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*Citation for published version (APA):*

Glasius, M. (2013). *Authoritarianism, activism and accountability in a global age*. (Oratiereeks). Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.

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# Authoritarianism, Activism and Accountability in a Global Age

# Authoritarianism, Activism and Accountability in a Global Age

*Rede*

uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt  
van hoogleraar Politicologie, in het bijzonder Internationale Betrekkingen  
van de Universiteit van Amsterdam  
op woensdag 25 september 2013

door

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This is inaugural lecture 484, published in this series of the University of Amsterdam.

Lay-out: JAPES, Amsterdam  
Foto auteur: Jeroen Oerlemans

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*Mijnheer de decaan,  
Collega's, familie, vrienden,  
Toehoorders,*

The summer of 1978 was an emotional time for many Dutch people: the Dutch national team took part in the world championship football in Argentina, got to the finals, but lost to the host country. For me, at age nine, it was the beginning of an abiding interest in authoritarian rule, the means of repression, and the outside world's engagement with human rights and their violation.

During the intermissions of the match broadcasts that summer, Amnesty International was given free airtime, and showed footage of political prisoners with stadium noise in the background. My parents must have succeeded well in explaining to me what was at stake: the Amnesty clips were the Dutch compromise outcome of a heated campaign that had tried to prevent the Dutch and other European teams from competing in the world championship, because in the host country Argentina at that time, thousands were being tortured, executed, disappeared.

The opponents of the world championship implied that something could be achieved, or at the very least the Argentinian junta could be embarrassed, by a boycott, and conversely that by participating, players and supporters alike somehow made themselves complicit in the human rights violations.

## **Authoritarianism in a global age**

Authoritarian rule today still prevents people from participating in decision-making relevant to their lives; and authoritarian governments still imprison, torture or kill, and instil fear in their citizens much more than democracies do. But the intensity of their engagement, and indeed that of their citizens, with the outside world, has radically changed.

The authoritarian states of the mid- to late twentieth century, including Nazi Germany, the Soviet bloc, communist China and to a lesser extent Latin American regimes had penetrated and monopolized social life to an unprece-

dedented extent. Political theory distinguished between non-democratic states and democratic ones based on the extent to which the state *chose* to control social life, but did not question its ability to do so.

Juan Linz, in his classic work on authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, defined a political system as democratic ‘when it allows the free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information and communication’.<sup>1</sup> Authoritarian rule by contrast was believed to require absolute control over association, information and communication, as well as movement of citizens.

Globalisation processes<sup>2</sup> strike at the heart of these forms of control. Openness to global ICTs and media, transnational NGOs, and inflow and outflow of people are generally considered to present states with economic opportunities. But for authoritarian rulers, such openness throws up new challenges in terms of how to control citizens who can travel, have access to information, and participate in global networks. Citizens of China, Azerbaijan or Saudi Arabia may now spend periods of their lives working or studying abroad, they may watch CNN, stay in touch with friends abroad via Facebook or cell-phone, and may participate in or benefit from activities of international NGOs.

Instead of just asserting this, I will illustrate it with some figures.

**Table 1** Openness in five most authoritarian states

|           | Authoritarianism |              |                  | Openness                      |                         |                                  |
|-----------|------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
|           | Autocracy*       | Repression** | Authoritarian*** | International NGOs in country | Internet use (% of pop) | Immigrant + emigrants (% of pop) |
| N.Korea   | -9               | 0            | 0.3              | 318                           | 0.0%                    | 2.4%                             |
| China     | -7               | 0            | 0.8              | 3331                          | 36.3%                   | 0.5%                             |
| Iran      | -7               | 0            | 0.8              | 1362                          | 46.9%                   | 2.7%                             |
| S. Arabia | -10              | 2            | 1.3              | 1364                          | 43.6%                   | 20.6%                            |
| Zimbabwe  | -4               | 0            | 1.5              | 1466                          | 11.8%                   | 6.2%                             |

\* Measured on the Polity IV scale, from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic)

\*\* Measured by violation physical integrity rights, scale 0 (most violations) to 8 (most respect)

\*\*\* Mean of rescaled autocracy + repression, from 0 (most authoritarian) to 10 (least authoritarian)

First a word on what authoritarianism actually is. Part of the aim of my research is to come up with better definitions and measurements of contemporary authoritarianism. Most political scientists equate authoritarianism with autocracy, which means a lack of parliamentary oversight or alternation in

power. I believe repression may be just as important as a defining characteristic. My working definition is a 'form of rule defined by low levels of accountability combined with high levels of coercion'. This is operationalised in my own authoritarianism scale, combining existing measurements of autocracy and of repression, which you see in the third column: the closer to zero a country is, the more authoritarian.

Shown here are North Korea, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Zimbabwe, the five worst scoring states in the world. It turns out that, while levels of migration<sup>3</sup> and Internet use<sup>4</sup> differ significantly per region, four of these five most authoritarian states in the world are also highly globalised – with North Korea as the autarkic exception.

China is the paradigmatic case of globalised authoritarianism: it scores very high both on participation in international NGOs<sup>5</sup> and on Internet use. The percentage of migrants appears low, but these data are from 2000, and students are not counted, so real numbers may be much higher. In the Middle East and North Africa, many countries are in turbulent transition, but the two most authoritarian states, Iran and Saudi Arabia, are not. Both are highly globalised in terms of international NGOs and Internet use, and in Saudi Arabia foreign residents make up almost one fifth of the population. Zimbabwe is easily the most authoritarian country in Sub-Saharan Africa on my scale, and is also one of the most globalised. It ranks fourth in Africa in terms of participation in NGOs and third after Nigeria and South Africa in Internet use. Migration is above average for Africa, and could be much higher if illegal migration were also considered.

So, countries can be highly globalized and highly authoritarian at the same time. While global flows of information, contacts and people can be considered as a *challenge* to authoritarian rule, they are not necessarily a *threat*. They may also throw up new opportunities for authoritarian control. It is simply not clear yet how constant citizen exposure to and participation in a wider world affects coercive rule. Gaining a better understanding of how authoritarian rule is affected by and responding to globalisation of information and communication, association, and people movement will be the main focus of my research agenda over the next five years.<sup>6</sup> I have yet to start this project, so I cannot present any of its findings today. Instead, I will give you a sense of the three main avenues the project will take, the first relating to media and new ICTs, the second to migration, and the third to civil society.

The literature on the relation between ICTs and authoritarianism is the most developed, but it is also very polemical.<sup>7</sup> On the face of it, the globalisation of communication through new ICTs, allowing for the emergence of transnational spheres of communication, should constitute a prime challenge

to the authoritarian state, and there is plenty of evidence now to back up the claim that, while SMS or Facebook never cause an uprising, they are important tools of mobilization, in a way that goes beyond just logistics. An Egyptian activist I interviewed recently explained why the ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ Facebook page,<sup>8</sup> which invited solidarity with a young man beaten to death in a police station, had been so important:

‘One of the things about this Facebook page was recognizing that we are so many. We are so many who are frustrated. This always gives you courage and increases your abilities to know your strength ... because all the time organizations weren’t able to show how strong they are. They always depended on working on the ground.’<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, new formal and informal public-private partnerships have come into existence between ICT companies and governments, that enable them to constrain and especially monitor Internet use, telephone conversations, and financial transfers.

In the recent graphic novel *Zahra’s Paradise*, about the aftermath of Iran’s election protests in 2009, one of the characters implies the complicity of mobile phone manufacturers, but perhaps also Internet service providers, in Iranian surveillance and repression. This character’s dark allusions to being ‘like flies trapped in webs you can’t see’ and ‘electronic voodoo’<sup>10</sup> are not enough for social science scholars. We want to understand how these public-private understandings actually work: who generates what data, and with whom is it shared?

We all now know that these forms of surveillance are practiced not just by the Iranian or Chinese government but also by the United States on an unprecedented scale. I hope to draw on the work undertaken by my colleague Marieke de Goede<sup>11</sup> and her group in formally democratic contexts on precisely this issue of public-private collaboration in surveillance and monitoring. It goes to the heart of the more over-arching theoretical questions of my project: what is contemporary authoritarianism and how does one today distinguish it from democracy? Is authoritarianism exclusively manifested at the level of the state, or can authoritarian rule be transnationalised and privatized?

The relation between authoritarian rule and people movement has received much less attention than the role of ICTs. Authoritarian regimes have long used both the capacity to refuse exit and the capacity to force people into indefinite exile in order to control their populations. This tool of control was epitomized of course by the Berlin wall. A mural painted on a section of the



wall, months after its fall, illustrates the idea that authoritarian states must constrain the movements of their population.<sup>12</sup> It has a pink rose to represent each person who died trying to get from East to West Berlin.

But the lawlike statement underneath, 'Escape is a mighty method to destabilize dominion', no longer seems to hold. Today, authoritarian states such as China, Cuba, the Gulf states or Vietnam are dealing with growing numbers of people who are neither permanently inside, nor permanently outside the borders, but travel back and forth. These include students, seasonal migrants, illegal migrants, expats and tourists. An additional, related challenge, are the growing numbers of people who have dual or multiple nationalities.

Overseas citizens may be a problem to authoritarian regimes since they often find themselves in democracies, and some, like parts of the Iranian and Cuban diasporas, may have a project of democratizing their home country. But authoritarian governments now also appreciate benefits of letting people in and out, in terms of remittances and investments, skills and networks.

Most overseas citizens maintain ties to the home country, family and emotional ties as well as economic ties, which make them want to retain the option of either permanent or at least temporary return. This gives authoritarian governments leverage. We informally know, through our contacts with students and others, that some authoritarian states have established systems to get overseas nationals to spy and report on each other. Other states keep tight control over diasporic organizations and religious institutions.<sup>13</sup> Yet surprisingly little research has been done on such overseas surveillance and control. The project will approach this through sensitive multi-sited ethnography.

Another line of research will be on tourists and expatriate workers. Tourism is a source of income for some authoritarian governments, and the use of skilled or unskilled expatriate workers hailing from more democratic states may make economic sense. For tourists and expats, the stakes are lower than for diaspora's: they are in the country at the government's discretion, for purposes of work or recreation, not to kick up political trouble. The project will investigate the mechanisms that authoritarian governments put in place, again with the possible help of private transnational partners such as employment agencies or travel companies, to keep both tourists and expats in a 'bubble', minimizing their contact with the local population.

The third focus of the project will be on what I have very neutrally called 'associationalism'. This links up to much of my past and current work on civil society and activism, so it gives me the opportunity now to talk not about what the future project will do, but about what my past and current research has shown.

## Activism in a global age

The sudden emergence, in an authoritarian context, of a mass movement demanding democratisation usually takes political scientists by surprise, and its success in toppling the regime even more so. This was the case in Eastern Europe in 1989, in Indonesia in 1997, and again in the case of the Arab uprisings of 2011. One reason is that political scientists tend to focus on what I call ‘Kremlin watching’, changes at the top rather than changes in society; another is that public support for the government cannot accurately be ‘measured’ in a climate of fear.

But I want to focus here on a third reason. When I did documentary research on civil society in South America and Eastern Europe under authoritarian rule, I was looking to compare ‘strategies of democratisation’ in different contexts. I could not find any such strategies. I drew on samizdat articles, manifestoes, diaries and letters from prison, all written before the transition to democracy, from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.<sup>14</sup>

I discovered then, and I am now rediscovering in the framework of the Egyptian uprising and the protests against Putin in Russia, that with rare exceptions, civil society activists are not motivated by a desire to topple governments. What they are trying to do is change their societies: to stop getting harassed by the police; to play songs with lyrics of their choosing; or to negotiate better working conditions in a factory.

Hungarian novelist György Konrád even wrote, somewhat disingenuously perhaps, ‘Let the government stay on top, we will live our own lives underneath it’.<sup>15</sup> Others did believe that sooner or later the widening and deepening of this ‘civil society’ as they called it would have consequences for the regime, but that was not the point. As Václav Havel put it, the ‘primary purpose of the outward direction of these movements is always, as we have seen, to have an impact on society, not to affect the power structure, at least not directly and immediately’.<sup>16</sup>

In the interviews I undertook recently in Cairo, it turned out again that the activists at the heart of the Tahrir Square uprising were neither motivated, nor in fact expecting, to topple Mubarak. One who was there on the whole of the first day told the following story about the moment Tahrir Square took up the slogan from the Tunisian uprising:

‘By seven p.m. when the numbers were a lot bigger, we were like 25 thousand in the square, and then this slogan started to be shouted ... It was really scary, you know ... when people were chanting “The People – De-

mand – The Fall Down – Of the Regime”. What? The fall-down of the regime? You know, people started being really scared. Do we really want this? Yeah – that’s significant. Are we aware of what we are saying?<sup>17</sup>

The mistake made by western analysts, political scientists and policy-makers alike in 1989 and again in 2011, has been to assume that ‘they’ wanted what we supposedly have: liberal democracy. But a closer consideration of what civil society activists say and write demonstrates that political freedoms are considered a necessary but not a sufficient condition for their aspirations, and multi-party elections are even less relevant.

As early as 1977, Václav Havel wrote that ‘people ... know ... that the question of whether one or several political parties are in power, and how these parties define and label themselves, is of far less importance than the question of whether or not it is possible to live like a human being’.<sup>18</sup> In Brazil in 1983, Fernando Henrique Cardoso described a vision of democracy ‘which is not restricted to accepting the party-parliamentary game (although it remains a fundamental part, just as the defense of the dignity of the person and his or her rights remains fundamental)’.<sup>19</sup>

This something more was to be realised in civil society: democratic practices among neighbours, between women,<sup>20</sup> or in the workplace.<sup>21</sup> Judit Vársárhelyi, a librarian and environmental activist, described the mobilization by the Danube Circle in Hungary in 1984 to oppose a hydro-electric dam project as part of a ‘general tendency of democratization’.<sup>22</sup> Chilean feminists even applied this concept of democracy to the private realm with the slogan ‘Democracy in the country and in the home’.<sup>23</sup>

Around the same time, Czech dissident Jiří Dienstbier wrote: ‘If the state does not perform its function, self-organization becomes necessary ... This produces tension which the state power attempts to neutralize sometimes by force, sometimes by pretending the tension does not exist. But when this happens, society enters into a dialogue’.<sup>24</sup> Both in Eastern Europe and South America in the 1980s, a vision appears to have been developed, based on the functioning of civil society under authoritarian rule, that combined the achievements of liberal democracy (civil and political rights and multi-party representation) with more radical forms of democracy based in civil society.

The reasons why these aspirations have been realized to a varying but only limited extent, even with some of the people just quoted in power after the transition, would constitute a whole different research project. But I do believe it is important to be attentive to these submerged voices from the 1980s, because I find them to resonate very much with the frustrations and aspira-

tions of much more recent activist mobilizations in different parts of the world.

This spring, I have been involved in a project<sup>25</sup> investigating recent protest movements in Athens, Cairo, London and Moscow, with an emphasis on identifying and comparing the aspirations of core activists. We asked activists who had been deeply involved in these movements in each context to define what democracy meant to them. In all places, they were most emphatic and unified about what democracy did not mean: it was not, or at least not just, elections. As a young female graduate from Cairo said: 'Let's start with what democracy does not mean to me. It doesn't mean to me a ballot box to go to every four years. This is the smallest part of democracy that I can image. And democracy has been described for so long as this ballot box.'<sup>26</sup>

Beyond this negative definition, there were many shades of opinion about what constitutes democracy, but there were three common elements. The first was an insistence on the rule of law, and equality before the law, as a minimum requirement. Second and perhaps more surprising, a close connection was often made with social justice, not only by Occupy activists in London, or in Athens, but also in Cairo. Most people I spoke to identified not this 'People demand the downfall' I mentioned earlier as the most important slogan of the regime, but 'Bread, Freedom, Social Justice'. It was explained to me by one activist as meaning that 'people are not accepting trade-offs anymore. They will not trade freedom and civil liberties for social welfare and they will not trade social welfare for some sort of democratic expression rather than democracy'.<sup>27</sup>

Third was a conception of democracy as not just something to be demanded from the state, but a set of practices in which citizens take part on a daily basis. Ahmed, a 22-year old activist in Cairo, whom I interviewed through a translator, said '(d)emocracy is a culture, an obligation. At the popular level we use democracy for formulating our revolution in the family, in the streets. People have not been educated to practice dialogue and democracy. I think that the absence of democracy at the formal level is a result of the absence of democracy at the popular level.'<sup>28</sup> This idea of democracy resonated with that of an Athens-based neighbourhood activist called Nafsika, also through a translator: 'Democracy comes from all of us. From the government and municipality, but if we want to give democracy real meaning it has to start at the grassroots and society must fight for it. It's not a gift, but something that you have to fight for. You must fight for democracy'.<sup>29</sup>

Because this DIY concept of democracy contains elements of both dialogue and struggle, the occupation of the squares, while not sustainable forever or even sometimes for very long, has become a defining moment for many acti-

vists. A Cairo-based activist who also later became involved in Occupy Wall Street called the 18 days in Tahrir Square in January 2011 a utopia: ‘God shows certain people utopia and to tell them it exists and that you have to achieve it yourself. And then it’s gone. So the people who saw the utopia in the 18 days ... They would live their whole life to achieve it again by their own human effort. Not by some god’s miracle. That’s why I don’t see the revolution as a failure, because it was just hope and a glimpse of what we can achieve.’<sup>30</sup>

I have wanted to highlight the utopian aspirations of recent protest movements, both because they chime with the earlier visions that were buried in the liberal triumphalism of 1989, and because, while they have had plenty, and mostly friendly, media attention, they have often been portrayed as not knowing what they want. In the short term, most of the struggles I have described have fallen far short of what they hoped to achieve. In Moscow, Putin is still in power; in Athens and London, austerity cuts go on; and in Cairo, the upsurge of free speech and political experimentation that the revolution had unleashed is being squeezed in the bloody confrontation between the army and the Muslim Brotherhood.

But in Moscow, policemen have been forced to wear their name badges, making them more accountable; in Athens, Nafsika and her friends have negotiated that households failing to pay their municipal tax no longer have their electricity cut off; in London, the closed Friern Barnet library has been squatted by Occupy activists and reopened with 10,000 books donated by volunteers. This summer, in Istanbul, Taksim Gezi Park was preserved; in Brazil, public transport prices were reduced; and in Bulgaria, a controversial new head of the national security agency was forced to resign after protests.

## Accountability in a global age

Egypt meanwhile, has run close to a civil war. The army has killed hundreds of people in its violent break-up of the Muslim Brotherhood sit-ins, and continues to kill and arrest political opponents by the day. Brotherhood leaders meanwhile stand accused of torturing their political opponents and fomenting attacks on Coptic Christian communities. It has amazed me, and this brings me to my third topic for today, that no one has suggested that ‘the situation in Egypt’ should be sent to the International Criminal Court. Not the international human rights organisations, not the local organisations, not the pundits. If this had happened ten years ago, when the ICC had just opened its doors, the Court would have been hailed as the institution that

could simultaneously restore peace, bring justice to victims, reconcile neighbours and prevent recurrence.

It is a measure of the speed with which the ICC's reputation has plummeted that no one seems to even think of it, even though it is clear that Mubarak, Morsi and Al-Sisi are all guilty of crimes that cannot be fairly adjudicated before an Egyptian court. I will use the last part of this speech to talk about what has caused this extraordinary loss of popularity, not just of the ICC but of international criminal justice as an idea, and to explain why I think we still need it.

The idea is that in the extreme case where a ruler commits or condones crimes against his people, the administration of punitive justice is taken out of the state's hands and up to the international level, even to the point where the ruler himself can be put on trial. We are in danger of forgetting already how revolutionary that idea was, and who made it happen: the International Criminal Court could not have come into being without a broad and sustained commitment from hundreds of civil society groups and individuals from all parts of the world.<sup>31</sup> This was a very different form of activism from the square occupations, dominated by lawyers, who spoke and dressed like the diplomats they were lobbying, and walked in the corridors of power, but activism nonetheless.

In order for an international criminal court to become possible, big claims had to be made, and passionately believed, by these activists about what it could do: It would end impunity, and contribute to prevention, of crimes against humanity. It would contribute to peace processes and to national reconciliation. It would strengthen respect for international and domestic rule of law. And it would bring justice to victims, and give them a voice. Set against such aspirations, it is unsurprising that the international criminal courts have disappointed. But the criticisms against the ICC and other courts have not been limited to their failure to meet these lofty aims.

Even staunch supporters of the idea of international criminal justice have accused the courts of being what I have sometimes called 'autistic'. Diane Orentlicher for instance argues that the Yugoslavia tribunal 'has never placed adequate store in the importance of communicating effectively with the communities most affected by its work',<sup>32</sup> Victor Peskin writes of the Rwanda Tribunal's 'self-imposed isolation from Rwandan society',<sup>33</sup> and Mark Drumbl describes how 'the society reeling from violence becomes disenfranchised from the redressing of that violence, which, instead, becomes a task suited to the technocratic savvy of international lawyers'.<sup>34</sup>

I believe this exclusion is indeed the result of the 'technocratic savvy' of the lawyers, who are trained in impartiality and legal argumentation, not in lis-

tening to traumatised populations, as well as of the political limits of international criminal courts. I also think of it, with hindsight, as inevitable. Political struggles do sometimes get won by the underdog, but that is not the end of it. Once entrenched institutionally, formerly revolutionary ideas, such as taking the right to punish away from the exclusive jurisdiction of the state, become new hegemonies. They will then in turn call forth new challengers, which in turn will take the idea into an unforeseen direction.<sup>35</sup>

International criminal trials were meant to function, as the Nuremberg trials did to some extent, as simple morality plays: a traumatised people get told exactly what the evil-doers did, the latter hang their heads in shame while the judges read the guilty verdicts, and the rule of law is restored in the eyes of the people.

But it has turned out that the defendants have more agency, and the courts are less above politics, than had been foreseen. When a rhetorically gifted defendant interacts with the in-built political constraints and biases of an international criminal court, the latter's legitimacy is in peril.<sup>36</sup> When Radovan Karadzic calls the Yugoslavia tribunal a 'disciplinary court for NATO', this is not literally true but has a kernel of truth: the Tribunal needed NATO to make arrests, and the military actions of NATO itself, such as the bombing of the television tower in Belgrade, were not scrutinized.<sup>37</sup> At the time when the lawyer of Liberian former president Charles Taylor claimed that 'the tribunals ... are, in fact, not administering law at all but, instead, providing spurious cover for their paymasters', half the budget of the Special Court for Sierra Leone came from a voluntary contribution by the United States, and the prosecution team was mostly American.<sup>38</sup>

However, I found in exploratory research in Liberia that audience understandings of legitimacy and guilt are not binary, but quite complex in a way that is still hopeful for the international criminal courts. I spoke to youth leaders, rights activists, journalists, businessmen, politicians, religious leaders, and development workers while the Charles Taylor trial was ongoing. Most had considerable knowledge and strong views about the case. They overwhelmingly believed in a causal relation between Taylor's falling out of favour with the United States and his eventual arrest and trial, and also in a general bias of international criminal justice against Africans. At the same time, they all believed the process to be fair and the judges to be independent. Even a former bodyguard of Charles Taylor said that 'when it first started, I was so bitter, so disappointed, I felt disgraced ... The way things are going, I like the system, they said let's give him due process, and they gave him due process'.<sup>39</sup>

Most interestingly, many of my respondents, and in particular youth leaders with political ambitions of their own, were emphatic about their belief in

the general deterrence value of the trial, something I was not explicitly asking about. According to them, the trial demonstrated that one could not wage aggressive war on a neighboring country, or that one could not commit human rights violations, without eventually being held accountable. They spoke of the trial as you would of educational theatre: as 'sending messages'<sup>40</sup> or 'telling leaders'.<sup>41</sup> These results are very preliminary, based on a small base of in-depth interviews taken at one point during one particular trial. Nonetheless, they suggest that it is possible for an international criminal court to suffer from serious legitimacy defects, and yet still to successfully convey an educational message that, in the words of one radio journalist 'you must be careful how you conduct yourself ... anybody can be held accountable'.<sup>42</sup>

It is for this reason that I do think the 'situation in Egypt' should be investigated by the International Criminal Court. It cannot restore order, or in the short term, reconcile. But it could, in front of impartial judges in the cold light of the courtroom, rake over exactly who did what to whom, and eventually send the message that the Egyptian military commanders and the Brotherhood leadership are currently not hearing, that 'you must be careful how you conduct yourself ... anybody can be held accountable'.

I began this speech with a working definition of authoritarianism as 'low accountability, high repression'. Perhaps the opposite and antidote to authoritarian governance, at every level, is having to account for one's actions. In a formal political context, we tend to think of 'accountability' primarily in terms of parliamentary oversight. But as the street protestors of Athens, London, Madrid, New York, Rome, Tel Aviv, in Istanbul and all over Brazil have been shouting, parliamentary accountability alone has been found insufficient. The accountability that can be had by occupying squares is indeterminate and volatile. Accountability before an international criminal court on the other hand, is meticulous, but very slow, sterile, and legally and politically constrained.

Nonetheless, where some see the early 21<sup>st</sup> century as an age of greed and impunity, I see an age in which people take greed and impunity less and less for granted, and on all fronts demand accountability. I have highlighted two very different faces of this demand: that of the street level activist who seeks to entrench democratic practices not just in the state but everywhere in society, even in the family; and that of the international lawyer, who seeks to entrench a global legal system in which nobody but nobody should be above the law.



## A word of thanks

My predecessor in this chair, Gerd Junne, puts into practice the idea that democracy is not a matter of high politics but of daily life, as exemplified by the fact that he is here today in a back row, without the professorial robe. I can only hope to emulate his abiding curiosity and his modesty. His predecessor, my PhD supervisor Peter Baehr, began his career driven by an interest in democratic renewal, but ended up devoting his working life to the defence of human rights. From him I learned early on that there is nothing strange about conducting sound empirical research to normative ends.

I want to thank the current head of department and his predecessor, Jean Tillie and Wouter van der Brug; the directors of the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research, Anita Hardon and José Komen; and the dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Science, Edward de Haan, for their efforts to get me appointed to this chair. But above all I want to express my great gratitude to my colleagues in the political science department, too numerous to mention by name, for their strong and sustained support for my appointment. Without your support, I would not be standing here today. You make this department not just an intellectually stimulating environment, but an academic *community* in the fullest sense. But although I do feel close to you, I worry about being thrown together too close for comfort, in our new building on the Roeterseiland. A scholar needs some space, a room of one's own,<sup>43</sup> if she is to write.

My final thanks go to my family. My parents who taught me that all authority, including parental authority, can and should be challenged with good arguments. My daughters Isis and Ishtar, who are learning this same lesson all too well. My brother Paul, who takes arguing and challenging authority to great lengths, and Pernille, who keeps him grounded. My in-laws, who turned out to love a good political argument over the kitchen table. And above all Rahul, whose love, argumentativeness, energy and intellectual curiosity sustain me every day.

Ik heb gezegd.

## Notes

1. J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, 2000 (original publication 1975), 58.
2. I use the definition of globalisation by Held et al. here: 'a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power'. D. Held, A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt and J. Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, 16.
3. The calculation is based on data from the Global Bilateral Migration Database by the World Bank, adding up total immigration and total outmigration (figures for the year 2000) <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/global-bilateral-migration-database>.
4. Internet users per 100 people, data from the World Bank (year 2010): <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>
5. This measures country participation in international NGOs, *Yearbook of International Organizations 2010/2011*, Union of International Associations, 2010, 53-54.
6. My colleagues Imke Harbers and Andrea Ruggeri will collaborate on the project, Harbers focusing on local authoritarian rule within formally democratic states and Ruggeri on determining correlations between globalisation and either democratization or sustained authoritarianism.
7. See for instance S. Kalathil and T. Boas, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003; R. Deibert and R. Rohozinski, 'Liberation vs. Control: The Future of Cyberspace', *Journal of Democracy* 21(4), 2010, 43-57; E. Morozov, *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World*, Penguin, London, 2011.
8. <https://www.facebook.com/elshaheed.co.uk>
9. Interview, Cairo activist, 22 May 2013.
10. Amir & Khalil, *Zahra's Paradise*, First Second, New York, 2011, 47.
11. See for instance M. de Goede, 'The SWIFT affair and the global politics of European security', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50(2), 2012, 214-230; L. Amoore & M. de Goede, 'Transactions after 9/11: the banal face of the preemptive strike', *Transactions – Institute of British Geographers*, 33(2), 2008, 173-185.
12. For a photograph of this mural see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/birdsarethewords/4823993341/>
13. See L. Brand, *Citizens Abroad: Emigration and the State in the Middle East and North Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006 for a study of such practices by Morocco and Tunisia, and to a much lesser extent Lebanon and Jordan.

14. M. Glasius, 'Dissident Writings as Political Theory on Civil Society and Democracy', *Review of International Studies* 38 (2), 2012, 343-364.
15. G. Konrad, *Antipolitics*, Quartet Books, London, 1984, 198.
16. V. Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in V. Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* London, Hutchinson, 1985; essay first published in samizdat 1979, 58.
17. Interview, Cairo activist, 18 May 2013.
18. Havel, 1985, p.52.
19. F.H. Cardoso, 'Associated-Dependent Development and Democratic Theory' in A. Stepan, ed. *Democratizing Brazil : problems of transition and consolidation*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989, essay first written in 1983, 324.
20. M.A. Garreton, 'Popular Mobilization and the Military Regime in Chile: The Complexities of the Invisible Transition', in S. Eckstein, ed. *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, 271-271.
21. Cardoso, 1989, 314; Konrad, 1984, 137.
22. J. Vasarhelyi, 'Acceptance speech', Right Livelihood Awards, 9 December 1985, available at [http://www.rightlivelihood.org/vargha\\_speech.html](http://www.rightlivelihood.org/vargha_speech.html)
23. P. Chuchryk, 'Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics: The Role of Women's Organizations and the Chilean Transition to Democracy', in J. Jaquette, ed. *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1989, 182.
24. J. Dienstbier, in V. Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry", *Social Research*, 55,1-2, 1988, 230.
25. Preliminary results have been published in A. Ishkanian, M. Glasius and I. Ali, *Reclaiming democracy in the square? Interpreting the movements of 2011-12*, London School of Economics and Political Science, available at [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/53474/1/Ishkanian\\_reclaiming\\_democracy\\_report\\_2013\\_author.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/53474/1/Ishkanian_reclaiming_democracy_report_2013_author.pdf)
26. Interview, Cairo activist, 21 May 2013.
27. Interview, Cairo activist, 19 May 2013.
28. Interview, Cairo activist, 20 May 2013.
29. Interview, Athens activist, 8 April 2013.
30. Interview, Cairo activist, 25 May 2013.
31. This is the subject of my book, M. Glasius, *The International Criminal Court: A Global Civil Society Achievement*, Routledge, London, 2006.
32. D.F. Orentlicher, *Shrinking the Space for Denial: The Impact of the ICTY in Serbia*, Open Society Institute, New York, 2008, 22.
33. V. Peskin, 'Courting Rwanda: The Promises and Pitfalls of the ICTR Outreach Programme', *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4 (3), 2005, 954.
34. M. Drumbl, *Atrocity, Punishment and International Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 135.
35. This could for instance be an International Criminal Court by and for Africans. For a more abstract and elaborate discussion of this dialectical conception of global civil society see M. Glasius, 'Gramsci's trenches: civil society as "warfare"', *International Studies Review*, 14(4), 2012, 670-673.

36. Koskenniemi sees this as a Catch-22 for international criminal trials: 'to convey an unambiguous historical 'truth' to an audience, the trial will have to silence the accused. But in such a case, it ends up as a show trial. In order for the trial to be legitimate, the accused must be entitled to speak. But in that case, he will be able to challenge the version of truth represented by the prosecutor and relativise the guilt that is thrust upon him by the powers on whose strength the Tribunal stands'. M. Koskenniemi, 'Between Impunity and Show Trials', *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law* 6, 2002, 35. I believe this view is too deterministic, not taking account of the variable credibility of each account to different audiences.
37. See T. Meijers and M. Glasius, 'Expression of Justice or Political Trial? Discursive Battles in the Karadžić Case', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 35(3), 2013, 745-746 for an analysis of these claims.
38. See M. Glasius and T. Meijers, 'Constructions of Legitimacy: the Charles Taylor Trial', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 6(2), 2012, 246-247 for an analysis of this claim.
39. Interview with HJ, Monrovia, 21 May 2011.
40. Exact phrase used by student leader JJ; religious leader JK; radio journalist JS in interviews in Monrovia, May 2011.
41. Exact phrase used by web-journalist CB; senior civil servant EL; radio journalist JS; student leader JW in interviews in Monrovia, May 2011.
42. Interview with radio journalist JS, 20 May 2011.
43. V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, The Hogarth Press, London, 1929.