

Actors' Changing Perception of Time in Unsettled Times and Its Consequences

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Abstract

Pragmatist and phenomenological theories have informed us that actors are embedded in the temporal process. Yet, we have a limited understanding of how actors' perception of time, or temporal orientation in particular, changes during unsettled times. This article addresses this question by proposing a theory of temporal reorientation. The theory begins by theorizing two distinct types of unsettled times – *accelerated* versus *decelerated* unsettled times. Whereas the former shifts actors' temporal orientation from the present to the future, the latter redirects agentic temporal orientation to the past. This process of temporal reorientation is particularly salient in the domain of political action. Combining comparative historical analysis with computational textual analysis, this article demonstrates the theory by examining political actors' temporal orientations and their exercise of performative power in the empirical case of Singapore. Taken together, this article contributes both to the theoretical articulation of temporality and action and to the empirical discussion of performative power.

Keywords

Agency; Temporality; Unsettled Times; Performative Power