Geopolitics of the Dakar Rally: International Impediments Threatening Cultural, Religious, and Ecological Harmony among Motorcyclists

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Abstract: The contemporary popularity of motorcycling has resulted in a booming manufacturing industry as well as the emergence of a unique culture revolving around very specific forms of material cultural capital. Industry research focusing exclusively on the economic impact of motorcycling gravely underestimates the social and cultural consequences that have been brought about as a result of these ecological alternatives in personal mobility. As routine riding in overcrowded urban environments becomes more and more problematic, motorcyclists find themselves yearning for the self-exile available through the wide open spaces of desert environs in order to optimize the emancipatory potential of this sensual technological Bohemian experience on two wheels. To that end, off road motorcyclists have organized rallies such as the Dakar in unique geological environments to provide riders the technology-driven mystical catharsis they are seeking. Using evidence gathered from ethnographic fieldwork, film portrayals, and contemporary public policies; the paper demonstrates that the widespread popularity of off-road motorcycling and related intercultural harmony represents a significant threat to the routinization of conflict driving the hegemonic world order.

Keywords: *Dakar Rally, technological determinism, off-road motorcycling, postmaterialism.*

> *If you're tired of famines, try self-sufficiency.* Nicolas Sarkozy, official address to the people of Senegal, two months into his election as President of France[1]

Introduction

Contemporary studies focusing on motorcycling have generally been limited to the economic ramifications of these two-wheeled mobility machines in advanced industrialized nations. While market research focusing on the successful strategies of dominating brands of motorcycles such as Harley

Davidson (Stanfield, 1992; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), BWW (Welsh, 2006), Piaggio (Hebdege, 1900), and others have made significant contributions to our understanding of product demands articulated among consumers in the west (Alt, 1982); the social, cultural, and political consequences of motorcycling beyond industrialized markets have somehow failed to capture the interest of social scientists. While gravely overlooked in contemporary analyses, motorcycling remains nevertheless, an increasingly globalized political and ecological phenomenon, whose popularity is no longer limited to testosterone-driven big brand distribution around the western world (Mellstrom, 2002; Donald-Walker, 2000; Pierson, 1997). The demand for motorcycles in the Middle and Far East now exceeds the consumption patterns in the United States and Europe, with steadily increasing proportions of two-wheeled transportation represented by riders in developing cultural contexts. According to Thompson (2000, 100-7),

> The motorcycle was and still is an essential mode of transportation for millions of people around the world. In 1997 there were some 126,508,878 powered 'two-wheelers in use' around the world, and of those some 45,111,479 were being ridden in Taiwan, Thailand, and India.

Beyond the myopic social scientific focus on the economic impact of dominating motorcycle brands in industrialized western contexts, another serious weakness of existing literature is the failure to distinguish motorcycle technologies from other forms of technological innovation. Typically limited to interesting footnotes in otherwise generic critical analysis in the philosophy of science and technology, the motorcycle as machine has been dismissed as yet another form of exploitative technology transfer that runs the risk of technological determinism, defined by Mackay and Gillespie (1992, 686) as 'the notion that technological development is autonomous with respect to society; it shapes society, but is not reciprocally influenced.' While perhaps accurate with regard to the subjugating environmental, social, and cultural consequences of certain destructive machines; these critiques have little universal applicability to motorcycle technology, whose design is profoundly influenced both by end users and the social structure to which the technology applies. Road preferences, ruggedness of geology, predilection or aversion toward risk, desired sensual impact, sensory and aesthetic inclinations of riders, as well as many other social, cultural, and environmental considerations are all exogenous but highly significant factors that have historically influenced the evolution of motorcycle technology and design. Failure of social scientists to distinguish the unique reciprocal relationship between motorcycle technology and humanity or motorcycle technology and nature–has resulted in the dissemination of misinformative analyses that disregards the numerous complex factors beyond marketing principles that truly influences motorcycling around the world. Rather than capture the complex integrative and harmonious characteristics of touring

and other day-to-day technological applications, uninitiated business-oriented social scientists who are not familiar with the overwhelming impact of consumer demand and terrain in research and development driving motorcycle technology have disregarded the unifying potential of machine, humanity, and nature Instead, social scientific critiques of technology have erroneously reduced the relationship between humans and machines as one contingent upon the rejection of other humans. As summarized by Purdy (1984), 'time spent with a machine is time spent away from humans.' Motorcycle technology as conceptualized and designed for challenging geological conditions found throughout the Middle East and other desert environs dramatically contradicts this and many other arguments espoused by science and technology critics. The antithesis of deterministic critiques, motorcycle technology facilitating the Dakar Rally and other *enduro* events is providing two-wheeled off-road enthusiasts with unprecedented opportunities for cultural and ecological harmony that actually unifies fragmented communities and minimizes social distances across the historic, economic, and developmental divide bifurcating east from west, north from south.

Quite contrary to notions of technological determinism, the current analysis intends to demonstrate that Dakar and other *adventure* rallies provide unprecedented opportunities for the [re]unification of fragmented social, cultural, and technological communities, based on shared understandings and affective sentiment surrounding motorcycle technology.

Data obtained from interviews with participants and other stakeholders, triangulated with content analysis of popular film portrayals, and further validated through coercive public policies suggests that this peculiar unification taking place transpires not only among historically fragmented groups based on ethnic, gender, and racial identities; but also serves to harmoniously reinforce humanity's relationship with one another, with nature, and with her machines. In addition to integrating humanity, nature, and technology; the analysis also intends to demonstrate that it is precisely the diverse road, ruggedness, risk, and other sensual needs of contemporary motorcyclists that significantly influence the avant-garde technologies that make participation in extreme rallies like Dakar humanly possible. But inspirational cutting-edge motorcycle technologies alone cannot provide the conditions to assure success in overcoming the unpredictable challenges presented by the terrain found in the region under investigation. Resilient riders working in cooperative technical teams are crucial in facilitating the harmony and cooperation that are fundamental for preparation for events like Dakar. The depth of the harmony and cooperation necessary among riders and indigenous technical and support communities that has made Dakar a consistent success for the past thirty years has, in fact, been so pervasive, that it represents a significant threat to existing special interests underlying exploitative socioeconomic and cultural world systemic arrangements.

Before examining these contro-versial propositions in greater detail,

it may be useful to describe the analytic inductive [AI] approach used in the current treatment. In contrast to the validation inherent in deductive reasoning, AI involves a process where 'theory is generated by the reformulation of hypotheses [as a result of] constantly confronting the theory with negative cases which do not confirm the current formulation.' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, 104). Through participant observation techniques using formal and informal interviews with thousands of subjects who were either participants, observers, or fans attending off and on-road motorcycle competitions and rallies on three continents over the course of two decades, the analysis focusing on non-economic factors attributed to international motorcycling were explored using the AI process of elimination. Participant observation techniques are particularly fortuitous 'as viewed from the perspective of people who are insiders or members of particular situations of settings.' (Jorgensen, 1989, 13; Znaniecki, 1934) As a trans-Atlantic motorcyclist herself, the author deployed methods and strategies that were amenable to gathering data in the unique, often chaotic fieldsites of international on and off road motorcycling events. In addition to interviews and other primary data collection and analysis conducted with participants and other enthusiasts at motorcycle events, direct observation techniques were made possible by the author through her participation as a rider, as passenger, or as a spectator in formal and informal, on and off road, enduro, adventure, and sidecar events in the United States, Europe, Egypt, and the United

Arab Emirates. The political, cultural, religious, ecological, and technological factors contributing to the enormous popularity of motorcycling that were uncovered in the field were validated with content analysis of motorcycle film portrayals. Through interview data and content analysis of film portrayals, the near universality of subject perception surrounding fear of exogenous impediments soon became apparent. The public sector was described by many informants as a coercive institution creating increasingly prohibitive regulations that impede technological and recreational aspects of modern on and off road motorcycling. As a result, international public policies were also examined to triangulate subject perceptions and reduce the possibility for errors due to researcher subjectivity. Thus, by integrating a multi-methodological analytic inductive approach, the study deployed ethnographic and other qualitative data derived from interviews, film, and policy analysis throughout a decade of international motorcycling events witnessed and experienced on three continents; with the results presented below.

Film Portrayals

The emancipatory potential and other human factors influencing the global popularity of motorcycling technology remains an authentic but yet unexplored area of social scientific investigation. The motorcycle as an element of human liberation from the constraints of industrialized society has not, however, been overlooked by cultural

critics outside the social sciences. Historic portrayals of motorcycling perpetuated in literature, film, and other art forms have contributed to the contemporary popularity, mystical catharsis, and sensual allure of two-wheeled transportation around the world. Two films in particular have been well received by both the motorcycling and non-motorcycling public, *Easy Rider* and The *Motorcycle Diaries*.

In *Easy Rider*, the young motorcyclists articulated a yearning for wide open spaces of America (Cummings, 2005). To satisfy the craving for escape from conventional society, bikers represented by actors Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda take to the road to interact with nature, experience new places, and interact with new people and cultures. To that end, they head out by motorcycle to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, the quintessentially bizarre American experience. Through their intense but problematic interactions with nature, people, and local cultures; they attempt to satisfy their inner craving for rejection of conformist economic production and the monotony of urban convention in lieu of the freedom and uncertainty inherent in life on the road. Brought on by the catharsis they experienced throughout their two-wheeled self exile, Costello (1972, 190) highlights that motorcycling in the film

> [warned] that the values of the counterculture were becoming indistinguishable from the values of the mainstream. […] The new American pioneer, searching for freedom, rides not on a stagecoach but a motorcycle, travels not west

but [south]. The ability to move seems a refutation of static lives. [The film characters go] to New Orleans at the time of Mardi Gras, the celebration that moves inexorably into the season of death, to the site of the old slave market and whorehouse [with] a warning for a counterculture that can't really be counter if it accepts the values of dominant culture into which it enslaves itself. […] The dialog says that the dominant culture is afraid of [the film's motorcycle characters] because they are free. Money-slaves always hate those who are free.

The motorcycle has figured prominently in pop culture as a vehicle for self-exile and related mystical liberation from conventional society.

The ideological freedom and human emancipation inherent in motorcycling is not, incidentally, limited to the United States. Motorcycles have also been a crucial element used to advance revolutionary identities in Latin America. Of all his insurgent writings and political activities, the only intimate autobiographical materials ever produced by Ernesto Che Guevera (with co-author and fellow motorcyclist Alberto Grenado) that document the personal experiences of his life are those narratives describing his motorcycling expeditions through-out South America known as, *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Guevera depicts the tremendous emancipatory freedom he felt as a result of his two-wheeled expeditions, which influenced the collectivist ideologies that his life-long revolutionary body of work would subsequently espouse. His deep affective sentiments toward

humanity and the scale of freedom that he advocated, often at gunpoint, for the citizens of the world made him a threat to many, but especially among fellow Maoists in the highest echelons of the Soviet Union. As cited in many of the biographies published since his untimely death, the most intimidating aspect of his entire insurgent persona has been attributed to the qualities he embodied as a motorcyclist. He persistently disrupted the established order through his unconventionally nomadic bohemianism, which above all advocated his identify as an *adventurer* rather than a political revolutionista. According to Harris (1998, 27-9),

> Feder Burlaps, a former advisor to Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev [stated], 'We disliked Che's position. He became an example for adventurers, [and this] could have provoked a confrontation between the USSR and the US.' […] During the period in which he was one of the most important members of the Cuban revolutionary government, [Che] was famous for his carefree appearance—he always wore his uniform shirt out of his pants and open at the throat, and his boots were never laced to the top. Some of these traits are clearly evident in Che's trips around South America as a young man. He seems to have delighted in traveling for days without bathing or changing his clothes and was not distressed by traveling with little or no money or having no idea where he would spend the night. He expected the same from his traveling companions. Ironically, these experiences helped him later as a

guerilla fighter, when he often has to go without food or water for days. […] His motorcycle diaries also revealed his growing sense of indignation and his early leanings toward socialism as he became aware of the extent and intensity of the social injustice and political oppression he witnessed on his travels through Latin America.

There are therefore, clear historical connections between motorcycle touring and emancipatory political acculturation. These are not, however limited to transcendental efforts among radical political revolutionaries throughout the North and South American continents. The emancipatory potential of motorcycling has been, and continues to be, the underlying motivation driving much of the popularity of this two-wheeled touring phenomenon among riders since the technology first circulated in the late 1800's in Europe and the United States. Despite misleading scholarly portrayals by economists and marketing analysts, liberation from the constraints of conventional four-wheeled transportation and the complementary desire for materially unencumbered aerodynamic travel has never been limited to western transactions of big brand motorcycles in the United States. Human liberation through reunification with self, nature, and one another has been a universal factor driving the scientific innovations surrounding the evolution of two-wheeled transportation since its earliest engineering achievements have taken place simultaneously in the United States and Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. As documented by Dulaney (2005, 2-3),

Motorcycling, something of a Darwinian variation in the evolution of bicycling, originates with the widespread diffusion of motorized transportation. […] These relatively cheap vehicles were marketed for a wide variety of uses, such as business delivery vehicles and leisurely activities, as well as being a prime answer to inner-city mass transportation problems. While bicycle companies had been experimenting with motorized versions of their cycles since at least as early as 1894, the first large-scale introduction of what was to become the motorcycle was introduced to the American public via bicycle racing after the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, well into the 1920s bicycle racing was America's most popular and well-attended sport, with races drawing more spectators than any other professional sport including baseball. In Europe, velodromes housed indoor wooden board tracks where world championships were held as early as 1893 and the first Tour de France was run in 1903. In the early 1900s bicycle design and manufacture, as well as athletes' physical abilities, had reached a point where aerodynamics were a major factor in bicycle racing. So it was that tandem (two-person) bicycles were fitted with French DeDion-Buton single-cylinder, air-cooled internal combustion engines in order to propel the cycles at regulated speeds just ahead of the racers. [M]otorcycle [history actually] begins in 1901 when Hendee and Hedstrom founded the Indian Motorcycle Company and began selling motorized bicycles to the general public. (The Harley-Davidson Motor Company was formed two years later.) Motorcycles, originally little more than motorized bicycles, were initially relatively affordable vehicles for most Americans, especially when compared with the astronomical costs of pre-Ford automobiles. Vast improvements in engine and carburetor design, along with the development of multi-speed transmissions, lighting systems, mechanical drum/leading-link braking systems, frame, and suspension designs very quickly ushered in an era that saw motorcycles as much more sophisticated and better-performing machines.

Since its earliest days, evolving motorcycle technologies have provided the public with an inexpensive and highly efficient, politically-viable, aerodynamically-sophisticated, ecological alternative to transportation that continues to revolutionize personal mobility and political sensitivities toward the planet and its' people to this very day. Nowhere is this phenomenon more demonstrable than in the contemporary off road rallies involving the circulation of cultural and technological capital among motorcycling participants and support communities meeting formally and informally around the Mediterranean for the past three decades.

The Dakar Rally

Dakar and other desert rallies have provided an unprecedented opportunity for cultural and technological exchanges leading to the unification among historically fragmented European, Nubian, and Arabic communities. The rallies taking place upon these mystical desert landscapes are providing unprecedented scales of sensually-cathartic, transcendental motorcycling experiences for the new international, culturally-sensitive, self-exiled bohemian carving an extraordinary path across the African continent on two wheels. How did this unique opportunity for harmony and cultural unification come about?

The race was started by French motorcyclist Thierry Sabine, after he became disoriented in the Libyan desert in 1978 and found his turmoil for survival a mystical experience. Named after the Senegalese capital city where the annual race finishes, the Dakar Rally boasts a grueling trek linking the two continents covering anywhere from 7,000 to 12,000 km and results in the highest rate of failure in the world. Despite the best performance of 500-600 specialized vehicles and expert drivers from 48 countries participating every year using high performance, cutting-edge, off-road technologies; only 310 were capable of finishing the race in 2007. In addition, there have been 58 deaths attributed to accidents since the Dakar started, including the death of its founder Thierry Sabine in a helicopter accident in 1986. 52 medical professionals serve the racers' physiological and mental health needs throughout the 17 days of racing, as they attempt to cut through some of the least hospitable terrain of of l'Afrique du Nord. The threats to racers are not, incidentally, limited to the heat and sand dunes endured throughout the entire track. At night time, extreme cold, scorpions, land mines, army guerillas, bandits, and other natural and man-made environmental threats face participants. The extreme conditions facing racers and the high mortality rates have made many uninitiated outsiders extremely critical of these annual events.[2] The French anti-sports lobby, the Mouvment Critique du Sport, was perhaps most outspoken in its accusation that the Dakar represents little more than an ostentatious display of wealth in countries plagued by poverty, starvation, and disease (Dynes, 2001) Ecologists including Greenpeace have also been critical of the environmental impact of the race on fragile desert ecosystems, particularly since organizers started allowing Hummers and other large militarized four-wheeled vehicles to compete in the rally (Bertrand, 2004). Critics have suggested that the globalization celebrated at Dakar represents little more than a clash of cultures, fomenting underlying hostilities due to exorbitant costs of technologies exhibited and significant disparities of development discernible in interactions among motorcyclists and indigenous peoples artificially precipitated by the event (Brooke, 1998). Other critics ignore the billions of Euros in transit fees circulated directly to individual nations and maintain that Dakar has little genuine long-term economic impact upon local indigenous communities (McGee, 2007).

While there may indeed be some validity legitimating these aforementioned criticisms disseminated by outside observers, the current analysis intends to show that adventure off-road motorcycle touring is, nevertheless, a profoundly optimistic act of international relations, blending sociocultural and technical experiences through unique hybridization that researchers have called the Man-Machine Interface [MMI]. According to Romanienko, (2001, 21),

> Although fragmentation and alienation by some measures appears to be on the increase, there remain areas of contemporary cultural production where technology is celebrated as a *source* of unity and integration across technical, artistic, cultural, ethnic, gender, and racial boundaries. [Technology] has not rendered mechanisms of human expression obsolete, but has instead become *another* creative vehicle by which to make […] cultural expression possible. [T]echnology has actually unified fragmented communities involved, increased the quality of manufactured goods available, and facilitated cooperation across artistic and technological community factions. Through hybridization of [technology], elective affinities have flourished. This has resulted in comprehensive collaboration arrangements […] thus optimizing aesthetic potential and maximizing opportunities for human creativity.

By focusing on the complex relationship between social structure and materiality found in the [hu]man-machine interplay, the analysis will illustrate that there are a whole host of benefits integrating international communities that significantly outweigh any of the inadvertent costs associated with motorcycle centered, technological community building at Dakar. Thompson (2000, 100-7) describes the relationship.

> With motorcycling, the most important 'real structures' are the riders—human beings—and their machines, which both must be analyzed not simply as what they are or seem to be 'in culture' but as what they are structures, one biological and the other mechanical. The bike and the rider together make up a kind of 'complex structure' that is assembled first and foremost at what the human-factors profession calls the 'Man-Machine Interface' or MMI. […] For those whose genetic inheritance includes a predisposition to translate certain somatosensory stimuli as enjoyable rather than unpleasant or frightening, a motorcycle in motion provides pleasures unavailable by any other means, pleasures that must be understood as aesthetic in every human sense for us to understand why riding a motorcycle seems so instantly to addict some and to repel others. […] But as every motorcyclist knows at some level of consciousness, riding a motorcycle is itself always an act of optimism, no matter what else it might seem to be.

To recapitulate, *riding a motorcycle is always an act of optimism*. The

current analysis suggests that the amicable international relationships that have longitudinally manifest as a result of three decades of harmonious human – machine interactions have unified communities at Dakar to such an extent, that the progressive egalitarian ties and related material cultural sentiments that have emerged throughout Dakar's North African motorcycling networks are now perceived as somewhat of a threat to socioeconomic and cultural entities benefiting from existing exploitative world systemic economic arrangements. These socioeconomic and cultural entities benefiting from the fictitious development of hostilities in the region include Christian, Islamic, and Jewish religious fundamentalists; as well as petroleum, natural gas, precious minerals, and other western industries with established resource-extracting activities. Emancipatory catharsis rooted in nature, as well as rapidly decreasing social distances and related harmonious unification among cooperative technical and indigenous support communities at Dakar; are highly antithetical to colonizing transnational business interests, as well as the hierarchical paternalistic authoritative social structures of domination that are reflected in all the major religious traditions around the world. The anticipated and unanticipated consequences of Dakar and other desert rallies represents a remarkable shift, toward what Tyszka (1997) has called *tectonic social changes*, that enhance multicultural understanding among European, African, Nubian, and Arabic communities. Under the rubric of technology-embracing, ecology-respecting, non-exploitative, motorcycling world views; an

elective affinity for these mystical desert environs has decreased social distances by race, gender, and ethnicity through the circulation of cultural and technological capital surrounding motorcycling technologies. Thanks in part to the Dakar, mutual understanding has been enhanced and improved intercontinental relations across the Mediterranean have been developing. These emerging egalitarian international relationships are threatening special interests benefiting from disparate levels of social, cultural, and economic development across the Mediterranean. So much so in fact, that the ex-President of France Nicolas Sarkozy, whose solid history of anti-immigration policies discriminating against African nationals in urban subsidized housing developments of Paris, engaged in an unprecedented political maneuver *the day before the race* and (after merely a half year in office) prohibited the Dakar Rally from taking place in 2008. To demystify the complexities surrounding these controversial events in greater detail, it may be useful to explore some of the political elements influencing the decision to impede the popularity of international motorcycling.

Emancipating the Colonized Mind

Why is motorcycling technology and its innovative use around the world viewed by so many to be so threatening to the existing order ? As prices of petroleum products skyrocket and as increased numbers of curious outsiders begin to seriously consider the feasibility of reduced consumption through two-wheeled mobility, analyst

use every statistical and paradigmatic resource at their disposal to dissuade and discourage the public from participating in these revolutionary ecological alternatives for clean mobility. These experts typically convolute the obvious ecological and political benefits associated with reduced petroleum consumption and overcrowded urban roadways affecting the entire world order by vilifying the machine and the lifestyle through the creative deployment of highly manipulative quantitative measures. According to Hemenway (1990, p. 1067),

> Motorcycling is one of the most dangerous forms of passenger transportation. For example, the mortality rate per passenger mile is 525 times that for scheduled aircraft, and 16 times that for automobiles. Motorcyclists, particularly unhelmeted ones, tend to be risk takers. The theory of propitious selection suggests that they will tend to be risk seeking, not only in the physical arena, but also in terms of their financial security.

In addition to the alleged dangers and related pathologies associated with reduced petroleum consumption through the use of these ecological alternatives to transportation, the most dangerous element of touring (and enduro rallies in particular) is that the machine is an important symbolic indication of an orientation toward *anti-materialism*. As a unique culture of consumption, motorcycling touring surrounding avant-garde off and on road transportation technologies are aerodynamically contingent upon weight restrictions that place severe limitations on food and alcohol consumption of riders, as well as the accumulation of superfluous material accoutrement while traveling. Although stereotypes perpetuated by often grotesquely-overweight motorcycle gang members composing formal 'outlaw' club structures reflects adherence to an antithetical consumptive aesthetic, genuine touring motorcyclists engaged in long distance travel must persistently avoid excessive consumption by necessity. For Dakar participants, lifestyles and worldviews reflecting an orientation toward conspicuous consumption beyond sustenance levels could challenge the laws of physics, enhance the likelihood for accidents, and decrease the chances for survival. Frequent attention to physiological consumption and elimination under time constraints established both by nature and Dakar's deep desert conditions could prove fatal (Bausenhart, 2002). Furthermore, excessive weight puts tremendous strain upon the machine and also has deleterious consequences upon the original technology's aerodynamic design. As such, a unique ethos surrounding anti-material culture of consumption is espoused by motorcycling touring communities around the world. Of these, off-road enduro and adventure touring is perhaps *most inhospitable to material culture*, based on the resilient mental and physical health requirements of drivers, as well as clear cognitive reasoning necessary to cope with sensory deprivation that accompanies crossing the desert in high temperatures under scarce resources conditions. Materially-unencumbered

aerodynamic motorcycling therefore, especially at unique desert events like Dakar, represents a powerful opportunity for social, cultural, and political contestation that defies and usurps conventional conformity rituals associated with conspicuous consumption. As suggested by Schouten and McAlexander (1995, 43-5),

> For the purpose of our discussion, we define a subculture of consumption as a distinctive subgroup of society that self-reflects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity. Other characteristics of a subculture of consumption include an identifiable, hierarchical social structure; a unique ethos, or set of shared beliefs and values; and unique jargons, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression. [C]ertain achieved subcultures have been observed to transcend national and cultural boundaries, demographic cohorts, racial or ethnic differences, and class differences in their scope and influence. [T]he subculture of consumption [is] a very useful and yet overlooked analytic category for understanding the objects and consumption patterns with which people define themselves [and their] culture. Our research interest [focused on] the possible existence of a distinctive, homogeneous, and enduring subculture that defines itself not only by a particular activity or lifestyle, but also by a […] brand of product!

Riders a the Dakar Rally have clearly created an alternative culture of consumption by embracing an ethos of anti-materialism and anti-consumption that resonates loudly with many who participate in these events. This culture of anti-consumption furthermore transcends racial, ethnic, gender, and national boundaries, and has universalized anti-material cultures among a unique population of motorcyclists on two-wheels (Hebdige 1983),

> [Motorcycle culture] was interpreted as a response to real problems and contradictions affecting the whole community: changes in the composition, ecology and culture of the urban working class, the erosion of pre-war communal and kinship obligations, the changing organization and status of industrial work, and the conflict between ideology of affluence and the experience of persistent deprivation [all contribute to the motorcycle critique of material culture].

Under routine conditions, the motorcycle rider with his or her subtle anti-material, cultural consumption patterns is discretely hidden, isolated, and fragmented in overcrowded, industrialized urban environments around the world. But at least once a year, members are capable of loudly promoting their revolutionary worldviews through symbolic discursive mechanisms reinforced through relevant motorcycle technology showcased at Dakar. Such revolutionary anti-material anti-consumption sentiments–

articulated by so many on such an international scale in such a politically controversial setting exposing so many new generations at all levels of economic development to anti-material worldviews – represents a significant threat to capitalist interests whose regional hegemony is contingent not only upon rapid consumption of petroleum and mineral products, but also upon large social distances to assure continued exploitative arrangements among European, American, African, Nubian, and Arabic communities. Thus the circulation of knowledge surrounding progressive motorcycle technologies and related sentiments that foster human unity and individual autonomy, egalitarian ideals, and harmonious cross-cultural relations represents nothing short of a subversion of the militaristic and economic interests of hegemonic governing powers continuing to mentally, geopolitically, and economically colonize and exploit Africa, its natural resources, and its people. According to Katsiaficas (1997, 308-9),

> The subversion of politics– the complete uprooting of authoritarianism in our everyday lives – begins by changing our assumptions and includes a restructuring of the ideological categories which prefigure our praxis […]. By way of contrast I understand autonomy as the phenomenological form of revolution […]. While liberty refers to the freedom to choose between available options, autonomy is an internally generated aspiration that has appeared spontaneously within a variety of movements.

Liberty is more of a function of situatedness of the subject and the tolerance of power, while autonomy is a universal form of revolutionary change, of creation of new categories that go beyond the existing reality. Reducing this human capacity to a categorical imperative of production effectively empties freedom of its sensuous human content. Inner meanings collapse in a world dominated by consumeristic categories of existence, and attempts to engage in autonomous activities becomes increasingly difficult. As the capacity for autonomous individuality shrinks, inner nature is colonized […]. The 'otherness' of autonomous movements is most blatantly clear [through] actions of individuals with regard to themselves and a rejection of government control of inner reality […]. Without a reworking of the psyche and reinvigoration of the spirit, can there even be talk of revolution?

Conventional motorcycling within hierarchical, franchising, economic social structures like outlaw biker gangs or independent urban riders in overcrowded industrialized environments leave little room for any genuine human emancipation. But there is significant revolutionary potential in touring events like Dakar, rooted in the refusal to allow exogenous institutional interests from colonizing the mind. No government, no dogmatic group of Judeo-Christian or Islamic religious fanatics, no other oppressive force can impose or otherwise influence opportunities for emancipatory motorcycle experiences

provided at Dakar that facilitate humanity's connections with the self, with nature, and with one another.[3] Conspicuous consumption, biker fashion, the avant-garde lightweight design of the equipment, articulation of discourse, or other disingenuous element of conventional material motorcycling culture can never substitute for the genuine emancipatory authenticity inherent in the mystical experiences taking place among the initiated at Dakar. As cited by Schouten and McAlexander (1995, 49-52),

> The [motorcycle] experience has a spirituality derived in part from a sense of riding as a transcendental departure from the mundane. […] Several elements contribute to the spirituality of the riding experience: the increased closeness to nature, the mantric throbbing of the engine, the constant awareness of risk and the concomitant mental focus, and, in group riding, the consciousness of oneself as an integral part of a larger group or purpose. The dominant value in the [biker] ethos is personal freedom. Two kinds of personal freedom are particularly important: liberation (i.e. freedom from) and license (i.e. freedom to). The reality of daily life is usually one of multiple sources of confinement. For the biker it is the reality of confinement that makes the [possibility] of liberation so seductive and the temporary experience of flight so valuable.

Here the authors have precisely captured the duel-edged sword of the emancipatory motorcycle experience

that is so threatening to existing world systemic arrangements. On the one hand, liberation from the constraints of conventional society is perhaps a ubiquitous yearning that is nearly universal. But like Ernesto Che Guevera, the touring motorcyclist has a rare combination of skills, talents, clarity, and perseverance enabling him or her to contest the bounds of freedom and to take occasional emancipatory license based on this combination of human distinctions surrounding personal fortitude. The resilience and fortitude that comes through years of touring is an ephemeral quality of accumulated cultural capital that does not lend itself easily to demystification by any particular macrostructural paradigmatic framework, but one that can be easily recognized by the trained eye of the symbolic interactionist through gestures as simple as the rider's walk, the way he or she stands when adjusting the machine, the performativity of space, or through the glorious exhaustion that comes after a lengthy day of travel. Enduro motorcycle touring, as well as the unique technologies making these experiences humanly possible, provides the initiated with an esoteric and deeply internal, transcendental, reciprocal human--machine interface that emancipates the psyche, facilitates autonomy and independence, and holds a distinct place of respect even (or especially) among more conventional motorcyclists. There are, after all, many uninitiated on two-wheels who often yearn for the freedom of the touring experience, but who are, for whatever reason, incapable of developing the courage necessary to break away from civilisation to endure

the harsh but emancipatory conditions associated with genuine self-exile of wide open desert spaces. Pratt argues (2002, 2-4),

> With its emphasis on rationalism and secularism, modern civilization is especially repressive; and to maintain social stability, various mechanisms are required to vent or at least blunt repressed needs. Without cathartic opportunities, societies will spontaneously erupt in widespread antisocial behavior or, if draconian social controls are enacted, slowly burns down to a smoldering malaise. Some of the mechanisms Freud describes in *Civilization and its Discontents* for keeping aggressive instincts in check include voluntary isolation, aesthetic pleasure, and religion. And whereas other reversal rituals are based on themes drawn from other cultures or the distant past, [motorcycle rallies are] unusual in that the dominant themes are derived from popular culture. [Westerners] have historically embraced technology, and their relationship with the motorcycle is particularly interesting. As one of the last great inventions of the industrial age, it may well have become the primary mode of transportation had it not lost out to automobiles when it became more expensive than the Model T. From that point forward, the machine became increasingly viewed as impractical, little more then technological fluff, and a dangerous form of entertainment. For these reasons, however, the potent emotional thrills evoked by the motorcycle have transformed

it over the years into a ubiquitous icon […] symbolizing values associated with power, freedom, escape, high fashion, and rebellion.

Motorcycle touring at Dakar remains therefore, the quintessential strategic mechanism of metasubversion that provides progressive international and indigenous technological support communities with emancipatory catharsis through human reunification with the self, with nature, and with one another through the wide open spaces of self exile in the mystical desert environs of Dakar.

[Re]colonizing the Emancipated Mind

Given the revolutionary potential of the postmaterial consciousness associated with on and off road motorcycling in both developed and developing cultural contexts like Africa, it was only a matter of time before these threats to existing socioeconomic arrangements proved too great. The interpersonal and interactive cultural, religious, technological harmony demonstrated at the Dakar represents a serious threat for hegemonic states. These include regional domination by resource-extracting business interests, the fear of diminishes social distances fragmenting European and African communities that exploitative arrangements are contingent upon; and perhaps most importantly, the ecological potential inherent in transcendental, nature-oriented emancipatory spirituality that is developed far beyond the reach of traditional paternalistic hierarchical

authorities of the major religious traditions. Given these and many other threats of racial and economic hegemony too lengthy to describe in their entirety here but elaborated more fully in postcolonial scholarship and racism discourses; it should come as no surprise that contemporary motorcyclists have found themselves under attack by both state and non-state actors. Indeed, the rise in worldwide postmaterial consciousness demonstrated at Dakar has already documented among numerous demographic cohorts in the World Values Survey (Inglehart, 1990). But do these threats necessarily manifest into antagonistic public policies ?

Efforts to impede the popularity of international biking begins with the machine. Motorcycle technology has been under attack by regulatory authorities around the world, placing excessive limitations upon the type of equipment used, the kinds of sounds produced, as well as the acceleration and sustained speeds they are capable of achieving. Pursell (1983, 315) suggests

> People are tool-using creatures. These tools have been used to shape both the nearest and most intimate contours of our lives, and also the larger cultural landscape in which they have been used. As a human institution and a form of human behavior concerned with the exercise of prudential judgment, technology has been the thin edge between people and the rest of nature, human and otherwise. We have encoded in this technology in each time and place, our own sense of organic needs, historic experience,

human aptitudes, and ecological complexity and variety.

Not only have contemporary motorcycle technologies failed to exhibit any deterministic controls on the social structure in which it is embedded, but rather the social structure in the form of state regulations exhibit profoundly deterministic controls that actually dominate rapidly changing motorcycle technology. Through Draconian prohibitions limiting consumer access to innovative technologies that focus on everything from helmets to exhaust systems to engine capacities; government regulations have become increasingly coercive in preventing consumers from indulging in these technologies to make their preferred (often peculiar) forms of mobile catharsis possible. By restricting the type of sensual two-wheeled experience available, government regulatory authorities have created serious impediments to the historically responsive relationship between scientific and technological innovators and the motorcycle-consuming public. Stakeholders fear that complications in the form of state interventions might impede scientific and ecological advances brought on by the historically-cooperative relationship between designers and consumers. According to Mackay and Gillespie (1992, 693-703),

> [W]hereas most literature su-ggests that the main function of design is to make things beautiful, design is better explained in terms of […] ideological coding. [The] designer should not be ascribed the autonomy so often assumed. [D]esign is a social process.

[D]esigners work as agents of ideology [whose role is] to condense a complex of ideologies into a singular product. [I]deology is a critical ingredient in technological design. [T]he way in which a technology is deployed is also determined by its users: the use is not inevitable, built into the technology, or fixed. The subjective, social appropriation of a technology is thus a crucial force in the shaping of technology. All consumption, then, involves the consumption of meanings; indeed it involves the production of meanings. Goods, in short, are the visible part of […] modern culture [that is] not isolated, but exists in the context of the social, political and ideological conditions under which meaning, production and consumption take place.

The intense cooperation among enduro touring motorcyclists and the developers of emerging technologies that make these mystical desert fantasies a reality, have led to a unique collaboration considered by many to be a *dangerous elective affinity*, that together fosters the revolutionary potential of transgressive *anti-materialistic* worldviews surrounding ecological and anti-material cultural consumption. Behrens et. al (2007, 445) stated

Human history has always been closely linked to the control, extraction and use of natural resources. [This is the] material basis of the global economy. […] Total material inputs to the economy as a whole…must by definition equal total outputs plus net accumulation of materials in the system. It thus follows that increasing problems

associated with waste generation and emissions are related to the scale of material input. From this point of view, an overall reduction of global material use (i.e. dematerialization)… will represent a key strategy to combat global environmental problems.

Certainly regulatory environments cannot entirely prohibit the techno-logical development of avant-garde motorcycles that address the specific needs of specific consumers under specific geological conditions, but they can make access to these proliferating technologies so prohibi-tively expensive, that they remain reserved for the uninitiated few who fail to understand it but can afford it. Disproportionately expensive insu-rance policies, the imposition of high-priced state-endorsed helmets, prohibitions on the style and speed of riding, the criminalization of competitions like the Dakar Rally, and attempts to regain lucrative sponsorships and investments by unsuccessfully relocating the race beyond the continent of Africa; are all dramatic examples of the increasingly destructive tactics being used by hegemonic elites in an effort to [re]colonize the emancipated mind of the avant-garde motorcycling community. State impediments to the frequency, duration, style, and location of motorcycle travel around the world should be construed as a viciously coercive and autocratic mechanism to thwart the emancipatory potential and diplomatic harmony of the international motorcycle touring public (Peacock, 2008). Furthermore, the permanent criminalization of Dakar represents an unprecedented attack not only upon international motorcyclists,

but also their international sponsors, their international technical and support communities, as well as their international machine designers showcasing their adapted motorcycle creations.

By using the race to opportunistically attract global attention to himself, French President Nicolas Sarkozy who had been in office only a few months used the Dakar Rally to impede the dissemination of postmaterial, postmilitary sentiments among motorcyclists and their like-minded, international technical and support communities, while vilifying indigenous African cultures.[4] Until the French prohibition, these informal diplomatic motorcycling missions have been taking place successfully for three decades across the Mediterranean. The unjustified and illegitimate autocratic decision-making that prohibited the Dakar Rally by French officials with lengthy history of discriminatory social policies against Francophile communities of color, represents an egregious attempt to censor the progressive, informal, international diplomacy taking place in Dakar for over a quarter of a century.

By annihilating the unusually cooperative relationship between a demanding motorcycling public and the scientists driving responsive research and development activities of the motorcycling industry through excess state regulations, by the imposition of prohibitive legislation that criminalizes the harmonious history of exchanges taking place at Dakar, and by making illegitimate claims that the murder of four French tourists on Christmas Eve in Mauritania in 2007 was evidence of sustained and organized mass African

terrorism by Muslim fundamentalists; the new conservative French government made unsubstantiated accusations that the security and safety of riders and other participants at Dakar was not possible.[5] Following in the genocidal path spearheaded by the Bush administration's foreign policy in the Middle East, the prohibition of Dakar represents yet another attempt by a hegemonic nation with a history of colonization to escalate the global anti-Arabic and anti-Islamic moral panic by equating the isolated murders of a handful of tourists as international conspiratorial terrorism. This serves to facilitate continued anti-immigrant policies within Europe and prohibits the circulation of progressive postmaterial, anti-consumption, ecological sentiments symbolized by the harmonious spectacle that had been the Dakar Rally. By thwarting the activities of an otherwise progressive and culturally-sensitive international motorcycling community that presents significant complications for existing exploitative world systemic arrangements, the French President has destroyed an important and harmonious international political and cultural event. Despite the fact that there have been no significant or dangerous interactions within the Dakar community in three decades of multicultural interactions; policies attacking motorcycling cultures have created insurmountable obstacles eliminating any possibility for the celebrated multicultural event to ever continue. Safety has never been a primary intention among the initiated participating in enduro touring events in Africa (Apter, 1992; Scott, 1996; Wilson, 1936). The unwarranted

and excessive interdiction by the French government banning the event giving organizers 15 minutes notice a day before the event without any consultation with sponsors or other stakeholders represents yet another paternalistic attempt by hegemonic interests to vilify and pathologize judicious decision-making by avant-garde motorcycle communities from participating in these risky but liberating touring endeavors throughout Africa.

Discussion

As the singularly most important public event of European origin legitimizing the cathartic possibilities for harmonious cooperative relations among ethnically, racially, and spiritually diverse historically-fragmented Francophone communities; these dramaturgic vilification strategies on the global stage have now become the customary modus operandi deployed by hegemonic governments to generate the fear of Islam necessary to enable exploitative economic interests to continue to colonize business interests throughout the region. Why is Dakar so threatening ? To answer this question, it may be fortuitous to examine motorcycle touring around the Mediterranean as part of the larger experimental utopian liberation project surrounding contemporary strategies of self-exile.

Among initiated insiders, motor-cycle touring throughout the organic communities composing the Middle East and North Africa is a part of the broader experimental utopian project for human liberation. Be it the self, the community, or the

world around us; motorcycling at Dakar is the quintessential discursive semiotic method of emancipation that formalizing the struggle for freedom, autonomy, and self-determination for both the individual and the collective through identification with, and empathetic nostalgic alignment of, premodern organic societies of the past. As reinforced through unification of the rider with the self, with the machine, with indigenous support communities, and with each other; individual liberation is connected to, rooted within, and impossible without, emancipation of the organic collective situated throughout gloriously un-derdeveloped, topographically mys-tical, geological wonders of the African desert. The motorcycle, according to the perspective of many initiated enthusiasts and observers, has been sustained as a primary site for the struggle to maximize our potential for human emancipation (Pirsig, 1974). As part of an effort to reduce these obstacles to human liberation rooted in crippling factors of modernity, the nostalgic return to organic society begins with the struggle for individual freedom offered through the philosophies of Krishnamurti (1992, p. 69),

> Freedom–to be free–is becoming more and more difficult. As society becomes more complex and as industrialization becomes wider and deeper and more organized, there is less and less freedom for man. [O]utwardly one becomes a slave to society, to the pressure of society; in this pressure of organized existence there is no tribal existence, but industrialized, organized,

centralized control. When there is more 'progress' there is less and less freedom.

As 'advanced' industrialized nations provide the technology, the capital, and the leisure time for the collusive servile masses to acquire unprecedented scales of materialist accumulation, the yearning for freedom and emancipation from materiality has, paradoxically, never been greater. Many avenues are explored in the quest to fill the void brought on by conspicuous consumption, all of them leaving their seekers more shallow and empty than they were before. The sensual, spiritual, and political extent to which motorcyclists are willing to deploy the machine in service to their struggles to transcend an increasingly artificial, threatening, adversarial world is indeed impressive. In all these various approaches deployed by genuine adventurers in service to their *inner authenticity*, the desire for human emancipation has led time and time again to the [re]assertion of human agency to combat the suffocating passivity and dependence brought on by a vicious combination of unregulated neoliberal market economics and the collusive state. According to Bennett (2000, 62, 138), the unification of victims of neoliberal economics beyond territoriality transcending nation-state boundaries in struggles linking the first and third world is a cognitive and social process called *cultural reterritorialisation*.

> One way in which indigenous populations may seek to culturally relocate [or reterritorialize] themselves is by constructing idealized versions of national

culture based upon an imagined past. One school of thought has maintained that globalisation can only have a pathological effect [based on] a one-direction flow of cultural commodities from the west.

On guard from cultural threats brought on by globalisation, individuals will rigidly defend themselves through the cognitive construction of a reterritorialised cohesive community to link protective strategies that, like circulating mobile capital, transcends nation-state boundaries. Such construction transcends immediate geo-political boundaries, and based on an imagined or actual past, fosters a return to and reconstruction of, organic solidarity inherent in underdeveloped cultural contexts. Like predatory capitalism and the coerced debt that accompanies it, this kind of organic reterritoriality goes far beyond modern political boundaries, forging camaraderies of resistance among victims located across core and periphery (Wallerstein, 1999). The rigidity necessary to combat the threats of the one world hegemonic predator has given rise to the identification with, and symbolic unification of, first and third world victims left devastated by the monolithic world system. Exiled, homeless, demoralized, and denigrated core inhabitants of the first world, through their own victimization of the same forces of imperialism and colonization that created centuries of suffering in the third world, have finally become cognizant of the genuine depth of deprivation brought on by coercive capitalism and the collusive state, this time in complex multinational forms associated with modern markets

causing the third worldization of disposable people located at the core (Hamel et. al. 2001, 6),

> It is this new pattern of uneven inclusion that generates anxiety and frustration. Globalization therefore invokes anger and anxiety in the South and tends to be experienced as yet another round of Northern hegemony, and another round of concentration of power and wealth. The common denominator…is imperialism, neocolonialism revisited. But analytically this is mistaken: imperialism was territorial, state-driven, centrally-orchestrated, and marked by a clear division between colonizer and colonized; none of these features apply to contemporary globalization. Contemporary accelerated globalization is multidimensional, non-territorial, polycentric, and the lines of inclusion/exclusion are blurred and run between the middle classes and the poor North and South.

Although centuries too late, the knowledge and experiences linking complex struggles between core and periphery have finally resulted in an unprecedented level of empathetic global understanding among the oppressed needed to generate innovative discursive strategies necessary to rigidly combat these vehement forms of contemporary exploitation, or what Harvey (1990) calls 'the distorted relationships that lie at the heart of civilized oppression.' Constructing the cohesiveness and rigidity through communities of resistance that will be necessary to combat these forms

of *civilized oppression* will take nothing less than a global revolution of dependency-dismantling egalitarian resistance worldwide, in which Dakar figures prominently. Intercontinental motorcycle touring is an important element in this contemporary struggle of bohemian exile known more commonly as *alterglobalisation*. By many accounts, reversing these global forms of civilized oppression will require nothing short of a movement of decivilizing independence to create a truly self-sufficient, sustainable, egalitarian society; where control or authority of any kind is prohibited and where all forms of power exercised by one human being over another are deemed unnatural, undesirable, and therefore prohibitive. Reterritorialisation takes place not only among the riders seeking a return to the organic self and organic others, but is also taking place among the indigenous inhabitants of Dakar, as the city strives to create a new decolonized identity of its own in service to the emancipatory project of progressive knowledge circulation advanced by the Dakar Rally. According to Roberts and Roberts (2007, 52-66),

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, when French colonizers conceived of and constructed Dakar as the new capital of colonial Senegal and all of French West Africa, the Western Corniche signaled participation in an urban-planning paradigm that naturalized practicalities like military [occupation]. [Artists are now] contributing to the refabulation of the parts of Dakar most haunted by colonial repression. […] Refabulation refers to the choosing of new myths and allusions to make a place more suited

to the needs of those seeing to such transformation. Many are contributing to this process in Dakar, as colonial markers and memories are effaced yet remain as historical palimpsest overlaid by images of saints and heroes of more immediate relevance [that] contribute to particular forms of devotional nationalism.

Whether one believes the post-colonial transformation process taking place among indigenous communities in places like Dakar as more characteristic of reterritorialisation or refabulation; the fact remains that progressive western motorcyclists, without the colonizing consciousness typically found among exploitative petroleum industry business executives, are voluntarily immersing themselves into these remote cultures through two-wheeled adventure ecotourism. European riders who temporarily descend upon Dakar every year within a celebratory atmosphere of anticipated accomplishment, intentionally seek the role of vulnerable and isolated travelers who are dependent upon international unity and cooperation for survival under extremely inhospitable geological and political circumstances. These unusual conditions at Dakar provide the Senegalese and other African nationals with an important opportunity to legitimate sovereign identity construction processes that includes Islamification as social movement (Bayat, 2005), to demonstrate affective and progressive sentiments of creative forgiveness toward historically-colo-nizing populations, and to benefit financially through interactions among avant-garde motorcycling communities from all sides of the Mediterranean. These unusual

conditions at Dakar furthermore, provide western motorcyclists with a contemptible legacy of colonization a refreshing opportunity to deconstruct and redesign a new era of progressive international diplomacy, made possible through technology-centered, avant-garde recreational ecologically-oriented motorcycle material culture. Efforts to relocate the event to South America have been economically, politically, and culturally devastating for many African and European riders, sponsors, designers, as well as members of technical and support communities. Despite media portrayals to the contrary, and given the recent elimination of opportunistic politicians exacerbating religious conflicts to promote their own political interests; the time has finally come to reverse these Draconian policies outlawing adventure motorcycling in North Africa, and allow the Dakar Rally to continue to heal the painful history of American, European, and African relations through the circulation of progressive cultural, ecological, and anti-material consciousness among Nubian, Arabic, and European peoples moving harmoniously together on two wheels throughout the region and the planet.

Notes
[1] Robert, Anne-Cécile (2007) Françafrique Sarkozy-style *Le Monde* Sept.
[2] Only a handful of drivers from the United States have ever participated in Dakar, and none of them have ever come in first place in any category or weight class on two or more wheels.
[3] For a deeper understanding of the

history of political relations of the Senegalese and their record of anti-colonial insurrections against the French, see Scheck, Raffael 2012 Les prémices de Thiaroye: L'infuence de la captivité allemande sur les soldats noirs français a la fin de la Seconde Guerre mundiale *French Colonial History*. 2012, Vol. 13, p73-90.

⁴ For an explanation of Sarkozy's Zionist family history and contemporary pro-Israeli foreign policy platforms, see Eliaz, 2007. For an explanation of Sarkozy's leadership in expediting the NATO-led assassination on Libyan ruler Muammar Khaddafi due to his threat of disclosure of evidence of illegal Libyan campaign contributions allegedly in excess of € 50 Million, see Ryan, 2012. For a description of the surprisingly sudden, brutal, and illegal nature of the NATO-led attacks in the assassination of Khaddafi and the mass graves of his associates; see Schell, 2011; Madar, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2012. Sarkozy who lost the presidential election denies acceptance of any campaign contributions from Khaddafi.

⁵ For an explanation of the history of the fictitious 'false flag' terrorist-design initiatives including Africa's main oil and gas producing nations under the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative, see Keenan, 2009 and 2012.

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