AN APERTURE INTO US GLOBAL EMPIRE: METHODOLOGICAL PURSUITS AFTER THE CABLEGATE RELEASE

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In 2010, Private Chelsea Manning supplied and assisted in the release of over 250,000 U.S. diplomatic cables covering years during both the Bush and Obama Administrations in an affair termed Cablegate. This article describes the data that Manning released and its origins. Thereafter, I discuss several ways in which social scientists might utilize U.S. diplomatic cables within research projects examining ***the conduct of U.S. global empire****. While U.S. foreign policymakers are often difficult to access and what they might reveal in interviews might have limitations, U.S. diplomatic cables provide researchers with backstage access to the thinking and perspectives that guide U.S. imperial endeavors abroad on a routine basis. In this article, I discuss how diplomatic cables might bear on several research inquiries rooted in the work of three sociological theorists: Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said. These three theorists' works continue to inspire social scientific analysis, and many of their ideas concerning corporate-political interlocks, surveillance and discipline, and the nature of Orientalist beliefs might be examined within the realm of U.S. foreign policy and* ***global*** *empire-building by harnessing data found within U.S. diplomatic cables.*

Keywords: *U.S. Empire, globalization, political sociology, imperialism.*

Social scientists have historically interrogated the nature of the relationship between the state and civil society (Dahl 1961; Gramsci 1971; Marx and Engels 1848 [2002]; Mills 1956; Skocpol 1979). They have sought to understand how it is that groups within civil society come to achieve their will within the state, or, in some instance, how it is that groups come to dominate the state and its agenda. This basic inquiry has served not only as the focus of classical political sociology, but it also continues to shape recent theoretical and empirical inquiry into the nature of the state and how social movements, business groups, unions, the Koch network, and other entities can potentially shape state outcomes, *including an array of globalizing forces* (Gilens and Page 2014; Hertel-Fernandez 2014; McAdam and Kloos 2014; Polletta 2009; Robinson 1996, 2001). These inquiries, however, do not monopolize the entirety of sociological pursuits. Recent work has focused on a number of issues including nationalism, war, protest, and *globalization*, to name just a few topics of interest for sociologists focused on political issues. And while these issues move us beyond the specific relationship between the state and civil society, most sociological research endeavors concerning politics, at least tangentially, continue to include issues involving the state.

Research involving the state and contemporary state elites is notoriously difficult for a number of reasons. The term 'elite' itself connotes that elite individuals do not make themselves readily available to simply anyone. So, at the top of the list of difficulties, there is an issue of access and, thereafter, data collection. That is to say, state elites are difficult to reach. They often exist in a world nearly separated from the seemingly more accessible lives of many citizens. In many instances, these dynamics commence from an early age within elite educational institutions and country clubs (Domhoff 1975; Khan 2010). In their current roles though, state elites often live in gated communities, they often possess a staff that keeps them on a tight and highly restricted schedule, and sometimes their job descriptions prohibit them from interacting with journalists, researchers, and the media. As a result, many of these elites communicate with the public through spokespersons and highly polished, and frequently vague, public statements. For the academic researcher, projects involving elites can appear daunting, and not worth the frustration and the roadblocks that one would likely encounter. Unfortunately, given these impediments, young scholars may elect to pursue alternative research projects in order to eschew the difficulties that arise when seeking to analyze U.S. foreign policy from close proximity.

Fortunately, there are several ways in which researchers can deal with these empirical headaches should they desire to conduct research on the modern state and its inhabitants. In doing so, scholars can actually wade past some, but not all, of the issues that arise as one attempts to examine U.S. foreign policymaking in the 21st century. First, sociologists have sought to utilize Freedom of Information Act requests (FOIR) when dealing with particular U.S. government agencies (Keen 1992; Greenberg 2016; Robinson 1996). While some U.S. agencies have responded to these requests and complied with them, some agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State, have been notoriously difficult, slow to respond, and ultimately offering little documentation to work with aside from scattered words and phrases amid a sea of black-lined redactions. Second, some researchers have indeed accessed some political elites, and, in doing so, they have utilized their interviews and interactions with these individuals as part of their data and research projects (Gill 2016; Jackson 2005; Lindsay 2007). These possibilities, however, are not sure bets, and it would be foolhardy to suggest that burgeoning researchers should assume that they will be able to access political elites. And indeed, when we might gain access to political elites, they still might not reveal too much information concerning their perspectives on particular issues and how they pursued particular policies.

In this paper, I describe the third source of data that has not been well-utilized within the sociological discipline: U.S. diplomatic cables. First, I describe how Private Chelsea Manning recently assisted in the release of over 250,000 cables spanning time periods during both the Bush and Obama administrations. And second, I demonstrate how researchers might utilize these cables to pursue several theoretical inquiries. In doing so, I draw attention to three sorts of research questions that have continued to preoccupy sociologists, and how this database can assist researchers in their empirical odysseys. These questions involve the issues of capitalist class interests, surveillance, and Orientalist portrayals of foreign leaders and their supporters. Each of these inquiries possesses theoretical roots that pertain to a particular strand of sociological theorization, including the work of Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said. *What is more, each of these theoretical traditions can enable sociologists to make better sense of how*

the USA continues to engage in a global project of empire-building, that is, by subordinating the interests of governments and citizens abroad to the interests of the U.S. Empire.

First, I argue that utilizing U.S. diplomatic cables can assist in an examination of how capitalist class interests factor into U.S. foreign policymaking. Neo-Marxists, and similarly aligned sociologists, have long asserted that capitalist class interests dictate U.S. foreign policy objectives (Kolko 1969; Mills 1956; Wallerstein 1974). In recent years, several neo-Marxist researchers have asserted that transnational capitalist class interests, rather than domestic capitalist class interests, direct U.S. foreign policymaking *and its conduct of global empire-building* (Burron 2016; Robinson 1996, 2001; Sklair 1995, 1999). Other researchers have asserted that U.S.-based economic interests continue to shape *its global agenda*, instead of transnational concerns, as the U.S. allegedly experiences hegemonic decline (Go 2011). Recently released U.S. diplomatic cables can provide an excellent opportunity to interrogate these claims, and allow researchers to precisely examine how business and economic interests factor into backstage discussions involving U.S. diplomats and their overseas counterparts.

Second, I assert that U.S. diplomatic cables can provide a look into questions regarding U.S. attempts at surveillance and discipline abroad. That is, through an analysis of these cables, researchers can examine how it is that U.S. diplomats attempt to *direct global affairs* by requesting that political actors behave in a particular manner and enact particular policies deemed appropriate by U.S. state actors. In addition, we can gain an aperture into how it is that U.S. state actors surveil foreign affairs from their respective embassies throughout the world and utilize informants throughout particular countries to gather intelligence. Many U.S. embassies possess a staff of diplomats and attachés that examine a range of particular issues, including political issues, economic issues, and human rights issues. In doing so, they gather intelligence on these topics and often provide this data through diplomatic cables to the greater embassy community within particular countries and sometimes beyond.

And finally, sociologists can investigate how it is that U.S. state actors depict and speak about foreign leaders, their supporters, and detractors abroad. Historically, diplomats from global empires, such as the British and the French Empires, have depicted foreign individuals as incapable of reason, prone to emotion, and engaged in barbarous behaviors (Said 1978). With the rise of the U.S. Empire, sociologists can examine whether or not U.S. actors also utilize similar sorts of colonialist modes of thought and expression to understand foreign leaders and their citizens. Indeed, U.S. diplomatic cables can reveal the hidden transcripts that U.S. diplomats and policymakers work with *to think about global events and actors abroad*. Most embassy cables that the U.S. Department of State has, in fact, released frequently obscure the final commentary that U.S. diplomats provide at the end of their cables. And so, the personal musings and opinions that unredacted cables provide can serve as additional points of entry into the murky world of U.S. foreign policymaking and the ways in which U.S. diplomats make sense of the world and the objectives that they aim to accomplish. *In a word, they can assist researchers in making sense of U.S. global empire-building throughout the world. The USA indeed remains a key force behind globalization, and thus a necessary entity to grapple with in order to push globalization studies further and to make better sense of the ever-encompassing process of globalization writ large.*

In the following section, I describe the recent release of U.S. diplomatic cables by Private Chelsea Manning and how they were processed thereafter. From there, I discuss the utility of these cables as they bear on several sorts of research endeavors that remain rooted in the works of Marx, Foucault, and Said.

Private Manning, WikiLeaks, and the Cablegate Release

Julian Assange, an Australian computer programmer and hacker turned activist,[1] initially established the WikiLeaks website and database in 2006. In its initial leak, the website released information pertaining to several African state leaders and their unlawful behavior. The database presently contains an array of data pertaining to a number of issues, including manuals and information from Guantanamo Bay, chapters from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and footage of U.S. military members mistakenly murdering two *Reuters* journalists, Saeed Chmagh and Namir Noor-Eldeen, and firing upon the individuals that attempted to recover their bodies following the shooting. Indeed, many journalists initially praised these releases as they provided the public with information that many individuals believe that citizens should have had at least some knowledge about.

In late 2010, WikiLeaks initially released several hundred cables concerning the Afghan and Iraqi wars led by the U.S., and, in late 2011, the group released over 250,000 cables covering the period between 2004 and 2010 and involving cables from all U.S. embassies located throughout the world.[2] Private Chelsea Manning, a former U.S. army intelligence analyst stationed in Iraq, who was dismayed with continued U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, provided these cables to Assange and the WikiLeaks group. The initial impetus behind Private Manning's releases was to initiate a national discussion over the utility of continuing these U.S. military endeavors in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. government eventually traced the origins of what became known as the Cablegate leak to Private Manning. As a result of the releases, Private Manning was sentenced to 35 years, largely under the Espionage Act, to military prison, and, at particular points in time, she was held in solitary confinement. Both her sentence and the nature of her confinement were ardently denounced by numerous human rights organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. As a result, former U.S. President Barack Obama commuted the majority of Private Manning's sentence shortly before leaving office in January 2017. Manning was released in May 2017.

Research Pursuits in the Wake of Cablegate

The U.S. State and Business Interests

Researchers working in the neo-Marxist tradition have consistently remained interested in the nature of the state, that is, who occupies key positions within the state and whose interests state elites represent (Block 1977; Miliband 1969, 1970; Poulantzas 1969; Robinson 1996, 2001; Sklair 1995, 1999). Throughout the mid-twentieth century, several social scientists, including C. Wright Mills, Ralph Miliband, and Nicos Poulantzas, engaged in a lively debate concerning how capitalist elites influence state policy, if at all. While Miliband (1969) and Mills (1956) contended that capitalist elites actually occupied positions within and directed state activities, Block (1977) and Poulantzas (1969) asserted that state leaders were often not themselves business individuals and

remained relatively autonomous from short-term capitalist interests, so that they might most effectively secure the long-term interests of capitalism. Most neo-Marxists and other researchers asserting the influence of corporate elites on U.S. state policy concurred, however, that most U.S. state elites were often reared within the upper-middle class and were thus socialized around many families that formed part of the U.S. corporate elite. And so, even if state elites were not themselves corporate elites, these researchers argued that state elites were socialized in an environment where they came to understand U.S. state interests as U.S. corporate interests.

In more recent years, many social scientists have broadened their focus to examine how economic interests direct not only domestic U.S. state policy, but also U.S. foreign policy. Both William Robinson (1996) and Neil Burron (2016), for instance, have argued that neoliberal economic interests undergird U.S. democracy promotion efforts throughout the Global South, such as in Nicaragua throughout the 1980s under Sandinista leadership, in Bolivia under the current presidency of Evo Morales, and in Venezuela under the former presidency of Hugo Chávez. That is, they argue that the USA provides financial and technical support to political parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that promote, or at least do not seriously contest, neoliberal policies such as trade liberalization, privatization of formerly state-owned enterprises, and deregulation of finance and industry.

What is more, some social scientists, including William Robinson (2001), among others, have posited that a transnational state has developed that includes the United States, but also other economically powerful states and *global organizations*, such as, for example, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, and the World Trade Organization. For these researchers, the transnational state indeed remains headquartered in the USA, but they argue that the U.S. state represents the interests of a transnational – rather than a strictly U.S.-based – capitalist class. While some sociologists have accepted this vision of a transnational state and the idea that the United States allegedly promotes transnational capitalist class interests, many researchers continue to take issue with several dimensions of this theory, namely that the USA no longer seeks to enfranchise its own capitalist class above all others, among additional issues (for alternative understandings of the nature of contemporary U.S. foreign policy endeavors, see Go 2011; Harvey 2003; Mann 2012; Wood 2005).

Regardless of what particular neo-Marxist variant one might accept as most compelling, U.S. diplomatic cables offer much material to work with concerning the relationship between *U.S. global empire-building* and U.S. corporate interests, and researchers could put much of this to fruitful usage. Each U.S. embassy possesses economic attachés that consort with prominent individuals within the host country's business community. In Venezuela, for instance, the WikiLeaks database contains an immense amount of cables that detail meetings which take place between economic attachés, as well as other members of the U.S. embassy, and members from the oil industry, including companies such as Conoco-Phillips, ExxonMobil and Chevron; members of the Venezuelan-U.S. Chamber of Commerce (VENAMCHAM); and an assortment of other companies, including Cargill, Chrysler, Ford Motors, and Procter and Gamble. Many of these meetings also frequently involve then-current U.S. Ambassadors to Venezuela, such as, for example, former Ambassador Patrick Duddy, who, for instance, met with Procter and Gamble's President in Barquisimeto state in 2008 to discuss local business concerns (CableGate 02/07/2008).

Within these meetings with high-ranking members from the international business community in Venezuela, U.S. diplomats discuss a range of issues, including bids on oil contracts, market share, interactions with the Venezuelan government, and long-term business plans within the region. U.S. embassy cables elsewhere throughout the world follow a similar trend involving continual interactions between U.S. diplomats and business leaders. Needless to say, this database is replete with data that sociologists could use to examine how U.S. diplomats interact with the business community on a routine basis. In doing so, researchers could precisely tease out what U.S. state interests, as they concern economic and business matters, are within particular countries. In addition, researchers could examine whether or not U.S. state interests regarding economic issues cohere with the interests of particular corporations within particular countries. Stephen Krasner (1978), for instance, has documented how U.S. state interests and U.S. business interests have sometimes diverged and sometimes converged throughout the early and mid-twentieth century. Michael Mann (2012) has also demonstrated how the U.S. state and many oil corporations were at odds over the future of Iraqi oil following the U.S.-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Sociologists could provide a more recent analysis of U.S. state and U.S. business interests that include, but also move beyond the more headline-generating military forays in the Middle East, involving regions such as Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa. In doing so, they can update Krasner's case studies and develop even more theoretically robust understandings of the relationship between the state and economic elites in the twenty-first century.

An additional area of research that many sociologists have focused on concerning the nature of the transnational capitalist class surrounds whether or not this class has become a class-in-itself, and how it might have also become a class-for-itself (Burris and Staples 2012; Carroll and Carson 2003; Staples 2015). That is, while sociologists have demonstrated how there exists a great deal of corporate interlocking between transnational corporations, there has been continued debate concerning whether or not this transnational capitalist class possesses the same interests. Indeed, several sociologists have argued that transnational capitalists possess a general interest in the promotion of neoliberal policies. However, it remains unclear whether or not transnational capitalists possess similar interests in more specific policies within particular countries. To take the example of contemporary Venezuela once again, it is unclear, for example, whether or not particular corporate elites might benefit from the continued existence of the socialist government due to existing relationships, or if they might prefer a change in government that might perceivably establish better relations with particular corporations.

Given the existence of hundreds of thousands of U.S. diplomatic cables, researchers that examine the nature and existence of the transnational capitalist class and its class cohesion might wish to make use of these cables in their studies. For instance, scholars might compare the requests and concerns from a multiplicity of corporate groups and members throughout a number of different countries and also within particular countries. Historically, while some corporations have benefited from positive relations with particular governments, other corporations have found their facilities expropriated or they have found it difficult to receive domestic contracts. Diplomatic cables can provide *globally-oriented sociologists* with backstage access to the discussions that take place

concerning these endeavors and thus shed even greater light on the nature of the transnational capitalist class, as well as its relations with the U.S. state and governments abroad.

Surveillance and Directing Political Affairs Abroad

In the past few decades, Michel Foucault's work has become increasingly useful for sociologists focused on an array of topics (Power 2011). For instance, Foucault's notion of bio-politics has proved helpful for researchers focused on the relationship between the state, medicine, and health care policy (Bourgois 2000; Comaroff 2007; Decoteau 2013). More broadly though, Foucault's emphases on discipline and surveillance have also provoked theoretical and empirical interest among many social scientists. According to Foucault, institutions within contemporary society rely on surveillance techniques in order to secure order and correct any behaviors that diverge from what those occupying the commanding heights of powerful institutions demand from their subjects. In his own work, Foucault discussed mental health facilities, educational institutions, and the military, as examples of institutions that relied upon surveillance and discipline to produce particular behaviors deemed appropriate by these institutions.

Foucault (1977: 172) writes of a

> whole problematic [that] develops: that of an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen … or to observe the external space … but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effect of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them.

Indeed, in terms of U.S. foreign policy, the U.S. state has developed a range of state agencies that examine, surveil, and attempt to direct political-economic affairs abroad. Jeffrey Jackson (2005), for one, has examined U.S. economic assistance for the developing world. Using a case study of Honduras, Jackson underscores how the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. government's most prominent economic assistance provider, has used its programs to monitor and survey the Honduran political-economic landscape. Despite what Jackson (2005) terms a veneer of beneficence, he asserts that U.S. officials and contractors reap most of the rewards through large salaries that allow for luxurious lifestyles, extensive contracts even following developmental errors, and, of course, social status and esteem.

While many social scientists focused on economic development have found utility in Foucault's ideas concerning discipline and surveillance, sociologists have been less inclined to explore how the U.S. has become politically involved *throughout global society* and used techniques of discipline and surveillance to achieve particular ends. The U.S. embassy houses many political counselors and political attachés that recurrently meet with political leaders within foreign countries. U.S. embassy cables are replete with cables written by these political counselors and attachés that detail these meetings, as they involve congressional and parliamentary members, diplomats, state leaders, dissidents, diplomats from other embassies, business leaders, and representatives from a range of NGOs and human rights groups focused on an array of issues. Many of these documents demonstrate how the U.S. often aims to assist particular polit-

ical parties that it perceives to possess similar political-economic interests, with their electoral and political strategies. Indeed, there is an even much room for overlap between the ideas of both neo-Marxists and Foucault in attempting to make sense of U.S. policy abroad. Using a Foucauldian lens of analysis, however, might uncover a range of U.S. interests abroad that may not necessarily be reducible, though, to the promotion of capitalist class interests.

In Venezuela, for example, U.S. diplomatic cables detail repeated interactions between U.S. embassy members and high-ranking members of the political parties that comprise much of the political opposition. In these meetings, U.S. embassy members often appear to strategize with members of the opposition as to how they should properly proceed, that is, in terms of contesting the socialist government of former President Hugo Chávez and its policies, and how they might effectively compete in electoral politics. In addition, cables detail repeated interactions with individuals from other foreign embassies, including the Chinese and Russian embassies, in order leverage intelligence from these individuals and, for example, deliberately 'annoy the Bolivarian Gentleman', that is, former President Chávez, and other Venezuelan government leaders (CableGate 7/10/2006). In addition, these cables detail the sporadic meetings between U.S. officials and Venezuelan government members, and how the U.S. historically sought to place pressure on the Venezuelan government to behave in particular ways, such as muting criticism of the Bush Administration and stalling the passage of particular piece of legislation as they concerned, for example, foreign funding for political groups and NGOs.

Researchers could most certainly utilize these diplomatic cables to examine the dynamics of surveillance and discipline in a range of countries. For example, researchers might examine how the United States engages with governments that it maintains poor relations with and governments that it maintains warm relations with. Comparative case studies involving dynamics within countries such as Mexico and Colombia, on the one hand, and Nicaragua and Russia, on the other hand, could generate highly interesting results. It is possible that the level of surveillance and meetings with government leaders and opposition leaders might persist with much less frequency in some places than others. In addition, it would be fruitful to examine how it is that the U.S. government aims to alter and correct the behaviors of particular foreign leaders and what sorts of pressures take form behind the scenes in these or those sorts of exchanges that researchers generally would not have access to.

Orientalism and Backstage Discourse

A final mode of analysis that *globally-oriented sociologists* might pursue includes attention to how U.S. diplomats speak, think about, and portray foreign leaders, their supporters, and their detractors in places throughout the world. Indeed, U.S. cables aim to render foreign societies more legible than they would be without the sort of intelligence that U.S. diplomats gather on a rather routine basis. U.S. diplomats continually engage with leaders, members from the opposition, members from the international community, and representatives from human rights and business groups. These cables are thus replete with descriptions of life within other countries and the prominent figures that help to lead these countries. Likewise, there is little debate concerning the existence of the U.S. Empire – a reality that is acknowledged by politicians, journalists, and academics alike (Go 2011). While we know that former global empires deployed colonialist and often racist understandings of populations, it is worthwhile to examine how it is that

diplomats under the employment of the U.S. Empire also use particular language to make sense of populations abroad.

In his seminal text *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) laid the groundwork for post-colonial theory and helped social scientists make sense of how 'the West' has historically and continually come to view 'the East'. In other words, his framework has allowed researchers to examine how those individuals in places such as the U.S. and Western Europe have perceived their African, Eastern European, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Asian counterparts. In Said's own work, he has called attention to how Western Europeans depicted individuals and leaders in the Middle East. For example, European historians often sought to understand Mohammed by drawing parallels between him and Jesus Christ. That is, European historians failed to understand non-Western religions on their own terms and without necessarily drawing parallels between non-Western religions and their own belief systems. What is more, many historians often depicted Mohammed in a quite negative light, that is, as a fraud, a thief, and not someone worth venerating. Said (1978) thus illustrates how many European historians depicted many inhabitants of what is now known as the Middle East as unable to recognize their own manipulation. In doing so, European historians justified European colonialism and the expansion of European power throughout the world.

More broadly, Orientalism involves the imposition of negative characteristics upon individuals that exist beyond the alleged West. This includes depicting non-Western others as mentally unstable, unintelligent, prone to emotional outbursts, irrational, uncivilized, and savage-like. Indeed, many writings from the eighteenth and nineteenth century by both English and U.S. colonial leaders describe their subjects in similar terms: unable to understand simple tasks, overly emotional, irrational, and unintelligent. Beyond Said, many researchers have pointed out that Western individuals that have possessed institutional power have continually utilized Orientalist frameworks in order to make sense of foreign individuals. During the recent Republican National Committee meetings, the Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump, for example, insinuated that most individuals throughout the Middle East that adhere to Islam are 'barbarians', 'savages', 'terrorists', and have no regard for human life. Some sociologists have also pointed out that many journalists continue to utilize Orientalist frameworks to make sense of Muslim individuals (Silva 2017). In addition, some work has also pointed out how individuals within the film and entertainment industry have readily portrayed Muslim individuals as villainous individuals (Nurallah 2010; Shaheen 2009).

U.S. diplomatic cables provide an excellent opportunity to examine how U.S. diplomats speak and think about foreign leaders and their supporters *throughout global society*. Indeed, this could include work that examines U.S. diplomatic cables from Muslim-majority countries and elsewhere. U.S. State Department and U.S. Executive comments are often painstakingly crafted. By contrast, U.S. cables provide researchers with a glimpse into the backstage where U.S. diplomats and policymakers write freely without the threat that their words will become available to the general public, at least in the short-term and perhaps not ever. Even when some cables have become declassified, many redactions have remained thus leaving out the full picture concerning how U.S. diplomats think about and discuss foreign leaders abroad.

These transcripts that are now freely accessible within the WikiLeaks database could stimulate and yield exciting new pieces of research concerning how it is that U.S. diplomats understand others. In Venezuela, it is clear that there is indeed an immense

amount of Orientalist language that is used to describe former President Chávez and his supporters. Chávez is recurrently depicted as unstable and, at times, insane, manipulative, over-emotional, hot-headed, and anti-democratic. What is more, his supporters are often depicted as a frenzied mass that remained beholden to Chávez's manipulations and therefore cannot think for themselves. This depiction is indeed rather similar to what Said (1978) initially identified within his own work. Within these cables and the discourse found within them, it is rarely considered that Venezuelan citizens might actually, rationally choose to select a leader that, in their opinion, has earned their vote by attempting to provide the popular classes with a more secure existence. Undoubtedly, similar themes play out within other contexts. However, it would be particularly interesting to examine whether or not Orientalist depictions exist within all countries within a particular region such as Latin America or the Middle East, or if these depictions remain contingent upon the interests of particular administrations. That is, if foreign leaders tether their own interests *to U.S. global interests*, it would be interesting for sociologists to examine whether or not Orientalist depictions persist or if they diminish as a result of support for *U.S. global policies*. Nonetheless, sociologists might pursue an array of interesting questions using these now freely existing government cables concerning the use of Orientalist frameworks to understand individuals abroad.

Conclusions

Without Private Manning's release of over 250,000 diplomatic cables, many of these U.S. diplomatic cables would have remained inaccessible or only slightly accessible amidst a sea of black-lined redactions. And, in fact, the most interesting parts of each embassy cable, that is, the final remarks and assessments from U.S. diplomats are what are almost usually redacted, in addition to other material. It is within these remarks and comments that we can access the thinking of those individuals that carry out U.S. foreign policy on a daily basis. And with these cables in hand, sociologists can make unique and innovative additions *to the examination of U.S. global empire*.

Analyses involving U.S. foreign policy *and global empire-building* have become notoriously difficult given methodological issues that arise. Most notably, the issue of accessibility remains. While daunting, these obstacles should not deter us from pursuing research endeavors that focus on the backstage of U.S. foreign policymaking and how it is that U.S. foreign policymakers think about foreign leaders and citizens, engage with foreign leaders and citizens, and attempt *to steer the direction of globalizing forces*. As the U.S. continues to possess the *status of a global empire*, it behooves scholars to make sense of these extensions of power and the imperial modalities that the U.S. Empire continues to *make use of at the global level*. Where possible, scholars might also consider drawing comparisons between the U.S. and *earlier global empires*, as Julian Go (2011) has completed concerning the British Empire and its respective stages of hegemonic development and decline.

In this article, I have discussed several types of research inquiries as they concern several prominent theoretical perspectives that sociologists might pursue in their work. In doing so, I have argued that sociologists could make excellent use of U.S. diplomatic cables to pursue questions connected with the work of Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said, that is, three theorists whose work continues to inspire contemporary social scientists. Although some might contest the ethics behind the existence of these

U.S. diplomatic cables, the data openly remain with us, and, given the consequentiality and often lethality behind the extension *of U.S. global power*, it behooves *globally-oriented social scientists* to further interrogate these documents, should their inquiries demand so.

NOTES

[1] Serious accusations against Julian Assange exist, including that he sexually assaulted two women in Sweden in 2010. Assange has denied this and claimed that the charges are a pretext used by the USA and other powerful groups to punish him for the release of classified information. Accusations also persist that Assange has worked with Russian government hackers to acquire classified political information, particularly concerning former U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. These recent acquisitions and dumps of e-mails from individuals involved with the Clinton campaign have drawn considerable criticism from many former supporters of Assange and WikiLeaks, including Glenn Greenwald and Naomi Klein. Assange has repeatedly claimed that Russia did not provide these documents, and a member from his team, former British ambassador Craig Murray, has stated that the leaks came from within the Clinton campaign. Assange currently remains housed within the Ecuadorean Embassy in London, where he has received immunity from the Ecuadorean government.

[2] A later release would involve U.S. embassy cables from the 1970s, some of which the U.S. state had already released.

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