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Beyond Liberal Promises: Interpreting Illiberal State Reactions to Social Movements through Foucault's *Raison d'état*

Liberal Vaatlerin Ötesinde: Sosyal Hareketlere İlliberal Devlet Tepkilerini Foucault'nun Devlet Aklı Kavramıyla Yorumlamak

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This article develops a theoretical framework to explain the apparent paradox of liberal democratic states employing illiberal measures against social movements and proposes that the underlying logic of state actions can be understood through Foucault's theory.
Methodology – This study relies on Foucault's conceptual framework to model modern state rationality (*raison d'état*). This framework is substantiated by an illustrative case analysis of state reactions to social movements in the US, UK, and France.
Findings – The principal finding is that illiberal state reactions are rational applications of a single state reason, based on the imperative to maintain the material-economic circulation of life, and that the liberal democratic character of the state is occasionally overridden. This dynamic can also be traced in states' reactions to social movements.
Conclusions – The article concludes that the liberal democratic character of the state is secondary to a fundamental modern state rationality, and that when systemic circulation is at risk, its illiberal actions are based on a rationality traceable to the modern state ethos.
Keywords: Liberal democratic state, social movements, Foucault, modern state reason, material circulation of life.
JEL Codes: D72, D74, P10

ÖZ

Amaç – Bu makale, liberal demokratik devletlerin sosyal hareketlere karşı görünüşte çelişkili, liberal olmayan önlemlerini açıklayan teorik bir çerçeve geliştirmekte ve devlet eylemleriinin altında yatan temel bir mantığın Foucault'un teorisi üzerinden anlaşılmasını önermektedir.
Yöntem - Çalışma, modern devlet aklını (*raison d'état*) modellemek için Foucault'nun kavramsal çerçevesine yaslanır. Bu çerçeve, ABD, İngiltere ve Fransa'daki sosyal hareketlere yönelik devlet tepkilerinin açıklayıcı vaka analiziyle desteklenir.
Bulgular – Temel bulgu, illiberal devlet tepkilerinin, hayatın maddi-ekonomik dolaşımını sürdürme zorunluluğuna dayanan tek bir devlet aklının rasyonel uygulamaları olduğu ve devletin liberal demokratik niteliğinin zaman zaman arka planda kaldığıdır. Bu akış devletlerin sosyal hareketlere tepkilerinde de izlenebilir.
Sonuç – Makale, devletin liberal demokratik karakterinin temel modern devlet rasyonalitesine ikincil olduğu ve sistemik dolaşımın riske girdiği anlarda illiberal eylemlerinin izi modern devlet ethosuna kadar sürülebilen bir rasyonaliteye dayandığı sonucuna varmaktadır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Liberal demokratik devlet, toplumsal hareketler, Foucault, modern devlet aklı, hayatın maddi dolaşımı.
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1. INTRODUCTION

From a liberal theoretical perspective, the state lacks an independent teleology; its purpose is defined by the expressed will of the individuals it serves (Poggi, 1978: 96). As constitutionalists posit, it is not a spontaneous historical product but an intentional construction, a rational human praxis designed primarily to protect inalienable individual rights and facilitate capitalist accumulation (Nelson, 2006: 1–2). This disavowal of any self-proclaimed authority creates a permanent condition wherein the state's very legitimacy must be continuously justified, shifting its orientation toward civil society (Green, 1999: 84–85; Nelson, 2006: 8; Neocleous, 2003: 41). Foundational public liberties—such as political participation, expression, and assembly—are thus not merely incidental but are the core instruments through which this legitimacy is maintained (Macpherson, 1984: 77-91), forming the crucial structural link between the ideals of liberalism and the practice of democracy (Koopmans et al., 2005: 31; Dahl, 1998: 85-86).

Given this robust theoretical foundation, a significant paradox arises in practice. Liberal democratic states, which are expected to exhibit the highest degree of tolerance for dissent, often employ repressive, exclusionary, and illiberal measures against social movements. This leads to the central analytical question of this research: When liberal democratic states respond to collective actions that operate outside formalized political channels, are their reactions governed by the liberal rights they promise, or by a different, more fundamental logic? Conventional explanations for this paradox, which often attribute these actions to mere hypocrisy or a simple prioritization of 'security' over 'liberty', fail to explain the evident rationality behind state behavior and its dual-faceted nature. They cannot account for why some movements are successfully integrated while others are met with overt repression.

This article argues that this analytical gap is best filled by understanding state actions as evidence of a more foundational modern state rationality (*raison d'état*) that operates beneath, and at times in spite of, its liberal-democratic character. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work on governmentality, this paper posits that the ultimate objective of this *raison d'état* is to guarantee the uninterrupted material and economic circulation of life. The validity of this Foucauldian logic, this article contends, can be powerfully demonstrated by analyzing how liberal democratic states react to social movements. These reactions reveal a consistent, underlying rationality that manifests through a dual strategy: integration (a logic of discipline) for manageable threats and repressive securitization (a logic of sovereignty) for existential ones, with the choice between them being a rational calculation of which approach most cost-effectively maintains systemic flow.

However, before proceeding with the analysis, it is crucial to explicitly define and justify the deliberate limitations of this study's scope, which are essential for the integrity of the argument. This study confines its analysis to three specific nation-states: the United States, France, and Great Britain. This selection is not arbitrary but is designed to create a robust test for liberal democratic theory by focusing on its archetypal cases. Other countries are intentionally excluded to avoid conceptual ambiguity. For instance, smaller liberal democracies, such as the Netherlands, are less suitable for generating broad insights into the core logic of liberalism as a major geopolitical force. Meanwhile, states with recent histories of fascism or post-war far-right governments -such as Italy, Spain, or Germany- present a different analytical challenge. In these contexts, illiberal state practices could easily be attributed to the lingering legacies of fascism or the specific ideologies of right-wing parties, allowing for a defense that "this is not real liberalism."

Furthermore, other settler-colonial states like Canada or Australia present unique dynamics where primary social tensions have historically revolved around indigenous-settler conflicts. For example, while the US was convulsed by the events of 1968 and its ideological fallout, Canada was preoccupied with resolving the Quebec issue. By focusing on the US, UK, and France -states with long, relatively uninterrupted liberal trajectories and complex, multi-faceted social conflicts beyond a single ethnic axis- this study can more effectively isolate the underlying *raison d'état* that is inherent to the liberal democratic model itself, rather than attributing its actions to unique national histories or specific political contexts.

Similarly, the study's temporal focus on the post-World War II era is a necessary limitation. While states have long had "liberal" elements, the synthesis of economic liberalism, political freedom, and mass democratic participation that constitutes a "full-fledged" liberal democracy is a relatively recent phenomenon. The fundamental conditions for such a regime -guaranteed individual and civil liberties, non-

interference in the economy, and equal political participation rights- did not meaningfully coalesce until this period (Hobhouse, 1945: 127; Thomas, 1995: 11-12; Scruton, 2007: 394-395). Furthermore, this period not only marks the maturation of the liberal state into its modern form but also, starting with the intellectual shift that redefined collective action from irrational collective deviance to a rational pursuit of interests (Turner and Killian, 1957: 143), represents a new era of politically legitimized social movements. The core hypothesis of this study is that a consistent pattern of state response endures despite the profound transformations of this period.

On one side, the liberal democratic state itself evolved from the accommodating "welfare state" of the mid-20th century to the more overtly disciplinary "neoliberal state" of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a model often associated with more repressive measures (Gamble, 1996; Petras and Weltmeyer, 2011: 122-125; Fine and Saad-Filho, 2016: 4-9; Rigakos, 2016: 1-3). On the other, social movements transformed from "old," class-based struggles to "new," identity-focused movements[1] centered on post-material values, and more recently, to "anti-austerity" movements blending material and cultural concerns[2] (Melucci, 1980; Offe, 1985; Williams, 2004: 92; Nash, 2010: 106-107; Della Porta, 2015: 17). Theoretically, these shifts should have produced profoundly disparate state reactions.

Nevertheless, this article hypothesizes that this surface-level variation masks an underlying strategic consistency. The fundamental calculus of the liberal democratic state has not changed. The persistent pattern of a dual-pronged response -deploying either pacifying integration or coercive securitization- is not an erratic reaction to changing circumstances. Rather, it is the consistent application of a foundational *raison d'état* aimed at preserving systemic order, or as Foucault's conceptualization "material circulation of the life and the economy" (2009: 5-6). Moving from the evaluation of the states' reactions to social movements, seemingly the state makes a rational calculation: it asks whether it is less costly to absorb a movement's demands into the institutional framework (integration) or to violently exclude it from the political sphere (securitization). The answer depends less on the state's ideological character (welfare vs. neoliberal) or the movement's explicit goals (material vs. post-material), and more on a pragmatic assessment of the movement's capacity to disrupt the material circulation of life and its level of popular legitimacy. Demonstrating that this same calculative logic endures across our selected case studies -the archetypal liberal democracies of the United States, France, and Great Britain[3]- will provide the strongest evidence for a deep-seated rationale of governance that offers a more powerful explanation for state behavior than its own proclaimed principles.

With this framework and its limitations established, the argument will unfold in three main sections. Section 2, Unpacking the Modern *Raison d'état*, will introduce the Foucauldian theoretical framework. Section 3, The Dual Logics of State Action, will then apply this framework to empirical cases, illustrating how the state rationally chooses between integration and securitization. Finally, the Conclusion will synthesize these findings to reaffirm the paper's central thesis.

2. UNPACKING THE MODERN *RAISON D'ÉTAT*: A FOUCAULDIAN EXPLANATION OF STATE ACTION

To understand the consistent logic behind the state's seemingly paradoxical responses, we must first unpack the theoretical framework that governs its actions. This requires moving beyond a surface-level analysis of liberalism and engaging with Foucault's concept of the modern state's *raison d'état*. As the following analysis

[1] *As Gamson points out: "[c]leansed of its assumptions about a spoiled or ersatz identity, there is a central insight that remains. Participation in social movements frequently involves enlargement of personal identity for participation and offers fulfillment and realization of the self" (Gamson, 1992: 56).*

[2] *Also, a second transformation argument proposes that 2000s social movements while sharing traits with both older and newer movements, form a distinct category. Unlike either, these movements prioritize material and economic issues, similar to old social movements, while attracting cross-class participation like new social movements. Della Porta conceptualizes these as "Anti-Austerity Movements" (2015: 17).*

[3] *The selection of the United States, France, and Great Britain as liberal democratic analytical units is purposeful; these nation-states serve as compelling and germane case studies for the comprehensive assessment of liberal democratic states' actualized commitment to the core tenets of both liberalism and democracy. This selection is supported by three fundamental considerations. Firstly, the prominent historical roles played by each of these states in both articulating and advancing foundational liberal principles; secondly, their comparatively protracted and uninterrupted historical trajectories as operational liberal democratic polities; and finally, their manifest suitability for facilitating a nuanced analysis of the interactive dynamics characteristic of the complex relationship between the state and its variegated expressions of social movements due to their complex population structures.*

will show, this rationality, centered on the management of populations and the safeguarding of economic flows, provides the key to deciphering the state's dual strategy toward social movements.

A seminal analysis of the modern state and its underlying rationality is offered by Foucault, who identifies three discrete instantiations of its historical development: the juridical state of the medieval period, the administrative state of the 16th-17th centuries, and finally, the governmental state, which has defined the political landscape since the 18th century. This latter form is characterized not by territory, but by its primary object of concern: the population (Foucault, 2009: 110). The modern *raison d'état* rely on this tripartite logic operates through a synthesis of three co-existing modalities of power, which the state strategically deploys: sovereignty of juridical state, discipline of administrative and security of governmental state (Foucault, 2003: 242).

It is crucial to highlight that an examination of these three modalities of state power does not suggest a linear or sequential progression. Rather, the elements of governmental rationality -sovereignty, discipline, and security- though distinct, remain deeply intertwined, with their respective functions and prominence shifting historically (Foucault, 2009: 5). Thus, the logics of sovereignty, discipline, and security collectively constitute the overarching governmentality of modern states, including liberal democracies. The advent of new governance technologies does not render prior mechanisms obsolete; instead, emergent forms arise from and are enmeshed within preexisting structures (Foucault, 2003: 242). In other words, these modalities do not operate in a teleological sequence wherein newer forms supplant older ones. Rather, they maintain a complementary relationship, with historical transformations determining which logic assumes dominance and thereby shapes the prevailing character of power. Crucially, these forms do not disappear over time - only their relative hegemony fluctuates:

> *So, there is not a series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear. There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security. Mechanisms of security do not replace disciplinary mechanisms, which would have replaced juridico-legal mechanisms. In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which what above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security (Foucault, 2009: 8).*

First, the logic of security functions as the state's default modality. Its apparatus does not seek to impose a rigid, idealized order, but rather to manage populations and events within a "bandwidth of the acceptable" by calculating probabilities and defining an optimal mean (Foucault, 2009: 5-6). The primary objective of this governmental security logic is to preserve the normal order by preempting any event that could disrupt the material circulation of life and the economy. It is a proactive and preventative rationality aimed at creating a stable, predictable, and ideally, a social movement-free environment.

When this most recent operational modality of state, governmentality, is incapable of guaranteeing a social milieu entirely devoid of collective action, and its well-prepared tactics prove inadequate when confronted with social movements possessing the capacity to disrupt established societal configurations, the state reverts to its other two, more interventionist modalities. In other words, when social movements emerge with a genuine capacity to disrupt this circulation, the logic of security proves inadequate. The first interventionist option is the logic of discipline. Through this, the state seeks to integrate and pacify the movement by channeling its demands and actors into the established institutional order. This is the logic of creating "docile bodies"—turning protest into manageable policy debates and radical actors into cooperative partners. This is precisely the mechanism we will see at play with highly institutionalized social movements.

The second, and final, interventionist option is the logic of sovereignty. When a movement is perceived as an existential threat and integration is deemed too costly or impossible, the state can activate its oldest, most foundational power: the sovereign right to suspend the law and use brute force in the name of "state salvation." As Foucault notes, "the law of this reason peculiar to the state... is that the state's salvation must prevail over any other law" (2009: 262-263). In such moments, state actions are no longer judged by their legitimacy or illegitimacy but solely by their success or failure in restoring order and the circulation of life (Foucault, 2008: 15-16). This is the logic that underpins the use of violent suppression, illegal surveillance, and extra-juridical force.

Crucially, within this paradigm, liberalism embodies as not an ideology that truly limits state power but rather a specific technology of governance. As Foucault (2008: 28) explains, liberalism functions as a distinctive mode of intervention positioned on a spectrum between minimal and maximal state action. It is a technique

for achieving the state's primary goal—ensuring the unencumbered circulation of persons and commodities—by governing "from a distance" rather than through direct coercion (Foucault, 2009: 48). Moving from this point, while professing allegiance to liberal values, these states often prioritize the maintenance of social order and the uninterrupted material circulation of life and the economy, elevating these goals above the uninhibited exercise of rights and freedoms. This does not necessarily mean that liberal values are abandoned but rather they are transformed within the context of *raison d'état*. This transformed state reason, naturally, in instances where disruptive social movements threaten to destabilize the existing order, the state may deem it necessary to curtail certain freedoms -freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, even the right to protest- to safeguard the broader stability of the system. This creates a hierarchy of values, where the state's perceived need to preserve itself and its economic foundations takes precedence over certain individual rights.

In this vein, the argument here is that the state, inclusive of its liberal democratic variant, embodies a synthesis of security apparatuses, disciplinary techniques, and sovereign precepts. This is also the case when social movements disrupt the normality that the state is charged with protecting. For example, when there is a possibility of a social movement emerging, the state's default mode is to operate through the logic of security, using proactive policing and administrative measures to manage populations and preempt disruptions, lest the material circulation of life and the economy be disrupted. However, when a social movement emerges with the genuine potential to disrupt this normalcy, the preventative logic of security proves insufficient. It is at this moment of crisis that the state reverts to its two other foundational powers, which always remain latent but now come to the forefront: the logic of discipline and the logic of sovereignty. The state's subsequent strategy is a calculated choice between these two options: either it incorporates the movement into established political channels through disciplinary mechanisms, or it deploys brute, repressive force through its sovereign power to neutralize the threat entirely, denying it any space for negotiation.

It is paramount to emphasize that what is rendered inefficacious within this specific context is not the foundational rationale of the security logic of government per se. The calculative logic constitutive of the security state persists as an integral element within the broader ratiocination of the modern state. Political economy, at this point, emerges as the paramount instrument in governmentality through which the state makes determinations, taking precedence over other factors, including liberal principles and democratic institutions enrichment (Foucault, 2009: 94-95). It evolves within the ambit of the state's inherent logic, differentiating state reasoning from the law, which functions external to this logic, and it focuses upon the strategic orientation and teleological aims of government, which are geared toward securing the prosperity of the constituent population. Consequently, the primary criteria for assessing actions of the modern state transition from questions of legitimacy or illegitimacy to considerations of demonstrable success or failure (Foucault, 2008: 15-16). This framework argues that a liberal democratic state, faced with a challenge to its vital circulation, will rationally deploy either disciplinary integration or sovereign repression. The choice depends not on the moral character of its leaders or its stated liberal principles, but on a pragmatic, cold calculation of which strategy will most effectively and efficiently secure the material and economic flows upon which its existence depends.

3. THE STATE'S REPERTOIRE OF ACTION: FROM PROACTIVE SECURITY TO INTEGRATION AND SECURITIZATION

Having established the theoretical framework of the state's tripartite rationality, this section now applies this lens to the state's practical responses to social movements. The state's primary and default logic is that of security, which is a proactive strategy aimed at preserving the normal circulation of life and the economy by preempting disruptions. The governmentality embodies the fundamental rationale according to which the liberal democratic state operates under quotidian circumstances. Consequently, preceding the manifestation of social movements, all state responses -including pre-emptive measures directed at obviating their genesis- are guided by this analytic framework. These control tactics are complemented by other ranges from imposing martial law and censorship to banning political action, utilizing covert infiltration, manipulating groups psychologically, and deploying agents provocateurs to discredit and disable them. Driven by a strategic calculus aligned with Foucault's notion of security-based governmentality, the state attempts to pre-empt and control social movements through preventative actions.

One key strategy for avoiding disruptions involves making protests predictable and protest notification and permitting systems function as an avenue for such preplanning for public acts of assembly. Regulations introduced in France on October 23, 1935, for instance, empowered mayors to ban demonstrations (Cerny, 1982: 117). Similarly, the 1986 Public Order Act in Britain enhanced police powers, enabling them to restrict and even prohibit protests, as well as including practices of picketing in such limitations. The definition of public disruption has also been updated within the system's rules, so it includes "serious disruption of the life of the community" with authorities creating defined "unofficial but expected routes" as well as requiring six days' advance notice by any organizers (Waddington, 1998: 119-120; Dryzek, 2003: 50-51). In Washington, D.C. the 1960s saw a local equivalent, with new methods adopted across city services for regulating collective action before this method rolled out as an expansion to include federal actors. This set of local regulatory policies forms part of the Public Order Management System (POMS), emphasizing methods of de-escalating actions that rely less on forms of violent police work. Developed in D.C., it has since been rolled out for broader contexts in many states and university systems in American states (McPhail et. al., 1998: 49-52).

However, when these preventative security measures fail and a social movement with a genuine capacity to disrupt the normalized order emerges, the state is forced to abandon its default mode. At this moment of crisis, it reverts to a strategic choice between its two other foundational powers, discipline and sovereignty, which until now remained latent. The state's subsequent reaction is therefore not arbitrary, but a rational calculation governed by the underlying *raison d'état* of preserving systemic circulation. This manifests as a dual strategic approach: the first option is integration; a course of action rooted in disciplinary power which seeks to absorb and neutralize a movement by channeling it into pre-established institutional structures. The second option is brute securitization, an exercise of sovereign power that aims to violently exclude and dissolve movements deemed an existential threat. This section will illustrate how the choice between these two paths is determined by a pragmatic calculation of a movement's disruptive potential and its political capital. This will begin with the politics of integration.

The state's first strategic choice when confronting social movements is often integration, a sophisticated exercise in disciplinary power aimed not at destroying a movement but at managing its disruptive potential. This path is rationally chosen when a movement possesses characteristics that make direct repression politically costly or impractical. One of the most definitive characteristics of these movements is that they often advocate for universal demands that are difficult to oppose on moral grounds, garnering international support while simultaneously influencing a broad electorate domestically. Consequently, they emerge as potential agents of change within the existing political order through elections and create a tendency to avoid direct confrontation in mainstream political factions vying for power. Even parties with political stances at the opposite end of the spectrum from the premises of these social movements typically manifest their opposition through action and carefully mediated methods rather than outright discursive conflict. Backed by both national and international legitimacy and a strong adherent base, these movements find a chance to leverage their demands within the political arena via well-established and co-opted institutional structures already part of the political system.

One of the most visible and powerful mechanisms of integration is the creation of specific, structurally distinct governmental bodies to manage a movement's core issues. This formal acknowledgment grants a movement official legitimacy while simultaneously domesticating its demands within the state's bureaucratic and regulatory framework. The rise of the environmental movement provides a clear example. Driven by widespread societal support and a "universal" imperative for the protection of nature (Rootes, 2004: 612-613), the movement became, as Castells (1997: 67) argued, too influential to ignore. Public opinion polls consistently ranked the environment as a top national concern, particularly in the US (Switzer, 1998: 11; Gallup, 2022). Consequently, the state responded by establishing powerful new agencies. The United States created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970, a move spearheaded by Republican President Nixon, who recognized the political capital to be gained (Gottlieb, 1993: 109). This was mirrored across the West, with Britain creating its Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and France its Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion.

The labor movement, as a result of its long history and deeply institutionalized character, exemplifies this model in its most entrenched form. Labor concerns receive formal recognition and are managed through permanent, high-level governmental bodies responsible for labor relations and worker representation. Key examples include the U.S. Department of Labor (established in 1913) and its supporting agencies like the

Bureau of Labor Statistics and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Britain's Department for Work and Pensions, and France's Ministry of Labor, Health and Solidarity. The very existence of these ministries and agencies proves that these three movements have been successfully integrated into the state's own structure, transforming their challenges into matters of ongoing state administration.

A parallel process of institutionalization is evident in the state's response to the women's movement, which focused on central issues of education, economic independence, and reproductive rights (Girling, 2004: 86-87). To address and manage these demands, new state organs were established. Like the environmental movement, the trend toward institutionalizing women's and equality issues is particularly pronounced in liberal democratic states, as illustrated by the three countries discussed here. In the United States, the President's Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1969, followed by the creation of the Office of Global Women's Issues in 2009. In Britain, the position of Minister for Women and Equalities was introduced by Tony Blair in 1997, with Harriet Harman serving as the first officeholder. Prior to this, the Cabinet Office's Equality Unit and the Cabinet Committee handled these matters. In France, the path initially paved in 1974 with the appointment of Françoise Giroud as Secretary of State for the Status of Women (Secrétaire d'État à la Condition Féminine) in the government formed by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac specifically to address women's rights and equality, continues with the Ministry Responsible for Equality Between Women and Men and the Fight against Discrimination (often referred to as 'Egalité femmes-hommes, Diversité et Egalité des chances')

Beyond direct state administration, a deeper mechanism of integration involves absorbing a movement's agenda and actors into the fabric of institutional life, both through mainstream political parties and formalized civil society organizations. This process disciplines radical potential by channeling it into the established modes of electoral competition, legislative compromise, and professionalized lobbying. This process serves to discipline radical potential by containing it within the established rules of electoral competition and legislative compromise. This is most visibly demonstrated by the rise of political parties directly linked to these movements. Green Parties, for example, became pivotal agents in mainstreaming environmental protest, emerging in Australia and New Zealand (1972), followed by the establishment of the British Ecology Party a year later. In France, "Les Verts" emerged in 1984 as a formal political organization, and in the United States, a similar process culminated in the creation of the Green Party of the United States (GPUS) in 2001 (Dryzek et al. 2003: 31-47; Chafer, 1982: 206).

Labor movement can also be categorized as articulated movements due to their well-established institutional frameworks that advocate for the interests of their constituents in the traditional political playground. As a result of its deeply institutionalized character, the actors of the labor movement participate in bargaining, negotiation, and conflict resolution concerning labor issues through trade unionism. Although the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the primary organization representing organized labor in the United States, does not maintain direct partisan affiliations, it represents a paradigmatic example of institutionalized labor unionism. In Britain and France, on the other hand, the largest labor confederations also maintain direct affiliations with the main actors of traditionally institutionalized politics, political parties. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain and the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in France have historically linked to the British Labor Party and the French Socialist Party, respectively, aligning their efforts with political objectives (Gospel and Wood, 2003: 7).

Despite the fact that there are no single-issue mainstream parties in liberal democracies that focus on women's issues, perhaps the most compelling evidence of this systemic integration, however, is the state's cross-partisan responsiveness to the women's movement demands. This demonstrates that co-optation is not merely an ideological concession from a sympathetic government but a necessary strategy for any ruling party seeking to maintain social stability. Landmark legislative changes advancing gender equality, a core goal of the women's movement, were often enacted by supposedly ideologically opposed governments. For instance, in Britain, paid maternity leave was introduced by the Labor government in 1975 through the Employment Protection Act, but this was also later expanded under the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher through the Employment Act of 1980. Similarly, in France, paid maternity leave was legislated in 1979 under the center-right government of Prime Minister Raymond Barre. These developments indicate that the women's movement has identified institutional politics as a relatively effective avenue for advocacy, favoring peaceful and conventional methods of political engagement that

prioritize integration over disruption: "It seems no longer to be a matter of rupture but of integration, not an issue of revolution but of reforms" (Gaspard, 2002: 69, cited in Girling, 2004: 93).

This process is solidified as the state recognizes large, moderate civil society organizations as legitimate negotiating partners. It is pertinent that faith in institutionalized resolutions extends not only within existing structures but is expressed also inside what can otherwise appear to be forms and structures of an organization with an emphasis on direct actions and tactics. Within that strategic domain in the USA's context, those types of actions tend to stem more directly from a range of groups, most noticeably moderate actors such as groups such as Sierra Club or Friends of Earth (FoE), and the mainstream-oriented positions adopted by these groups can indeed derive by policy instruments deployed by governmental forms (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989: 7). Whilst concerning Britain's organizational infrastructure, entities such as the National Trust, The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-former World Wildlife Fund), Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), as also the Ramblers Association stand in a privileged position, which operates their advocacy through routinized interactions of decision-makers via established channels. The Green Alliance, established in 1978, was created to foster communication and collaboration between environmental groups and government decision-makers. Additionally, autonomous government agencies such as the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, as well as government advisory committees like the Standing Royal Commission, have been established to advise and influence environmental policy in Britain (Dryzek et al., 2003: 20-21, 43-44). Despite the exclusionist stance of the Thatcher government, 40 percent of environmental groups had representation on advisory committees in the early 1980s, which underscores the mainstream nature of environmental issues and the political responsiveness to them (Lowe and Goyder, 1983: 63). France Nature Environnement (FNE), an umbrella organization comprising 46 different associations and representing nearly 1 million supporters as of 2022, provides institutional access points that promote moderate actions such as lobbying.

The labor movement epitomizes this model of institutionalized civil society action through its deeply entrenched trade unions. As a result of their long history of mobilization, giant union confederations such as the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) in the United States, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain, and the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in France have become the primary, formally recognized actors for bargaining, negotiation, and conflict resolution concerning all labor issues. The same pattern of institutionalized interlocutors applies to the women's movement, with large organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the US, Britain's National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO), and France's Conseil National des Femmes Françaises (CNFF) acting as primary channels for advocacy and negotiation with the state.

In stark contrast to integration, the state's second strategic response is securitization—an exclusionary logic that often manifests as brute force in the exercise of sovereign power. This path is chosen when a movement is perceived not as a negotiating partner to be managed, but as a disruptive threat to be eliminated. The state's calculus here is reversed: when a movement is deemed to lack widespread public legitimacy or directly challenges the fundamental circulation of economic and social life, the political cost of repression becomes lower than the cost of accommodation. This process of securitization typically unfolds in two calculated stages: first, the ideological discrediting of the movement to strip it of legitimacy, followed by the deployment of coercive state violence to physically suppress it.

The initial and crucial step in this process is to frame a movement's aims as morally illegitimate or politically dangerous, thereby justifying the subsequent use of force. As Rigakos (2016: 2) posits, states often broaden threat categories to include domestic opposition, a "terror-labeling approach" that equates dissent with socially unacceptable behaviors. Thus, state actions, including state violence, function as complementary operations within a broader framework of securitization. This reductionist logic was evident when the American Civil Rights Movement was labeled as part of a communist conspiracy by Virginia minister Jerry Falwell (McNeese, 2008: 49), when Republicans perceived the 1968 Movement in America as a precursor to communism (Anderson, 1999: 12), and when the 1968 Events in France were attributed to an international conspiracy (Jobs, 2009: 380-391). Thanks to this tactical preference, liberal democratic states have become able to apply consistent coercive security tactics and blunt repression against movements that, while possessing disruptive potential, lack inherent legitimacy, a broad base of potential supporters, and pre-existing institutional integration. Crucially, this ideological campaign is most effective -and the subsequent physical repression most viable -when the movement already lacks broad public sympathy.

In this sense, the state's rational calculation -that repression is a low-cost option- is strongly correlated with a movement's perceived lack of broad public support. An examination of public opinion data for US Civil Rights Movement, the US Anti-War and Peace Movements of 1968, the May 1968 Movements in France, the Occupy Movement, and the Yellow Vests (Gilets Jaunes) Movement[4] that faced harsh suppression confirms this logic. For example, a 1961 Gallup Poll on the US Civil Rights Movement's direct-action tactics found that a majority of respondents (57%) believed direct disruptive actions like sit-ins would "hurt" the cause of integration, giving the state apparatus a clear signal that repressive measures would not face widespread public backlash (Reinhart, 2019). Similarly, despite favorable media coverage, the 1968 anti-war protests in the US were viewed unsympathetically by the public. Post-election research revealed that only 19% of respondents felt the police used excessive force in Chicago; a majority (%57 combined) believed the force was appropriate (%32) or even insufficient (%25) (Robinson, 1970: 1-2). Decades later, the Occupy Wall Street movement faced a similar public landscape. A Gallup survey showed that a substantial majority (53%) of Americans remained neutral or unsupportive, and active opposition (19%) remained steady, indicating to the state that a forceful crackdown carried minimal political risk. The movements' active support rate was varied among %24 and %26 (Saad, 2011). In France, although precise polling for May 1968 is limited, the subsequent general election results, which showed increased support for de Gaulle's government, suggest that as economic activity was severely disrupted, significant sectors of the population came to favor a return to order over the protests.

The crucial role of public opinion in the state's calculus is powerfully confirmed by the inverse case of France's Yellow Vests (Gilets Jaunes) movement. It faced, like other movements, repression and denial for political representation and arguably the only movement that achieved tangible results shortly after its emergence. Thus, it can be the vivid example for connection can be drawn between the movement's "relative success" and the substantial public support it garnered, particularly in its initial weeks. To demonstrate, a study by the French Public Opinion Institute (IFOP), cited by Chamorel (2019: 54), suggests that the core demands of the Gilets Jaunes reflected widespread discontent with the functioning of politics and democracy. The IFOP survey found that only 11 percent of those identifying with the movement believed Macron was attuned to the concerns of ordinary citizens. Additionally, 81 percent expressed distrust in politicians, 71 percent viewed them as corrupt, and 70 percent believed democracy was failing in practice. These shared grievances likely explain the movement's broad appeal and the widespread public backing of its demands. Data published by Statista on January 13, 2022, show that the movement achieved public approval ratings of 65 to 70 percent within its first three weeks. This finding aligns with a poll conducted jointly by the French Institute of Petroleum (IFP) and the business services firm Fiducial, which, as cited by Mauger (2019: 112), reported a public support rate of 72 percent on December 5. This widespread legitimacy, rooted in shared grievances against politicians and a perceived failing democracy made sustained, brutal repression a politically high-cost strategy for the state. Consequently, and in stark contrast to the other repressed movements, the Yellow Vests achieved tangible results shortly after their emergence. This exception proves the rule: when public support is high, the cost-benefit analysis of repression shifts, forcing the state to concede rather than crush.

[4] The absence of British movements can be explained using Eisinger's framework on social movement emergence, arguing that they thrive on relative openness coupled with closed channels on the movement's focus issue. In other words, moderate repression or political unresponsiveness fosters movement growth more than extremes (Eisinger, 1973: 15-16). British government actions during this period reflected an opposite dynamic; political repression coexisted with access to institutional channels, likely hindering movements. For example, even the authoritarian liberal Thatcher's government, despite its counter-position, did not strongly resist acknowledging the importance of environmental issues. In her 1988 speech at the Royal Society, Thatcher recognized the necessity of taking action against global pollution, although her stance remained cautious and measured, Or the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament heavily relied on Labour Party support, especially during periods when nuclear disarmament was a central political issue" meaning Labour offered routes previously not thought to address "pressing issues when they've been inadequate". These also combined with the fact that the generally conservative approach defines those potentially affected who view protest through the limited frame of class conflict and issues. The labor movement serves to typify that tendency as flexible responsiveness to issues other than labor has allowed groups to be either initially exclusionary or quickly and readily aligned in the face of public and policy-wide alignment. All these points have supported pacification and a social movement-free environment stemming from the intersection and interactions of traditional British establishment interactions between activism, dissent, parliament, and various parties in British policy (Goldstone, 2003: 4). Van Zwanenberg's opinion about British environmental movement as "participation in the civil domain is hampered by the absence of alternative routes of dissent (...) virtually the only way the environmental groups have been able to engage formally with the policy process is by being accepted as members of the various policy communities" (1997: 194) has explanatory power also for other movements in this vein.

4. CONCLUSION

This article began by highlighting a central paradox of liberal governance: how can states founded on principles of individual liberty and democratic participation routinely engage in illiberal practices against social movements? As the detailed cases of integration and securitization have illustrated, the state is not simply reacting ad hoc to a crisis. The consistent patterns in its responses reveal a rational, coherent, yet fundamentally illiberal logic at play. The primary finding of this research is that the state's actions cannot be explained by a mere prioritization of liberalism or democracy. Rather, they are driven by a more foundational modern *raison d'état* whose ultimate objective is to guarantee the uninterrupted material and economic circulation of life.

To substantiate this claim, this study first established a Foucauldian theoretical framework centered on the state's tripartite powers of security, discipline, and sovereignty. We then applied this framework to analyze the state's reactions when its default 'security' logic fails in the face of disruptive social movements. Examining the social movements detailed above -from the environmental and women's movements to the Civil Rights and Occupy movements -revealed the consistent deployment of two discrete, albeit interconnected, modalities of action. These reactive modes derive from the intertwined logics of discipline, which manifests as integration, and sovereignty, which manifests as brute securitization.

The choice between these two strategies is a rational, calculative one. Integration is applied as a plausible strategic option should a movement possess the potential to affect discernible alterations within the extant socio-political arrangement, particularly through its capacity to influence electoral outcomes. The state incorporates these movements by creating dedicated administrative bodies, absorbing their agendas into partisan politics, and formalizing relations with their moderate civil society wings. Conversely, movements deemed illegitimate by the state, especially those failing to garner widespread public backing, are far more likely to face repression using harsh methods (Marullo and Meyer, 2004: 661). In other words, when it becomes less costly to overlook, marginalize, or openly repress an actor than to accommodate them with recognition, the state responds by deploying legal restrictions and, if necessary, outright forms of brutal physical violence. These seemingly divergent movement scenarios are thus linked by a common operational thread: a pragmatic, cost-benefit analysis aimed at managing or neutralizing threats to systemic flow.

This blatant course of action, a result of the sovereign logic of the modern state, particularly relies on forms of exclusion that are ostensibly absent from the pseudo-core values that liberal doctrine seeks to protect from such interruptions. Using the instruments of its coercive power, even liberal democratic states resort to blatant physical aggression, such as policing strategies designed for the excessive suppression of protesters and their supporters, including unjust arrests, brutal beatings, torture of movement actors, and disappearances. Furthermore, at this stage, tactics can extend to targeted assassinations, public executions, and the use of explosive violence in mass settings. The power of the state at this stage operates without any limitations, prioritizing "punishing and suppressing any perceived resistance at all costs," which is beyond the full scope of this text but can be observed in the indelible police actions against the US Civil Rights Movement, the 1968 Anti-War and Peace Movements in the US, the May 1968 Movements in France, the Occupy Movement, and the Yellow Vests (Gilets Jaunes) Movement. This course of action, in turn, is the fate of movements that, due to the content of their demands and the failure to have natural common legitimacies, cannot immediately address or garner popularity from a large portion of society, so they rely instead upon visibility.

In light of the preceding discussion, it is possible to evaluate these illiberal tendencies not as aberrations, but as logical outcomes of the state's foundational makeup. By delineating the linkages between state practices and Foucault's concepts of governmentality, it becomes epistemologically feasible to comprehend the consistent and sui generis rationality that underpins the actions of liberal democratic states. The central insight here is that liberalism itself functions as a subordinate technology within this broader *raison d'état*. As Foucault (2008: 28) noted, liberalism is not a doctrine that negates or nullifies state reason but serves as a distinctive mode of governance positioned on a spectrum of intervention. This perception offers a clearer framework for understanding why and how liberal states can act illiberally without fundamentally contradicting their operational logic. Also, this interpretative standpoint explains how liberal democracies undermine what they openly frame as their core principles. They prioritize maintaining a codified order and social equilibrium over the needs for open access and equal participation for all members of society. In this process, even legal frameworks become tools of the state's overarching rationality. The state can act

alongside, and if needed, through the 'legal' system, rendering fines, jail terms, and even torture or other forms of physical harm as "legitimate" expressions of the will of the state, all in the service of preserving itself.

To sum up, notwithstanding the divergence in their operationalization, these reactive modes of integration and securitization are fundamentally rooted in a unified objective and circulation-prior" and "order-oriented" rationale. This is located within the theoretical construct of modern governmentality that informs the decision-making of all modern states, including liberal democratic ones. Building on this theoretical background, it can be concluded that the state's preeminent and unwavering objective is the circumvention of any threat to the unimpeded flow of material life and the economy. The persistent uniformity of the state's responses, irrespective of fundamental transformations in the state-social movement relationship over the past several decades, constitutes the evidential foundation for this article's central hypothesis: the principal determinant of state reaction is not its liberal or democratic character, but the underlying, circulation-focused rationality of the modern state. The illiberal and coercive tactics observed are not failures of the system, but rational, calculated features of it.

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Yazar Katkı Beyanı*: 1. Yazarın katkı oranı %100'dür.*

Çıkar Beyanı*: Yazarlar herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedirler.*

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