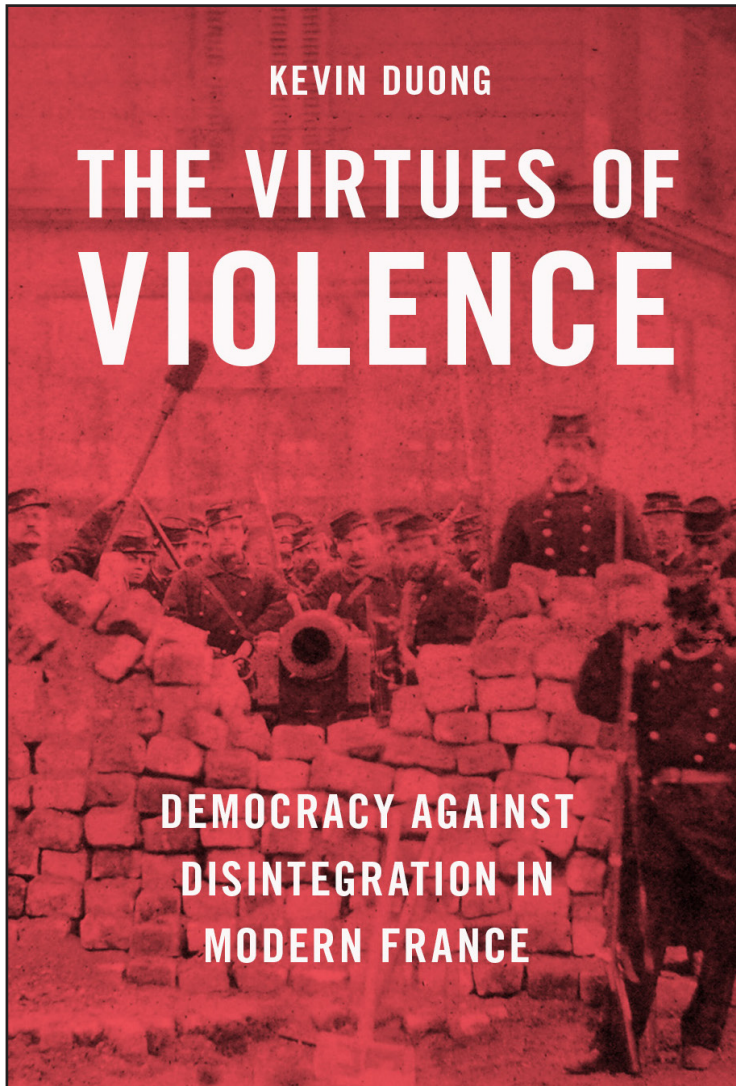


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THE VIRTUES OF VIOLENCE

DEMOCRACY AGAINST DISINTEGRATION
IN MODERN FRANCE

Kevin Duong



If democracy liberates individuals from their inherited bonds, what can reunite them into a sovereign people? In *The Virtues of Violence*, Kevin Duong argues that one particular answer captivated modern French thinkers: popular violence as social regeneration. In this tradition of political theory, the people's violence was not a sign of anarchy or disorder. Instead, it manifested a redemptive power capable of binding and repairing a society on the cusp of social disintegration. This was not a fringe view of French democracy at the time, but central to its momentous development. Duong analyzes the recurring role of the people's redemptive violence across four historical moments: the French Revolution, the imperial conquest of Algeria, the Paris Commune, and the years leading up to World War I. Bringing together democratic theory and intellectual history, he reveals how political thinkers across the spectrum proclaimed that violence by the people could repair the social fabric, even as they experienced democratization as social disintegration. The path from an anarchic multitude to an organized democratic society required the virtuous expression of violence by the people--not its prohibition.

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