Quentin Skinner and the Analysis of Ideology

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Introduction

The question I pursue in this paper is essentially the same "intractably large but crucial" one concerning "the connections between the world of ideology and the world of political action" posed by Quentin Skinner in his 1974 article, 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action'.[1] How, exactly, do ideologies influence the way people act (singularly or collectively) in politics? Probably the most contentious and provocative aspect of my paper is the suggestion, in re-posing this question, that it has not already been satisfactorily answered – over and over indeed – in existing political and social theory. But, having worked on the study of ideology for just over a decade, specifically in the context of ideology's role in political violence, I feel the question has still not been fully answered. When we suggest, for example, that Stalinist ideology mattered to the Great Terror of 1936-8, or that Nazi ideology explains Germany's T-4 'Euthanasia' killings of disabled persons, or that ethnonationalist ideologies contributed to patterns of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia or Rwanda, *what kind of ideological influence are we actually referring to?* It seems to me that most scholars of ideology (and violence) only implicitly characterise the link between ideology and action, and those implicit accounts are generally either implausible or question-begging. There are exceptions, but the most illuminating discussions – and I count Skinner's analysis in 'Some Problems' to be among them – still offer only fragments of an overall answer.

It is perhaps a little cheeky for me to focus on this topic, given the title of our conference. While central to Skinner's work,[2] the question of ideology's influence is not explicitly core to 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' – our official focus. More in the foreground of 'Meaning and Understanding' is a set of claims rooted in philosophy of language about the meaning and intentionality of action. Like most readers, I find these claims highly compelling. Nevertheless, the link between these claims and Skinner's core methodological conclusions does involve, I think, some empirical

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[1] Quentin Skinner, "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action," *Political Theory* 2, no. 3 (1974): 278 & 280.

[2] See: Quentin Skinner, "History and Ideology in the English Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 8, no. 2 (1965); Quentin Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought," *The Historical Journal* IX, no. 3 (1966); Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch.9. See also: James H. Tully, "The Pen is a Mighty Sword: Quentin Skinner's Analysis of Politics," *British Journal of Political Science* 13, no. 4 (1983).

assumptions about the influence of ideological context over action, visible in this key summary of Skinner's claims:

> "The essential question which we therefore confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance… it follows from this that the appropriate methodology for the history of ideas must be concerned, first of all, to delineate the whole range of communications which could have been conventionally performed on the given occasion by the utterance of the given utterance, and, next, to trace the relations between the given utterance and this wider *linguistic* context as a means of decoding the actual intention of the given writer."[3]

The second half of this passage moves beyond a point purely about the centrality of intention and illocutionary force in a text's meaning, to an emphasis of the *constraining effect of linguistic context*[4] (which I believe Skinner sees as at least partially constituted by ideological context) on possible (speech) action. So what exactly are, to use the currently fashionable social scientific language, the *mechanisms* or *microfoundations* through which that constraining effect of ideological context is exerted?[5]

To some, the question might seem otiose. Much political theory and political science now accepts, at least in a very general way, the constructivist contention that humans ultimately act on the basis of meanings, mental states and, thus, ideas. Yet, especially in political science, many continue to think that underlying material forces, institutional constraints, or rational incentives are sufficiently strong to render such constructivist insights of limited empirical relevance. They would query, in other words, *how far ideological context really constrains action* – pointing, indeed, to precisely the kind of "innovating ideologists" Skinner discusses to suggest that, in truth, ideological contexts are highly mutable and can easily be twisted and altered to suit political actors' needs.[6] For such political scientists, ideas are effects, rationalisations or by-products rather than causes and

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[3] Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 49.

[4] Though Skinner also warns against overstating such effects – see Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 41-8; Skinner, "Some Problems," 287.

[5] See: Peter Hedström and Petri Ylikoski, "Causal Mechansims in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010); Joshua D. Kertzer, "Microfoundations in international relations," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34, no. 1 (2017).

[6] Skinner, *Visions of Politics* 1, 148.

explanations of action.[7] Obviously the Namierites, a key target for Skinner's critique, raised similar views in history.[8] So the nature of ideology's influence matters for both past and present theoretical debates. I will attempt to give several concrete historical examples, moreover, where the ambiguity of ideology's influence is clearly important.

So my aim in this paper is to further explicate the problem of linking ideology to action, and ultimately show that the problem can be solved by integrating a number of key arguments from social theory and psychological science into an 'infrastructural' account of ideology, as I shall call it. This infrastructural account builds on, but significantly expands, Skinner's original argument in 'Some Problems'. It emphasises that ideologies cannot be effectively analysed simply as *either* 'belief-systems' that directly motivate action, *or* as a kind of social structure or legitimating tool, *or* even the combination of both. Instead, ideologies shape, enable and sustain political action through the mutual interaction of four kinds of influence: *commitment, adoption, conformity* and *instrumentalization*. Understanding ideology's influence in this way vindicates Skinner's attention to ideological context and his arguments about the importance of ideological legitimation, but also suggest ways of elaborating our analysis of ideological context and ideology's role in politics.

The Problem

The question of how ideology[9] is linked to political action is obviously a subspecies of the broader – and vastly theorised – question of the influence of ideas/culture on human behaviour in general. But I take the question of ideology's influence to be narrower and more uncertain. Again, we may all accept the broad constructivist argument that individuals *necessarily* rely, in at least some general sense, on frameworks of ideas that are, at least to a very large extent, acquired through socialisation into culture(s). Although the implications of this constructivist argument are easily exaggerated – for example in the claim that there is therefore "nothing outside of discourse"[10] – it is a relatively uncontentious basis for

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[7] See also: Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 42.

[8] See: Skinner, "Some Problems," 291-300.

[9] Like Skinner, I understand ideology broadly, defining ideologies as the *distinctive political worldviews of individuals, groups and organisations, that provide frameworks of interpretive and evaluative ideas for guiding political thought and action.*

[10] David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Revised ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 4. Such claims are exaggerated because basic sensory and representational capacities for the ordering of experience exist in humans, as in non-linguistic animals, prior to the acquisition of specific discourses. Indeed, without such pre-discursive capacities, humans could not acquire discourses in the first place. Nor do individuals with impaired access to social discourse show the kind of cognitive impoverishment that would be expected if discursive acquisition was a genuine precondition of meaningful thought. See: Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (London: Penguin

thinking that the influence of culture matters. It is an open question, however, whether ideologies are truly an important part of that influence. A reconstructed Marxist or Namierite could argue, for example, that the basic cultural frameworks necessary for even perceiving material forces and holding certain core material interests might remain highly similar across human communities and not subject to significant ideological variation. Ideological arguments or principles might still, as such, remain largely an epiphenomenal symptom or rationalisation of ubiquitous material forces or interests – not an independent influence on action in their own right.

To illustrate the non-trivial nature of this uncertainty of how ideology relates to political action, consider the 1936-8 Great Terror in Stalin's Soviet Union, where much debate surrounds Stalinist ideology's exact role. While the Terror was once interpreted by historians as little more than a ruthless way for Stalin to consolidate his own power, with ideology of little significance, this account has largely been abandoned. Stalin's control was already effectively hegemonic prior to the start of the Terror, many ideological beliefs about hidden enemies and conspiracies seem to have been sincerely believed by the Stalinist elite, and the violence followed particular ideological rationales (such as the targeting of the quasi-fictitious category of 'kulaks') hard to explain in other terms.[11] Indeed, Stalinist terror was saturated with ideological language. Consider the following, typical, charge against 39 supposed Ukrainian counterrevolutionaries:

> "On the assignment of the Ukrainian counterrevolutionary bourgeois nationalist centre… Vasilenko (arrested) set up a Ukrainian nationalist insurrectionary organization led by the former secretary of the Skvirskii District party committee, Kokhanenko (arrested), and subsequently by the boss of the district land department, Zalevskii (arrested) with the aim of overthrowing the socialist system and government of the USSR and resurrecting capitalism and breaking off Ukraine from the USSR and establishing a fascist dictatorship. The organisation united anti-Soviet Petliurists[12] and repressed kulak elements with tasks to prepare

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Books, 1994); Michael Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[11] See: John Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-war Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); James Harris, *The Great Fear: Stalin's Terror of the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[12] Symon Petliura had led the Ukrainian nationalist forces and the short-lived Ukrainian republic (1918-1921) in the Russian civil war against Soviet forces.

insurrectionary-diversionary cadres in the event of war against the
USSR to raise an uprising in the rear…"[13]

It is plausible to claim that such language and the violence that followed is in certain senses *unintelligible,* let alone inexplicable, unless the relevant ideological context is understood. Yet we are left with puzzles. How *exactly* were these various ideological notions – of counterrevolutionaries and bourgeois nationalists and kulak elements and so on – influential? It is tempting, and consistent with much contemporary work on discourse, to think that such ideological notions formed a kind of inescapable cultural system[14] which, while not deterministically dictating precise outcomes, necessarily shaped how individuals thought about and acted during the Terror.

But there is an important sense in which this is not plausible. It is clear that many participants in Stalinist terror did not accept such notions, and that even some of the *writers* of such accusations knew they were false.[15] Moreover, there are other visible elements of the Stalinist ideological context which individuals readily ignored. Some of the violence was, for example, organised around what contemporaries termed 'the biological approach': i.e. arresting people based on their familial ties to other already arrested individuals. Such a practice was highly inconsistent with Stalinist ideology, which rejected implicit biological explanations of human action as inconsistent with the tenets of historical materialism, and it was repeatedly rejected by Stalin and other party leaders.[16] One would think that such action would, as Skinner puts it, "be inhibited to the degree that it cannot be legitimised"[17] within the ideological context of the time.[18] Yet it persisted, seemingly because of certain dynamics highly *undistinct* to the Stalinist ideological context – namely bureaucratic incentives to meet certain policy demands for arrests, coupled with weak bureaucratic capacity for exercising more selective violence. So there is clearly no necessary or merely *assumable* link between ideological frameworks and action. We need some account of the

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[13] Cited in Lynne Viola, *Stalinist Perpetrators on Trial: Scenes from the Great Terror in Soviet Ukraine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 74.

[14] See the still outstandingly lucid discussion in Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

[15] See: Alexander Vatlin, *Agents of Terror: Ordinary Men and Extraordinary Violence in Stalin's Secret Police*, ed. Seth Bernstein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 31-2.

[16] Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization*, 326 & 397-8; Viola, *Stalinist Perpetrators*, 25.

[17] Skinner, *Visions of Politics* 1, 156.

[18] It might be argued that, since the practice continued, it clear was successfully legitimised, and that therefore there must have been *other* ideological or linguistic resources available for such legitimisation. But this claim is tautological and question-begging – any action that occurs does so (in part) because it was legitimated, and we only know it was legitimated because it occurs.

causal[19] processes or mechanisms actually link a given ideological doctrine or framework to action.

Three Accounts of Ideological Influence

Three broad kinds of account dominate existing scholarship. The first suggests that ideologies shape behaviour via *ideological convictions that motivate action* – such convictions are not automatic products of culture, but distinct beliefs of certain political actors, who then work to put their ideological principles into practice. This continues to be the at-least-tacitly-assumed image of ideology's influence in much scholarship and popular commentary. In research on extremism and terrorist radicalisation, for example, radical ideologies are often presented simply as sources of deep beliefs for terrorists – and if such beliefs seem to be lacking, ideology is assumed to be of limited relevance.[20] It is also this image of ideological conviction which underlay Daniel Goldhagen's controversial claim that the Holocaust was rooted in "the autonomous motivating force of Nazi ideology"[21] with violence explained by the fact that "the perpetrators, 'ordinary Germans,' were animated by antisemitism, by a particular *type* of antisemitism that led them to conclude that the Jews *ought to die*."[22] Methodologically, moreover, many scholars jump quickly from observations of certain ideological notions in political discourse, to the explicit or implicit assertion that those notions were core beliefs of the actual individuals under study.[23]

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[19] I should note, since my discussion is all about causal relationships, that I do not share Skinner's view – at least expressed in the papers I draw on here – that intentional and conventional explanations of action are non-causal. Like motives (which Skinner recognises as causal), intentions are mental states, and mental states remain linked to action as part of a causal sequence of mental processes. To think that the fact that intentions also *constitute* the action in question means that they cannot be causal (see Alasdair MacIntyre, "A Mistake about Causality in Social Science," in *Philosophy, Politics and Society: Second Series*, ed. Peter Laslett and W.G. Runciman (Basil Blackwell, 1962); Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 45; Skinner, *Visions of Politics* 1, 137-8.) is to confuse the classification of an action with its causal ontology, and doesn't provide any basis for thinking that intentions exist outside of the world of causal relations. Shifts in philosophy of science, away from 'causal laws' and towards 'causal mechanisms,' may be important here. A causal mechanism, such as a certain kind of intention that is operative *in the doing of a certain action*, is both constitutive of that action and an essential part of its causal occurrence and thus explanation. Analogously, a component of a clock is both part of what makes it a clock *and* part of what causally produces and explains the clock's physical representation of time. I don't think this point, however, threatens any of Skinner's methodological arguments.

[20] Compare the views expressed in: Peter R. Neumann, "The trouble with radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013); Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor, "Reconsidering Radicalization: Fanaticism and the Link Between Ideas and Violence," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 1 (2018).

[21] Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Abacus, 1996), 13.

[22] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 14. [emphasis in original]

[23] This tendency is perceptively critiqued in: Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence," *Annual Review Sociology* 24 (1998): 443.

Obviously sincere ideological convictions do matter, and in contemporary social science, the sort of sweeping dismissal of ideological belief asserted by Lewis Namier and some of his followers is no longer sustainable. A wealth of archival, ethnographic and experimental evidence shows that many, maybe most, or maybe *all* individuals do possess sincere ideological frameworks that influence their behaviour.[24] But while ideological conviction is clearly *one* way in which ideology may influence political action, the problems of purely analysing ideology in such terms are well established. In a huge range of contexts, ideological convictions seem to be much rarer and weaker amongst most of the participants in that context than this account suggests. In my field of research on political violence, for example, it often appears that important ideological rationales and concepts structure violence, and that important ideological myths, claims, principles or forms of propaganda are used to mobilise support for violence – yet only a minority of perpetrators actually display strong ideological convictions and/or motives.[25]

Because of such problems, many scholars employ a second account of ideology's influence, which presents ideological claims as important, not as objects of genuine belief, but because they are *instrumental political tools*. It is this account that is appealed to by Skinner in his response to Namierite scepticism: even if ideologies are not sources of motivational conviction, Skinner argues, they may be critical as mechanisms of legitimation for potentially questionable activities.[26] Other scholars have focused on further instrumental uses of ideology – to, for example, actively mobilise political supporters, or set clear rules, norms and policies within an organisation or political coalition.[27] Ethnonationalist ideology in the Yugoslav Wars during the 1990s is, for example, often analysed in such terms – providing a way for opportunist political leaders like Slobodan Milošević to garner public

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[24] For various broad overviews of such evidence, see: John T. Jost and Brenda Major, eds., *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); John T. Jost, Christopher M. Federico, and Jaime Napier, "Political Ideology: Its Structure, Functions and Elective Affinities," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009); J. Christopher Cohrs, "Ideological Bases of Violent Conflict," in *Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict*, ed. L. R. Tropp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Marc Stears, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jonathan Leader Maynard, "Ideology and armed conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 5 (2019). Not all of this research truly focuses on *ideological conviction,* however.
[25] Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-5; Timothy Williams and Dominik Pfeiffer, "Unpacking the Mind of Evil: A Sociological Perspective on the Role of Intent and Motivations in Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 11, no. 2 (2017); Timothy Williams, *The Complexity of Evil: Perpetration and Genocide* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021).
[26] Skinner, "Some Problems," 291-300.
[27] See, in general: Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Ideology in civil war: Instrumental adoption and beyond," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (2014): 217-20.

support or legitimate violence.[28] In important ways, Skinner's discussion has advantages over some of these more recent instrumentalist analyses of ideology. For a start, Skinner does not actually limit ideology to an instrumental role – emphasising the likelihood that ideology plays both a sincere and instrumental role, and that legitimation to oneself may be as important as legitimation to others. Moreover, whereas many instrumentalist analyses see ideology as simply a tool that political actors are free to use to their own advantage – which effectively limits ideology's independent impact, since actors' interests and strategies actually determine what happens – Skinner emphasises that the need for ideological legitimation is a *constraint,* meaning that the ideological context plays a central role in determining the relative viability and attractiveness of different forms of political action.[29]

Nevertheless, this instrumental account of ideology's influence, even in Skinner's sophisticated version, suffers from some important problems. By contrast with the conviction-centric account, it can acknowledge that ideologies have significant effects even when individuals do not deeply believe in the ideology. But it struggles to *explain how* ideology has such effects. Efforts to legitimate action by manipulating the available moral vocabulary of a given ideological context will only be necessary, and will only benefit an actor, if it actually leads other people who would have opposed the actor in the absence of such legitimation efforts to now eschew such opposition. But why would other actors do this, if ideology's function is primarily instrumental – if they do not really believe in the ideological notions and claims in question?[30] 'Some Problems' is not, as far as I can tell, quite clear on this question, although I will suggest some possible responses Skinner may have been inclined towards.

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[28] See, in general: Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (London: Penguin Books, 1997); Valère Philip Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[29] Not to mention Skinner's lucid description of the actual kinds of legitimation strategy available to political actors.

[30] Identifying this problem is not novel – see: : James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 846 & 853-5; Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 6; Nils Bubandt, "Rumors, Pamphlets and the Politics of Paranoia in Indonesia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 791 & 813; Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, "Ideology in civil war," 222.. Instrumental accounts might assume that while the elites use ideological claims instrumentally, this works because the claims really resonate with target audiences. But there's no theoretical or empirical basis for this contrast. Indeed, it inverts the conventional wisdom within political science research that it is elites who tend to be ideological and masses who are not, see: Philip Ernest Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); Amihai Glazer and Bernard Grofman, "Why representatives are ideologists though voters are not," *Public Choice* 61 (1989); Donald R. Kinder and Nathan P. Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal Nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

The first and more obvious response is to revert back to some more modest claims about genuine beliefs and attitudes. Again, Skinner is explicit that in reality "an agent's motives…will usually be mixed and complicated," and likely mix genuine ideological with various instrumental calculations.[31] This can be said not only of the innovating ideologist manipulating ideological claims to legitimate their behaviour, but also of those audiences they are legitimating *to*.[32] It may not be the case that these 'legitimation audiences' are possessed of deep ideological convictions. But perhaps legitimation strategies give *just enough* plausible justification, touch just enough of the moral vocabulary individuals feel some resonance for, to dissuade serious opposition. Instrumentalization of ideology is thus parasitic on some degree of sincere internalisation of the relevant political ideas, conventions or concepts.

In many circumstances, I think this is a perfectly adequate explanation of the bulk of ideology's influence. Some scholars, indeed, suggest that this is the *only* possible ultimate explanation of ideology's instrumental power to legitimate action or mobilise support.[33] But the argument remains, I argue, importantly deficient, since it implies that the overall influence of an ideology in any given context is ultimately *proportional to*[34] the level of sincere belief or sympathy for that ideology in the given context. Yet a wide range of examples cast doubt upon this claim. A particularly well known one is the last decade or two of the Soviet Union's existence. It is widely accepted that from roughly the late 1970s and certainly the early 1980s onward, hardly anyone – neither political elites nor the mass public – retained serious belief in *official* Soviet ideology.[35] Yet that official ideology continued to exert significant influence over the behaviour of millions of individuals and hundreds of state agencies. Policies continued to be ritualistically intoned and legitimated in terms of the dominant communist vocabulary. Even officials were highly constrained in their ability to break out of established doctrine in many (though not all) areas of political life, and it took remarkable determination and prolonged struggle for Mikhail Gorbachev to eventually overcome powerful internal resistance and manage to reform, and unintentionally topple, the existing ideological system.[36] A less familiar example is that of Syria under Hafez al-

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[31] Skinner, "Some Problems," 293.

[32] Skinner suggests, for example, that large-scale successful shifts in normative vocabularies result in a change in "the sensibility of a community" – which I assume to refer to sincere attitudes, see: Quentin Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3 (1999): 71..

[33] E.g. Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 123; Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, "Ideology in civil war," 222.

[34] But not *equal to* – instrumentalization could be a 'force multiplier'.

[35] Joseph Schull, "What is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies," *Political Studies* 40 (1992).

[36] Timur Kuran, "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (1991); Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian*

Assad between 1971-2000. As Lisa Wedeen suggests in her study of Syrian politics and society in the 1990s, the regime's ideology under Hafez al-Assad involved the absurdly exaggerated hagiography of and obeisance to the government and Prime Minister. Wedeen suggests that few if any Syrians, probably inclusive of government ministers, *believed in* this ideology. Yet the rituals continued nonetheless and, Wedeen argues, were genuinely functional for the regime's power and rule.[37]

Something else, it seems, is going on with ideology in such cases. This takes me to a third possible account of ideology's influence (again, one I think Skinner may endorse). Many theorists suggest that ideologies primarily function in a more diffuse, intersubjective or structural way not accounted for by either a focus on sincere internalisation or instrumental action. There's no shared terminology for such a line of analysis, although it is of a piece with many accounts of how discourse, more generally, structures political action.[38] Many of the theorists I have in mind stress the way ideologies provide certain *collective scripts, frames or lexicons* for political action. In his analysis of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia, for example, Anthony Oberschall emphasises that deep ethnonationalist commitments were lacking. But he proposes that an ethnonationalist "crisis frame", resonant in light of historical legacies of conflict, could be activated by elites to transform interethnic relations and generate ethnic violence.[39] John Hagan and Wenona Rymond-Richmond similarly emphasise the role of dehumanising racial ideology, theorised as a form of "collective framing", in genocidal violence in Darfur.[40] Stephen Kotkin's influential account of Stalin's Soviet Union emphasises how "speaking Bolshevik" was an key imperative and skill for both elites and ordinary citizens, irrespective of the extent of deep belief, infusing everyday life with ideological frameworks.[41] Lee Ann Fujii's leading study

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Behavior and the End of the Cold War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Robert D. English, "Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End: A Reply to Brooks and Wohlforth," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (2002); Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), ch. 6.

[37] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).

[38] Within specialist work on ideology, Michael Freeden's depiction of ideologies as morphologies of political concepts that seek to control public political language has some affinities with this account, as does Teun van Dijk's discursive approach to analysing ideological effects. See: Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Teun van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage Books, 1998).. Many of the more discourse-theoretic approaches surveyed by John Thompson might also be associated broadly with accounts of this third kind, see: John Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984)..

[39] Anthony Oberschall, "The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 6 (2000).

[40] John Hagan and Wenona Rymond-Richmond, "The Collective Dynamics of Racial Dehumanization and Genocidal Victimization in Darfur," *American Sociological Review* 73 (2008).

[41] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

of the Rwandan Genocide argues that state-sponsored ethnonationalist constructions of identity were not deeply believed by perpetrators, but nevertheless provided a "script or dramaturgical blueprint for violence".[42] In his analysis of genocidal dehumanisation, Rowan Savage likewise emphasises that "the only necessity is a narrative that legitimizes the action in question. In order to fulfil a psychological need such a 'script' does not actually require wholehearted or long-term belief."[43]

This third story gets us closer to some of the puzzling forms of ideological influence I have alluded to – but the underlying causal mechanisms are still somewhat obscure. We still need an explanation of *why individuals respond* to certain scripts, frames and lexicons. The implicit tendency in many accounts is to write as though individuals *just have to* – since the scripts, frames or lexicons represents 'discursive preconditions' or 'systems of possibility' for certain forms of political action. I have already pointed out that this claim, while potentially plausible at the level of 'culture' or 'discourse' in its most general sense, is unconvincing for specific ideologies or doctrines. Scripts, frames and lexicons do not possess innate force, and many fail to exert serious political influence. So when Fujii writes that "[p]eople could kill with scripted ethnic claims, without believing those claims to be true or accurate, because as a script, ethnicity *required certain performances,*"[44] what makes individuals follow such 'requirements'? In a similar fashion, Savage argues that: "a dehumanized discursive system regarding an out-group *constitutes the (moral) reality* within which members of the in-group act."[45] But how does a certain 'constitution of moral reality' shape behaviour if individuals do not believe in it?[46] Alternatively, such theorists fall back into emphasising real belief and internalisation.[47] Kotkin emphasises how, in the Soviet Union, "elements of 'belief' and 'disbelief' appear to have coexisted within everyone".[48] For Oberschall, ethnonationalist "crisis frames" possessed real resonance and persisted, albeit "dormant", throughout Yugoslavia's history. Hagan and Rymond-Richmond more explicitly present frames as sources of motivational conviction, arguing that "racial epithets are important…because they capture attackers' motivation and intent"[49] and produce "the

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[42] Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 104. Fujii does not present such identity-constructs as ideological, however.

[43] Rowan Savage, "Modern genocidal dehumanization: a new model," *Patterns of Prejudice* 47, no. 2 (2013): 149.

[44] Fujii, *Killing Neighbours*. [my emphasis].

[45] Savage, "Modern genocidal dehumanization," 149. [emphasis in original].

[46] The same issue problematises Schull's attempt to theorise ideology as a legitimating discourse, see: Schull, "What is Ideology?," 736-8.

[47] In more general discourse theory, similarly, emphasis may be ultimately placed on some kind of internalisation in the form of "unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation," and so forth – see: Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5..

[48] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 228.

[49] Hagan and Rymond-Richmond, "Collective Dynamics of Racial Dehumanization," 878.

heightened vulnerability and fanatical fury that lead to genocide."[50] This resurrects some of the concerns with conviction-centric accounts. Why is evidence of such resonance and fanaticism so uneven, and potentially unnecessary? I think these theorists, like Skinner, take us much closer to properly understanding ideology's influence, but the ultimate explanations still have something of a question-begging character.

An Infrastructural Account of Ideology

Each of the three accounts presented above gets something importantly right about the way ideology can influence political action. I suspect, moreover, that most users of such accounts would be amenable to the suggestion that they can in some sense be combined – and Skinner both explicitly and implicitly points to the need for such overlap across his comments in 'Meaning and Understanding' and 'Some Problems'. Yet I believe that no sustained, theoretically developed account of such a combination can really be found in existing work on ideology.

I dangerously claim to have formulated such an account. I moderate the immodesty of that claim, however, by emphasising that I am essentially synthesising various quite familiar claims from economic, psychological and social theory, including those surveyed in the last section. My novelty, if any, is only to more systematically set out these ideas and their interrelationship, and to link them more explicitly to ideology. There are two elements to the account.

   1.   Four Forms of Ideological Influence

To begin with, I suggest that four *principal* forms of ideological influence can be identified – two of which work primarily through some degree of sincere *internalisation* of ideas, the other two of which operate primarily as forms of external or *structural* influence rooted in convergent social expectations.[51] Most obviously, and harking back to conviction-centric accounts of ideology, ideologies may generate **commitments** to particular ideas.[52] Such ideological commitments typically form the most long-standing core of individuals' personal ideological frameworks. Even commitments come in degrees, and need not be dogmatic, systematic or fanatical. Indeed, while individuals with well-defined and

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[50] Hagan and Rymond-Richmond, "Collective Dynamics of Racial Dehumanization," 886 fn.14.
[51] I claim only that these are the principal, not exhaustive, forms of ideological influence. A more detailed account of these four forms can be found in: Leader Maynard, "Ideology and armed conflict," 638-43.
[52] Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, "Ideology in civil war," 220-2.

systematised ideologies are relatively rare, political psychologists have nevertheless found that most ordinary citizens possess committed values and beliefs that are patterned along ideological lines.[53] Sincere ideological commitments carry intrinsic resonance for individuals, are resistant to change, generate strong emotional responses, and bear directly on processes of perception and decision-making. To return to Stalin's Soviet Union, there is considerable agreement in historical scholarship that: "Stalin frequently used Marxist language outside of his public speeches and in his private correspondence. It is now clear that he did not just cloak a base desire for power in Marxist rhetoric. Stalin viewed the world through a Marxist lens and appears to have been ideologically committed."[54] Similarly, no serious scholar denies, that leading Nazis were intensely committed to the central tenets of Nazi ideology, or that many (though not all) recruits to Islamist or far-right terrorist organisations are guided by real commitments to jihadist or racial-nationalist ideas.[55]

But there is a second broad way in which ideological elements may be internalised. Political psychologists, sociologists and theorists of political communication have long recognized that individuals often sincerely accept ideological positions even though they do not feel any intrinsic commitment to the ideas involved.[56] Individuals nevertheless engage in the sincere **adoption** of those ideas, as I put it, because the ideas have become connected to deeper beliefs, values and needs, or fill gaps in individuals' political worldview left unaddressed by intrinsic commitments. Peter Neumann notes, for example, how many recruits to jihadist terrorist organisations do not express longstanding religious or political commitments, but join a terrorist group out of a core political grievance or sense of Islamic identity, on the basis of which they then adopt the wider ideology of jihadism.[57] Adoption is often rooted in 'identification' – individuals adopt ideas which are associated with

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[53] See, in general: John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jost and Major, *Psychology of Legitimacy*; Jost, Federico, and Napier, "Political Ideology."; Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Religion and Politics* (London: Allen Lane, 2012); Peter Hays Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); G. Scott Morgan and Daniel C. Wisneski, "The Structure of Political Ideology Varies Between and Within People: Implications for Theories About Ideology's Causes," *Social Cognition* 35, no. 4 (2017).

[54] Peter Whitewood, *The Red Army and the Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Soviet Military* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 12-13.

[55] See: Yaacov Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil* (London: Continuum, 2000); Max Taylor, PM Currie, and Donald Holbrook, eds., *Extreme Right Wing Political Violence and Terrorism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Daniel Byman, "Understanding the Islamic State - A Review Essay," *International Security* 40, no. 4 (2016).

[56] Somewhat contra Schull, who conflates accounts of ideology centred around strong commitments and beliefs with any emphasis on psychological internalisation: Schull, "What is Ideology?," 729-33..

[57] Neumann, "The trouble with radicalization," 882.. See also: Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 45-6..

identities the individual feels genuinely committed to.[58] Democratic and Republican voters in the United States, for example, will sincerely support an idea or policy when it is advocated by a representative of 'their' party, yet reject and oppose the exact same idea or policy if it is proposed by their political opponents.[59] Often, though, individuals may simply accept certain ideas because of their dominance in social discourse, in lieu of any good alternatives.[60] In all such circumstances, it would be misleading to characterise individuals as motivated by underlying commitments to the ideas in question. Yet those ideas become sincerely adopted, and often are essential to explaining how such individuals act.

Through commitment to and adoption of ideas, individuals formulate their genuinely internalised ideologies that shape the *sincere* perception and evaluation of action. As already explained, however, ideologies exercise influence that transcends such sincere internalisation. As Skinner emphasises in both 'Meaning and Understanding' and 'Some Problems,' individuals' political actions are influenced not just by their own sincere ideological beliefs, but by their perceptions of their *ideological context*. The apparently dominant ideological beliefs, discourses, norms and policy paradigms of their social environment create pressures, incentives, opportunities and constraints for an individual irrespective of their private ideological views. Again, I actually think there are two key forms of influence – two sorts of causal mechanism – at work here.

The first operates through **conformity** effects: the widely researched psychological tendency of human beings to relatively unreflectively follow explicit or implicit expectations of behaviour generated by peer pressure, orders from authority, organisational roles or similar social influences.[61] Much of the time, individuals will simply go along with such social pressures, since doing otherwise risks interpersonal tension, loss of face, or personal accountability. This power of conformity is one of the most famous findings of social psychology, associated with Solomon Asch's experiments on individual submission to group judgements, Stanley Milgram's experiments on obedience to authority, and Philip

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[58] Herbert C. Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton, *Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), ch.5.. On identification and violence, see: Rebecca Littman and Elizabeth Levy Paluck, "The Cycle of Violence: Understanding Individual Participation in Collective Violence," *Advances in Political Psychology* 36, 1 (2015)..

[59] Geoffrey L. Cohen, "Party Over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 5 (2003).

[60] A. P. Simonds, "Ideological domination and the political information market," *Theory and Society* 18, no. 2 (1989).

[61] Leonard S. Newman, "What is a 'Social-Psychological' Account of Perpetrator Behavior? The Person Versus the Situation in Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*," in *Understanding genocide: the social psychology of the Holocaust* ed. Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch.8.

Zimbardo's 'Stanford Prison Experiment'.[62] All these experiments found that under the pressure of a group consensus, orders from authority, or official roles in a simulated institution, individuals would often abandon their personal convictions and simply act as was expected of them.

Sheer conformity is not really discussed in 'Meaning and Understanding' or 'Some Problems' (although Skinner's emphasis on linguistic 'conventions' fits rather nicely with such a mechanism), perhaps because the influence of such social psychological research on the broader humanities and social sciences did not really take off until the 1980s and 1990s. Since conformity, in its social-psychological meaning, is relatively unreflective, it probably also bears less on the analysis of the more deliberate ideological output that is the focus of much intellectual history. But there is good reason to think that conformity is a central dynamic through which ideologies exert large-scale effects on political action more broadly. Within the Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union, Stalinist ideology was not only a sincerely accepted worldview, but also a source of intensely institutionalised norms, routines, discourses and rituals that, even in the absence of direct coercion, individuals faced strong social pressures to comply with.[63] It seems likely that by the late 1970s and early 1980s, mere conformity was playing an even greater role in much of the influence of official Soviet ideology over action. More generally, the distinct ideological characters of such diverse settings as the American Republican Party, the British Labour Party, the Islamic State, the Occupy Wall Street protests or Palestinian Fatah results in different institutional norms, policies and practices, resulting in varied pressures to conform to different ideological standards of behaviour.[64]

Finally, turning to Skinner's more central theme in 'Some Problems,' individuals may be encouraged, or arguably required, by their ideological context to calculatedly **instrumentalise** ideology – to employ ideological claims and principles, potentially in innovative ways, because they expect this to elicit beneficial responses from others. Like those who conform to ideological expectations, actors who are consciously making

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[62] Solomon E. Asch, "Studies of independence and conformity: I. A minority of one against a unanimous majority," *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied* 70, no. 9 (1956); Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (London: Pinter & Martin Ltd., 1974/2010); Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil* (London: Rider Books, 2007)..

[63] Various dimensions of such social influence are discussed in, *inter alia:* Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David L. Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003)..

[64] See, for example: Mara Revkin and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "The Islamic State's Pattern of Sexual Violence: Ideology and Institutions, Policies and Practices," *Journal of Global Strategic Studies* Early Release Online (2020); Sarah E. Parkinson, "Practical Ideology in Militant Organizations," *World Politics* 73, no. 1 (2021).

instrumental use of an ideology need not have any sincere belief in it. But the apparent ideological content of prevailing norms, institutions or discourses incentivises them to instrumentally espouse or comply with the ideology in question in order to legitimate their political actions, to mobilise support, to coordinate political activities with others, and so forth. Having already discussed this dimension of ideology above, I won't belabour the point.

2. Ideological Infrastructures

The second part of my account is a depiction of how these four different forms of ideological influence *mutually* generate large scale ideological effects or patterns in political action. It will rarely if ever be the case that a political actor is guided by ideology in only one of these four ways. Even those who conform to or instrumentalise ideology typically sincerely adopt ideological justifications of their actions *to some degree*, since a range of psychological and social mechanisms make it difficult to continuously comply with ideologies publicly while entirely disbelieving them privately.[65] Individuals' relationships to ideologies are also dynamic. Individuals who initially merely conform to certain ideological claims may become pressured by their past public statements to maintain ideological positions they would now prefer to abandon.[66] Ideologically committed individuals, on the other hand, can become disillusioned but have placed themselves in situations where they still face strong conformity pressures or instrumental incentives to comply with that ideology.[67] Many ordinary Germans may have espoused Nazi ideology out of opportunism in the early years of the regime, for example, with millions joining the party just after its takeover of power in 1933. But this tied some individuals into institutions that promoted sincere adoption of or commitment to Nazi ideology, while others became subject to immense conformity pressures to comply with the increasingly radical Nazi state, even

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[65] See also: Philip E. Tetlock and A.S.R. Manstead, "Impression Management Versus Intrapsychic Explanations in Social Psychology: A Useful Dichotomy?," *Psychological Review* 92, no. 1 (1985): 72; Timur Kuran, "Sparks and prairie fires: A theory of unanticipated political revolution," *Public Choice* 61 (1989).

[66] A form of what Frank Schimmelfennig terms "rhetorical entrapment," see: Frank Schimmelfennig, "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union," *International Organization* 55, 1 (2001).

[67] See also: Herbert C. Kelman, "Compliance, identification, and internalization: three processes of attitude change," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2, no. 1 (1958); Charles H. Anderton, "Choosing Genocide: Economic Perspectives on the Disturbing Rationality of Race Murder," *Defence and Peace Economics* 21, no. 5-6 (2010): 482-3; Lorenzo Bosi and Donatella Della Porta, "Micro-mobilization into Armed Groups: Ideological, Instrumental and Solidaristic Paths," *Qualitative Sociology* 35 (2012): 362 fn. 2; Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Socialization and violence: Introduction and framework," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (2017): 596..

when this no longer served their self-interest or matched their private views.

It is this interdependence that leads me to argue that ideologies should be understood as *infrastructures*. By this metaphor I intend to allude to a) the way ideologies *enable, sustain* and *shape* collective action by large numbers of individuals, b) how this influence over action is rooted in the configured interplay of different forms of ideological influence and human interaction, and c) that such ideological influence reproduces and modifies itself via the political practices it generates. An ideological infrastructure is a particular configuration of worldviews, norms and institutions across a given social network, which sustains and shapes collective action through the mutually reinforcing interaction of commitment, adoption, conformity and instrumentalisation.[68] My argument is that when we seek to assess the impact of a given ideology or ideological context, such as Stalinism, what we should essentially be asking is how collective behaviour was shaped by the interaction of a) sincerely internalised Stalinist ideas in the minds of various individuals and b) the conformity pressures and instrumental incentives of Stalinist norms, institutions and policy platforms. That is: we are asking how far, and in what ways, a Stalinist ideological infrastructure was able to shape political action via the four forms of influence identified above.

Such an infrastructural account of ideology solves the kinds of puzzles about ideology and action that I sought to highlight earlier in the paper. The point is not merely that the different kinds of ideological influence *interact,* but that there are 'emergent,' *greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts* dynamics to this interaction. I return, for example, to the question of how instrumentalised usage of ideology might be disproportionate to underlying levels of sincere belief. This is a puzzle, remember, if all instrumental efforts to legitimate one's actions ultimately depend on one's audiences sincerely caring about the beliefs those legitimations invoke. While it is often the case that legitimating appeals will genuinely resonate with audiences, instrumental legitimating appeals may also work, because target audiences *themselves* feel strong conformist or instrumental pressures to go along with those appeals. Audience members assume that the legitimating ideological appeals are going to 'work', and so each member responds positively to them, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.[69] Consequently, ideological legitimating appeals can prove powerful even when they resonate with relatively few audience members. In such circumstances the majority of

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[68] The language of ideological infrastructures is somewhat inspired by, but quite different in meaning to: Michael Mann, "The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results," *European Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1984); David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988): 205-7..

[69] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 42.

disbelievers are, to paraphrase Michael Mann, *structurally outflanked* – they cannot overcome the collective action problems needed to successful overturn the existing expectations, norms and institutions supported by a sincerely believing minority.[70] Indeed, as Russel Hardin explains in the context of extremist sects: "At the extreme, one might suppose that some group has no genuine believers in its fanatical views but that all members are coordinated on acting by the false sense that everyone else or most others do believe."[71] This extreme situation is rare. More typically, it is the mutually reinforcing mix of strong ideological commitments, some weaker forms of adoption, some conformist behaviour, and some purely instrumental calculations, which make legitimating ideological appeals work. When the mixture starts to break apart – when sincere internalisation is very weak for a sustained period of time and/or the expectations underpinning conformity and instrumental action erode – ideological infrastructures, or at least parts of them, are liable to decay and become brittle, as *eventually* proved the case with Soviet ideology in the later 1980s.

To make this infrastructural account of ideology a little less abstract, consider the example of ethnonationalist atrocities in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. One of the great puzzles of the Yugoslav conflicts is a version of the problem of ideological influence I have been discussing. Contrary to early assertions that 'ancient hatreds' motivated violence in Yugoslavia, most Yugoslav citizens attested to positive ethnic relations in the years preceding the conflicts, marriage and friendships across ethnic groups were widespread, and many of the rank and file perpetrators seem to have been guided more by loot and thuggishness than by politics. Yet ethnonationalist logics and narratives remained central: conflict was organised around ethnic groups seeking to maximise national territory, and saw atrocities that targeted individuals based on their ethnicity. I believe a core part of the explanation of this violence is that ethnonationalism rapidly became, in the early 1990s, *a dominant ideological infrastructure* of the Yugoslav conflicts. It was powerful because a) some people, although probably a minority, were committed to ethnonationalist claims and aims; b) many others selectively accepted certain ethnonationalist ideas and largely supported such true believers; c) others conformed to such ideas in a context where ethnonationalism suddenly seemed dominant, while d) others actively manipulated ethnonationalist claims for political and personal benefit. Individually, none of these processes may have been sufficient for ethnic conflict. But together they

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[70] Michael Mann, *The sources of social power*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 7.
[71] Russell Hardin, "The Crippled Epistemology of Extremism," in *Political Extremism and Rationality*, ed. Albert Breton et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16.. See also: Jon Elster, "Belief, Bias and Ideology," in *Rationality and Relativism*, ed. Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982), 132..

created an emergent 'greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts' power to an ethnonationalist ideological infrastructure.[72]

Conclusion

I've tried to do three things in this paper. First, I've tried to elaborate on the problem posed explicitly by Skinner in 'Some Problems' in 1974, and more indirectly in 'Meaning and Understanding,' on the ambiguity of ideology's influence over action. Second, I've tried to formulate a more expansive answer to that question, that draws heavily on Skinner's analysis in both papers of the sincere and instrumental impact of ideology. This more expansive answer constructs the notion of 'ideological infrastructures' – which explain core patterns of ideological action through interdependent mixtures of commitment, adoption, conformity and instrumentalisation. Returning us a little more centrally to the theme of our conference, however, I've also tried, third, to illustrate how central I think Skinner's contribution to the analysis of ideology was in 'Meaning and Understanding' and 'Some Problems.' Not only does Skinner's analysis remain more sophisticated than much leading work on ideology produced today, but I have found Skinner's insights invaluable in application to a discipline and field entirely outside his own: political science research on mass violence. Like most others, I assume, at this conference, I feel greatly indebted to his work.

I conclude with two fragmentary comments on some of the links between my attempt to provide an account of ideological infrastructure in this paper, and the broader themes of interpretation, meaning and rhetoric of our conference. First, I think appreciating ideologies as infrastructures opens a range of interesting questions about how, and how far, we may *distinguish between the different forms of ideological influence* in our interpretation of political texts and political action. Again, of course, the point is not to fully 'separate out' such forms of influence, since they are rarely separate in practice. Assessing the relative balance between commitment, adoption, conformity and instrumentalisation to/of ideas is also extremely difficult. Yet the kind of detailed analysis of texts and context offered by Skinnerian methods is, I suspect, the most powerful tool available to historians and social scientists for doing so. Moreover, awareness of the rough

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[72] This paragraph draws broadly on: Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*; Oberschall, "The manipulation of ethnicity."; Jacques Semelin, "Analysis of a Mass Crime: Ethnic Cleansing in the Former Yugoslavia, 1991-1999," in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Siniša Malešević, *Identity as ideology: understanding ethnicity and nationalism* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

relative weight of different kinds of ideological influence on a historical actor may, in turn, alter our interpretation both of their own political action and rhetoric, and of the ideological context in which they acted.

Second, appreciating ideologies as infrastructures also opens up some new ways of thinking about *ideological stability and change*. In particular, it suggests that many instances of political action and rhetoric may be understood as a kind of *infrastructural maintenance*. In 'Some Problems,' and many of his other works, Skinner's principle focus is on ideological activity as a form of innovation and dynamic of *change*.[73] The common image, again, is of an innovating ideologist seeking to reconfigure existing normative vocabularies to legitimate some new action or emerging pattern of behaviour.[74] Nevertheless, Skinner emphasises that such innovations tend to be objects of ideological debate,[75] with much ideological activity being reactionary in its aims: seeking to preserve the existing ideological conventions and terms against their prospective modification.[76] I think there may be more we can say, though, about the dynamics of such ideological maintenance, though – what common strategies of maintenance exist, and what causal microfoundations they rest on.[77] In particular, Skinner tends, in 'Meaning and Understanding' and 'Some Problems,' to frame the activities of ideologists – innovative or reactionary – as essentially about 'persuasion,' keeping the focus on processes of sincere internalisation and genuine beliefs/attitudes.[78] But understanding ideology as infrastructure highlights that both ideological change and maintenance may not necessarily be about persuasion, but about forms of 'structural outflanking' – i.e. efforts to corner the norms and expectations of a community, successfully maintaining its observance of certain rules or rituals, even if these do not actually reflect underlying sentiments or attitudes. Again, in practice, the more persuasive and more structural aspects of ideological change and stability will always be intermixed. But, to return to the example of Hafez al-Assad's Syria or the later Soviet Union, key forms of ideological performance and ritual may more centrally revolve around the effort to sustain certain *expectations* of behaviour, and thereby certain forms of political rule and order, than to actually influence a population's sincere beliefs or normative

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[73] See also: Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change."

[74] Skinner, "Some Problems," 292-4.

[75] Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," 62.

[76] The analysis of both more reactionary and more revolutionary forms of ideology was, of course, central to Karl Mannheim's work and his distinction between (one sense of) 'ideology' and 'utopia', see: Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubney & Co. Ltd., 1940).

[77] It's not clear to me that Skinner's detailed discussion of legitimation strategies and changes in a normative vocabulary can simply be cross-applied to infrastructural maintenance, see: Skinner, "Some Problems," 296-9.

[78] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 40; Skinner, "Some Problems," 294.

evaluations. Conversely, sudden ideological changes – such as the fall of Communism – are probably more rooted in sudden shifts in structural expectations than in sudden transformations of sincere beliefs and attitudes (if not, it is a puzzle that such sincere beliefs and attitudes could change, seemingly so much, almost overnight). Bringing this 'structural' side of ideological infrastructures more centrally into scholarship on ideology might, therefore, deepen our understanding of both ideological change, and the role of ideology in political order.