have come to know over decades of research in Turkey. Many are in despair, victims of the government's purge, exposed to endlessly creative

forms of inhumanity. Other citizens, people whom I have also come to like and respect, are rejoicing that their oppressors and people whom they see as enemies of the nation are being vanquished. They are among that half of the population voting for the AKP. For decades, they had felt victimised by secular governments, kept in a back room like stepchildren of the nation. Victimhood authorises oppression, and oppressors see themselves as victims. How do we make sense of this in a way that respects people's own understanding of their coordinates in a complex landscape of power? Crises like these bring us to the limits of our current models. They demand of us creative accommodation with unexpected and perhaps unthinkable landscapes of power.

Let us take a topographical look at the concept of politics from below. The up/down model of politics has a long history. Hegel's conception of civil society invoked an imaginary space, with the state up high, the family low on the ground and a range of other institutions in between. There is a common-sense perception that the state operates at a "higher level" and secures its legitimacy by means of what James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002: 983) have called claims of vertical encompassment. In other words, the discourse of up and down naturalises the authority of the state by positing that it encompasses the local in spatial scope, in superior power, interest and moral purpose. The state is imagined to reach down, intervene, manipulate and plan society. The struggle, then, is conceived to come from below, from the community, the grassroots and the local, which are laden with nostalgia and an aura of a 'grounded' authenticity. Civil society, Ferguson writes, is placed at the zone of contact between the state and this authentic local (2008: 89-90).

An up/down model of oppression conceives of people as embedded in structures of power, so politics from below is inevitably framed as the poor standing their ground against the better off, as civil society pushing back against the state, women resisting patriarchy or youth upending social norms. Saba Mahmood (2005) has suggested that there is a hidden liberal, individualist agenda in social science research, particularly research on women in the Middle East. She suggests that scholars tend to see oppression or resistance in actions that the people we are observing might define differently, as something they have chosen to do, difficult or uncomfortable as it may seem to outsiders. Are actions in pursuit of goals of which we do not approve a form of resistance? An up/down structure of politics allows the observer to revisit repeatedly the revolutionary hope that the working class, the poor, women and the downtrodden will win in the end.

I would argue that politics at its most basic is a horizontal landscape through which people move, searching for resources, for protection, seeking to achieve their goals within the historically situated parameters of their time and place and interacting with others in a variety of ways that cannot be reduced to up/down positionality. People move across this landscape individually or in groups, to greater or lesser effect. They are trying, if only in their square meter of effectiveness, to gain some control over their fate and that of others. Often,

their circumstances and the impossibility of challenging dominant norms allows only unspoken coordinated action, a tactical manipulation of events and 'everyday practices' that result in what Amélie Le Renard (2014) in her study of young Saudi women calls new subjectivations, new ways to be subjects. Hartmann, in this issue, describes how Hizmet followers reconfigure 'how to be' when the circumstances of the purge make their previous relation to the state tradition untenable. Through the interpretation of certain dreams believed to be 'private letters from God', Hizmet followers reconfigure the conflict so that it is no longer a worldly power struggle that creates fear and anger but rather a test from God that requires faith, gratitude and patience as a response that will be rewarded in the afterlife.

At times, people connect with others more systematically in networks that lend themselves to collective action. They are hindered or helped in this by the resources and talents they already have or that are lacking. The poor have less money and fewer powerful connections but may have the advantage of a shared religious or political identity that at that historical moment acts as a sword in hand to smite their perceived oppressors or to better their lot (goals that often are in tandem). A destabilised model of political action that admits a kaleidoscope of positionality, power and vulnerability poses a challenge to the observer. It makes it more difficult to assign statuses like victim or oppressor and thereby to identify a trajectory of social change. If we adjust the research lens to micro practices, as the contributors to this issue do, it becomes problematic to assign up/down status to the various actors. The female preachers whom Chiara Maritato studies, for instance, propagate state-defined normative values while at the same time taking advantage of newly possible professional capacities for women.

Scott (1987) described 'everyday' practices, the quiet encroachment of the ordinary by squatters, vendors, the unemployed, migrants and refugees. In the 1970s, I remember that no matter how many times municipal bulldozers in Ankara razed *gecekondu* squatter settlements that had been built illegally on public or unused private land, rural migrants rebuilt them. Eventually, an election came along, and politicians curried favour with *gecekondu* voters by passing out deeds, bringing in electricity and extending bus services. Bayat wrote about a politics of redress among the urban poor in Iran and elsewhere. That is, people try in some small way to force a redistribution of social goods (like land, housing, electricity, transport or simply a relief from regulation). To officials and landowners, it comprised a theft of resources exacerbated by mafia-led land speculation. To the migrants, it was a struggle not just for survival but also for dignity in the eyes of others. The struggle took place within migrant communities characterised by a moral economy of trust and cooperation, which allowed men the opportunity to provide for their families, protect them and keep their honour intact.

What makes any of this political? Bayat argues that this kind of informally organised, individual action really only becomes political in the eyes of the

actors when their gains are threatened, by bulldozers, for instance, blind regulations or assaults on their dignity. Diane Singerman's (1996) study of bread riots in Cairo showed that even a small rise in the price of a loaf of bread meant that poor families, who ate many loaves a day, as a result were unable to afford to marry off their sons. That made bread prices not only highly political but also a matter of existential survival. Mohamed Bouazizi was a Tunisian street vendor, unable to get a job despite his education. He eked out a living selling from a cart. When the authorities again confiscated his cart and a female official humiliated him in the street, he set himself on fire. His was an individual act, steeped in personal motives and ethics, honour and humiliation, but it was also a profoundly political act that struck a spark that in 2010 set the Middle East and North Africa region on fire. Bouazizi had no way of knowing this, but, as Bayat points out, the individual actions of the atomised poor become political when their gains are threatened and when, having become conscious of their actions, they mount a collective defence.

In Turkey, the invisible mobilisation of Hizmet in pursuit of its goals of occupying the capillaries of institutional power (without, as Hartmann argues, being 'political') might be understood as a form of Bayat's 'quiet encroachment'. Hizmet fits many of his criteria for 'uncivil society', community networks based on a moral economy of mutual assistance. That is, Hizmet individuals carried out informal, self-generating activity, organised in community networks and foundations with a clear moral economy. But these are not the poor folk that Bayat and Scott had in mind. Hizmet followers are primarily lower middle class, teachers, businesspeople, students and their families. One could argue that, as Bayat's model predicted, Hizmet became political when its gains were threatened. Its attempts at what Bayat would call collective defence (e.g. the attempt to arrest the peace envoy to Oslo and to arrest AKP politicians for corruption) eventually led to a war of attrition as the ruling AKP struck back.

For the half of the population that supports the party, one could argue that they gained a sense of dignity and honour under the AKP, a chance to get an education and profession; they now live in a society where wearing a headscarf, rather than marking them as peasants, is seen as a sign of modernity and upward mobility. Many of those who had felt themselves victimised, however, are now cheering on the purge that is rounding up fellow citizens whom the government has labelled traitors, terrorists and threats to the nation. The gossip that Ursula Wozniak writes about in this issue, the denunciations and snitching that are putting people at risk, are here not examples of resistance versus the state but rather a mode of suppression that empowers social actors at the local level in the *service* of the state.

This process is exacerbated by neo-liberal capitalism that creates new commoditised rituals and false intimacies that disguise political influence as voluntary practice. Esra Özyürek (2016) describes how the Turkish government and its allies 'fabricate intimacy-oriented publics'. They make the political agenda seem individually chosen, purchased in the marketplace, willingly shared,

intimately internalised. By means of these new symbols and rituals, people interpret their relation to history – to modernity – and their connection to the state. Özyürek was talking about secular modernity (the purchase and display of Atatürk paraphernalia), but the same principle applies to the domestication of Islamic modernity through new commercialised rituals such as a formal party with gifts when a girl first puts on a headscarf. New ways of being Muslim in Turkey are focused on lifestyle, not doctrine. The touchstone of Islamic modernity is choice (*şuurlu*, or conscious Islam). Choice is provided by the market in pious fashion, leisure, entertainment, travel, literature and so on. The market obscures the government's role in managing desires 'from above', creating a docile public unaware that it is acting out a political scenario. Samuel Williams in this issue shows that the morality of being gay in an Istanbul neighbourhood is an ambiguous category that is highly responsive to the particular economic context in which it is performed. The mechanical gears of twentieth-century social engineering have been replaced by enticing advertisements and public discourses that 'show the way' (Hannerz 2008). 'Above and below' speak the same language, 'everyday grammars', as Williams put it – a discourse that, even when it is grounded in resistance, as in the 2013 Gezi protests, can then be reincorporated into political categories that coexist with state power.

In my book about Islamist mobilisation in the 1990s (White 2002), I used the term vernacular politics, rather than politics from below, because I wanted to make clear that the discourse used by these parties to mobilise people politically was not simply a top-down discourse of control but rather was part of the fabric of society: *imece*, *himaye*, *sevgi*, *hizmet*. These terms echo interpersonal, communal and family discourses, as well as Naqshbandi religious devotional terms and practices. *Imece* refers to a rural, community-based tradition of cooperation, of pooling labour and resources. In Istanbul, rural migrants used an analogue of *imece* to tie themselves to other people in their neighbourhood, people to whom they might have no other ties. The Islamist Welfare Party then harnessed the concept of *imece* for grassroots organising. *Himaye* is the principle of protection by and loyalty to family. In the political field, it underlies vertically organised patronage networks. The Welfare Party and the Hizmet movement, and later the AKP, incorporated *sevgi* (love) and *hizmet* (service) into their slogans. These refer to the moral imperative of mutual assistance within the family and helping the less fortunate, which are also constituent elements of *imece* and *himaye*.

These were the core values of Turkish vernacular politics in the 1990s. Vernacular politics coordinated local networks of individuals along with their webs of obligation and responsibility with civic associations and political parties. In this way, vernacular politics boosted local interests and demands to the national level (White 2002: 69). Vernacular politics makes no assumptions about the form or motivation of the political process. People are mobilised around cultural, social and political issues that are presented and interpreted through familiar, deeply rooted and culturally authorised idioms, concepts

and practices. In this way, despite its local roots, vernacular politics is able to draw large numbers of people of diverse backgrounds and contradictory goals into national politics.

Another cultural discourse shared by above and below is that of *kahraman* and *hain*. The *kahraman* is the hero who protects the family and nation against the evil outsider. The *hain*, or traitor, is the inside enemy working at the behest of the evil outsider to divide the nation, which itself is discursively rooted in conceptions of the honour of women and the family, which makes the nation uniquely vulnerable. Nationalistic fervour is fuelled by a rhetoric of fear of the outsider who sows economic and social chaos, providing a scapegoat for middle-class fears of falling and the fear of the poorer classes of failing to rise. The daily evidence of free fall by individuals like Kurds, Hizmet followers and a wide variety of professionals who are wholesale exiled from society can only intensify that anxiety. Fear of falling in class status is particularly sensitive for new elites. Upward mobility, lifestyle and consumer choice, while perceived as personal, are profoundly shaped by political discourse that stokes desire and fear in equal measure.

This is not to say that a horizontal political field makes local cultural discourses and practices equivalent in effectiveness to those produced by the state but only that state discourse must resonate in people's lives in order to be politically effective. The state has many more resources to amplify its message and to implement its goals. Technology and neo-liberal capitalism have become new terrains for acting out individual and state interests. In today's hyper-linked environment, the government and its allies can flood every level of society with political meaning by engaging common discursive tropes like hero and traitor, thereby fabricating what appear to be self-organised publics.

Capitalism is also an arena in which the state can *deprive* people of their identity and personhood by erasing their economic footprints and, thus, their social viability. Those accused of being Hizmet followers and coup plotters have been dispossessed of both identity and market value. Their personal identities are erased as they are shunned by society, even by family members afraid of being purged by association. Fired from their jobs, forbidden from ever working in the civil service again and unable to find work or housing, many have also had their properties confiscated. Defined as nonmarketable, they are kicked out of the social and economic world in a kind of neo-liberal death. Even after physical death, those accused of being coup plotters initially were buried in a communal grave, marked only by a rough wooden sign that marked them as traitors.

What I have described is a shared political terrain where the trajectory of meaning and action is circular (rather than up/down) or at the very least ambiguous. People move into and out of institutional viability in which they are able to affect others. As Fredrik Barth (1993) observed about national identity in Bali, people share coherent systems of knowledge about what it means to be Balinese, Hindu, Muslim and modern. These clusters of related ideas,

like 'being Turkish', are embedded in and expressed through interpersonal relationships. So, in practice, what people do and who they claim to be are contingent on the circumstances of the particular interaction and the individual's immediate needs and concerns.

Just as 'the people' are not divisible into above and below, the moral content of their claims cannot easily be separated out. It is sometimes difficult for the observer to disentangle the various motivations, fears and constraints. I want to end with a telling example from my fieldwork about the difficulty of determining just who is oppressed and the importance of listening to people's own, sometimes contradictory accounts of who they are, even if they challenge our own liberal stance. In my 2002 book, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, I discussed the rise of Islamist parties in the 1990s, particularly the role played by pious women activists who had never been politically active before. My research area was the large, poor and very conservative neighbourhood of Ümraniye that had previously voted in a secularist mayor from the opposition Republican People's Party and then switched to an Islamist one.

One day, after the book was out and had been translated into Turkish, I was visiting one of the families I had written about. I always give copies of the books, once they are translated, to the people who appear in them so that they know what I have written about them. I had just handed the book over and saw Halil sitting in a corner reading it. Halil appears in the book as an Islamist so extreme that even his devout mother worried about him, and his elder brother apologised for his behaviour towards me. In the introduction, I described our first meeting. I was sitting with Halil's new wife, his brother and his sister-in-law, a young woman I had known for years. Halil came in spitting and snarling, offended by my presence. Eventually, under pressure from his family, he helped me obtain access to Islamist officials to interview, and when he saw over time that I had no agenda other than to understand, he visibly relaxed.

I described in the book how, some months later, he accompanied me to the bus stop so that I would not be waiting alone in the street. While we waited, he shyly asked for my advice: 'Do you think it's wrong that I don't allow my wife out of the house?' I thought about his intelligent wife, who had been employed before her marriage as a secretary with admirable computer skills and who was now left behind whenever her mother- and sisters-in-law went just around the corner to the open market. I did think she was oppressed, but I did not think it was my place as an anthropologist to disapprove, so I channelled his mother, who had told me that she feared her clever daughter-in-law might become bored and ill. I suggested that Halil get her a computer so that she could keep her skills up and perhaps teach other local women from home. His thoughtful response brought me up short. They could not afford a computer. Poverty, I thought, is also oppressive.

There he was sitting in an armchair in the living room, reading the translated book. Suddenly, to my relief, he burst out laughing. The next morning, I received an invitation to have breakfast in their apartment on the floor below.

He and his wife looked tired. I suspected they had stayed up all night reading the book. We sat hunched over breakfast in the narrow kitchen under the looming cabinets that had a now outdated Islamist political party logo carved into the glass. 'You know,' Halil said, 'it's interesting to see yourself through someone else's eyes.' His wife turned to me and asked in a bemused voice, 'Do you still think I'm oppressed?' This shocked me. I would have vehemently denied any such conclusion in the book. I had paraphrased his mother's and brother's concerns, not expressed my own. Yet, my assumption that she was oppressed had been clearly visible. And, just as clearly, she did not share it. It was a lesson that who is considered the victim or oppressor depends in part on the position of the observer. As Maritato observes in this issue, the act of fieldwork itself constitutes 'below' as an analytical category.

Politics is a topography of shared action, mobilised by a shared discourse. Politics is acted out in the context of actual social relations in which individuals pursue their goals and seek to act on their concerns. Circumstances and even chance are powerful arbiters of who is up, conceptually speaking, and who is down. All of this occurs within a technologically advanced capitalist society that provides new tools for both individual and state action, leading to the sometimes-rapid transformation of shared knowledge, for instance, about what it means to be a Turkish citizen, a Kurd or a Muslim. Winners become losers, and losers winners. As Barth observed, we find slippage, adjustment, change that is not predicted or even desired. In pushing for their own freedom and welfare, as Mahmood pointed out, people may oppress others or themselves. Like Turkey, the United States has entered a period of rapid transformation as power is redistributed in unexpected ways and an intolerant and self-destructive discourse spreads like a stain across society. As a result, liberals, caught up in a developmental discourse of resistance from below, may misrecognise that victim and oppressor, like hero and traitor, are refractions of the same prism. Many of the articles in this issue implicitly or explicitly make a case for reading politics horizontally in order, as Woźniak put it, to capture the full 'multiplicity of conflicts and interests at stake'.

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