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7/11, 9/11, and Post-Politics

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> The immanence of terror, regardless of its source, is evident not only in the protagonists' behaviour, but also in their choice of methods, pathological copies of the enemy like those made by a retrovirus of the attacked cell. (Enzensberger 2001)

> The worst damage from many nerve injuries is secondary - it happens in the hours after the initial trauma, as the body's reaction to the damage kills more nerve cells. (Stallman 2001)

When the British comedian S. B. Cohen – *Ali G* – recently crossed the Atlantic "to help the US with some of the problems following 7/11", his deliberate confusion of 7/11 with 9/11 was found "tasteless" by most critics (Bowcott 2003). Indeed "one would think that Sacha Baron Cohen was the Salman Rushdie of TV pranksters" (Macaulay 2003). In other words, 9/11 is a sacralised event; it is sublimated and elevated to a level above politics, dialogue and humor in a way reminiscent of the Holocaust. Hence the "tastelessness" of *Ali G*'s linking 9/11 (terror) to 7/11 (globalisation) and the "obscenity" of Stockhausen's infamous depiction of the attack as "the greatest work of art imaginable" (Žižek 2002: 11). The condemnation of terror, however, must be combined with an understanding of the complex global interdependencies of the network society:

> My unconditional compassion, addressed at the victims of the September 11, does not prevent me to say it loudly: with regard to this crime, I do not believe that anyone is politically guiltless (Derrida; quoted in Žižek 2001: 11-2).

This article was written in this spirit. Taking a "sociologising" stance against the political and cultural adiaphorisation of Sept 11, we think with Ali G and deliberately confuse some conjugated categories. We open with a discussion of classic and new terrorism, relating this

distinction to the politics of security. Then we link together globalisation (7/11) and terrorism (9/11), stressing that they share in common the logic of networking and an emphasis on mobility. That is, the "network society" and "terror networks" mirror each other in a mobile network space. However, we argue that the theorisation of the emergent gap between the mobile elite and the immobile masses must be supported by an understanding of the processes of internal stratification within the mobile, especially that between the mobile elite and the terrorists. The issue of terrorism, in other words, gives a significant twist to what Bauman calls the "revenge of nomads" (2002: 13) illuminating that mobility does not have an irresistible emancipatory calling but changes meaning drastically depending on the context (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 387). This takes us to the second part of the article where we discuss the notion of post-politics in relation to terrorism. Which helps us consolidate the link between the two de-territorialised networks: global capitalism (7/11) and global terrorism (9/11). We support the analysis of this mimetic relation with another relation, that between the politics of security as a form of contemporary (political) fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism that it seeks to fight. When security becomes the dominant form of politics and the law is replaced by a permanent state of exception, a state "can always be provoked by terrorism to become itself terroristic" (Agamben 2001).

The new terror

Sacrificing the most sacred of the sacred, human life, the 9/11 suicides articulate a new, post-modern fear: the fear of enlightened right extremism. Today, the opposition between public (state) authorities and the marginalized, local resistance seems to be replaced by an opposition between radical right and civil society (Hanlon & Žižek 2001). Thus, the 9/11 attacks did not come from the usual suspects of a modern, disciplinary order, from the other(ed) occupying the margins without "touching" the rest of the society. On the contrary, the terrorists were "normal" people. They were fundamentalists, but this in no way prevented them from functioning as an integral part of the American society. Their neighbours, for instance, were utterly surprised to realise that they had been in contact with a terrorist. "Fundamental" religiosity does not, in other words, mechanically make one a "potential terrorist" (or else one should formally consider the Christian Right in the US, for instance, to be potential terrorists).

The new fear is bound up with radical uncertainty. Terror hits randomly: anybody and everybody can be a potential target. Hence Enzensberger postulates the "the return of the human sacrifice" (Enzensberger 2001). Nothing can be more wrong, though. Terror kills but who is killed is not necessarily sacrificed. Sacrifice necessitates form and value, but the hostage, the subjectivity that pertains to terror, is a naked, formless body without a value (Baudrillard 1990: 47; Diken & Laustsen 2002: 106). And herein lies the difference between the "classical" and the new, "complex" forms of terror (Homer-Dixon 2002). Whereas the classical terror targeted political adversaries and aimed at a realisation of a political program (e.g. RAF's and IRA's terror), the new terror is blind and diffuse. It operates stochastically and seldom demands something explicit from an identifiable adversary. The classical terror was highly symbolic and was pre-occupied with arranging spectacular scenes that had everybody as its potential audience (Jürgensmeyer 2000: 119-144). In contrast, the new terror is highly invisible, off-scene/obscene, and viral (Žižek 2002: 36-37). Being indifferent to the choice of targets, it seeks to maximise destruction and fear.

The problem regarding the new terror is to identify and stop the enemy before he realises his plans. This pre-emptive logic is, however, doomed to fail for structural reasons; terror is parasitic on the unexpected. The common characteristic which terror attacks (e.g. attacks on the WTC, on overseas American bases, on discotheques in Bali, the anthrax attacks, the assassinations of the sniper from Cleveland, and so on) is that they share nothing in common except that all actions are different. What is significant in the series is the surprise effect regarding means and ends.

This explains why the co-operation between Hollywood and the American military, or what Der Derian (2001) has called MIME-NET (the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment-NETwork) is significant. This network arranged a meeting in 2001 at the University of Southern California, the Institute for Creative Technology. Among the participants were names such as Steven E. Souza, the manuscript writer behind *Die Hard*, Spike Jonze, the director of *Being John Malkovich*, and David Fincher of *Seven, Fight Club and The Panic*

Room (Der Derrian 2001; Davis 2001: 38; Homer-Dixon 2002). Aimed at "imagining" the possible targets of terrorism, the meeting illuminates how the US military can use Hollywood's "patriotic" help in the war against terrorism. In other words, the military does not feel that it has the potential to imagine the unexpected. After all, the terrorists "staged the massacre as a media show. In this respect they thoroughly followed the text-books of horror movies and sci-fi thrillers" (Enzensberger 2001). Since terror mimics the media - terror is a kind of "virtual" war - control of the media becomes decisive.

Imperial paradoxes

Though only the elected few can engage with "scenes" of terror in terms of hybridising aesthetics and military logic, most people try to deal with terror by translating it into a familiar language:

> It seems clear that the 19 terrorists of September 11 were all foreign citizens and entered the United States legally, as tourists, business travellers, or students. This was also true of the perpetrators of previous terrorist acts … While it is absolutely essential that we do not scapegoat immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, we also must not overlook the most obvious fact: the current terrorist threat to the United States comes almost exclusively from individuals who arrive from abroad. Thus, our immigration policy, including temporary and permanent visas issuance, border control, and efforts to deal with illegal immigration are all critical to reducing the chance of an attack in the future (Caramota in Zolberg 2001)

Pat Buchanan, too, demanded immediately after the attacks a temporary stop to immigration, more border control, a radical reduction in the numbers of visas given to those from the countries that "support" terrorism and the expatriation of 8-11 million illegal immigrants settling in the US (Zolberg 2001). Others, such as Edward Kennedy and George Bush were more "moderate" but nevertheless maintained the image of a threat from outside. Such arguments are predictable for they build upon a classical, Hobbesian understanding of security according to which the limits of the state are identical to those of civility. Outside the walls of the city or the nation reigns barbarism. The state guarantees the security of its citizens by distinguishing friends and (potential) enemies. This differentiation of "inside" (friends) and "outside" (enemies) runs parallel to those of civil war and (international) war, the police and the military, and, more generally, of order and chaos. These distinctions share the assumption of clear-cut borders - from imperial walls to the walled cities of the Middle Ages to the contemporary entrenched nations to "Fort Europe" - and historically have revolved around the question of how to extend the entrenched space (Bauman 2002: 88). Even contemporary versions of entrenchment (e.g. "gated" communities) are part of this history.

Entrenchment is however not the only metaphor that structures the organisation of the city and social life (Reid 2002). The city is thought of not just as a fortress but also as a market place. In their pure forms, the two metaphors refer to two incompatible principles: entrenchment can lead to the blockage of the flow of wealth into the city; a one-sided focus on accumulating wealth and opening up the city can compromise security. Therefore, the city gates historically sought not only to block movements but also to facilitate, to regulate and to control them (Reid 2002: 7). The "door", in other words, "represents how separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act" and "transcends the separation between the inner and the outer" (Simmel 1997: 67)

Today colossal numbers of people and commodities flow across borders. And the control of this flow comes with considerable costs. For instance, the proportion of containers checked increased after 9/11 from 2% to 10%, while 90% remain unchecked. Likewise, in all Western countries airport security has been intensified after 9/11. In the USA security services were re-nationalised (Beck 2002: 41-2). But approximately 100 million people use US airports every year and approximately 450 million enter the country over land (Zolberg 2001). It is impossible to check so many people thoroughly, and if it were possible, one can only detect a potential terrorist if he or she already has been registered for criminal acts. But suicide pilots and bombers act (or die) only once. So, faced with such structural impossibilities, strengthening the USA's security can only take place at the expense of the USA's economic interests.

From another perspective, the same dilemma surfaces in the schism between the USA's imperial ambitions within what Hardt and Negri have called Empire, the decentralised and deterritorialised global capitalist network. In Empire, power goes nomadic, assuming a non-linear, rhizomatic character. Concomitantly, "disciplinary society" is evolving into a new "society of control" that replaces the principle of territorial enclosure by that of permanent movement (Deleuze 1995). In this emerging smooth space "there is no *place* of power - it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*" (Hardt & Negri 2000: 190). The dialectic between "inside" and "outside" has disappeared; "there is no more outside" (Ibid. 187). In contrast, however, the USA's political and military power can be likened to a classical case of imperialism on a global scale. The condition for the US participation in the in the UN is its veto right (which it has used more than any other nation). The condition for NATO is US dominance. The US does not want an international Court of Justice (which would mean that American soldiers could be held responsible for the crimes committed whilst in American military service). Whereas sovereignty in global finance capitalism is diffuse, in the politico-military field it seems to be firm and robust, indivisible and well codified (e.g. the principle that a sovereign state has jurisdiction over its citizens). These rights, though, are only held as absolute for certain states. In the case of Iraq and other "rogue" states, they become secondary rights. The US "is imposing itself as the active and determining centre of the full range of world affairs, military, political, and economic. All exchanges and decisions are being forced, in effect, to pass through the US. The ultimate hubris of the US political leaders is their belief that they can … actually shape the global environment - an audacious extension of the old imperialist ideology of mission civilisatrice" (Hardt 2002). Thus, when France, for example, "threatens" to veto a resolution on Iraq, the US can perceive it a case of misuse in the council.

The relationship between imperialism and Empire is thus a variation over the classical differentiation between the fort and the market place. Which means that the transition from imperialism to Empire is not and cannot be clean-cut. The dialectic between imperialism and Empire is rooted in the interdependency between territorialisation and deterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The viral

9/11 is often interpreted against the background of the theory of imperialism. Said (2001) and Chomsky (2001), for instance, claim that the attacks were a natural response to the US ambition for global sovereignty. The US has bases in 69 countries, the US dollar still functions as a global currency reserve, and the US has supported a series of dictators and their terror when it served its own interest. 9/11 is also the day when the Allende's democratic government in 1973 was knocked down by an US-supported military coup (Wallerstein 2001). Bin Laden claims that 9/11 is "a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years" (quoted in Wallerstein 2001). Ironically (if not sadly) however, Bin Laden himself is "created by the CIA and wanted by the FBI" (Roy 2001).

Pilger (2001) wrote that the ultimate aim of the war on Afghanistan was the "acceleration of western imperial power" and not (only) the capture of terrorists. Later, 9/11 was used as a pretext to attack Iraq with no satisfactory evidence for mass extermination weapons and with no evidence of a link between Al Qaeda and the Iraqi government. In this, Al Qaeda has become a spectre-like entity; it is both everywhere and nowhere, and because it can function as an empty signifier it can condense every threat against the USA (Žižek 2002: 111). In this perspective, unless global poverty is radically dealt with, the Third World will remain, like a ticking bomb, a source for producing terrorists: the problem is rooted in western international politics itself.

The problem with this argument is that it rests upon a distinction between the inside and the outside of the empire. Yet what is decisive about 9/11 is that "the Americans also found themselves inside the empire" (Negri 2001). It is rather uncanny in this respect that Bin Laden is often likened to Hitler. For "what the Christian bourgeois … could not really forgive Hitler was not the crime of genocide, but the crime of having applied to Europe the colonialist actions as were borne up till now by the Arabs, the coolies of India and the Negroes…" (Bauman 2002: 109). In other words, what Hitler rendered universal in Europe was the *homo sacer* who can be killed but not sacrificed (Agamben 1998). And Bin Laden brought the *homo sacer* to the USA.

From now on, the only way for the US to prevent terror *within* the US is to prevent its taking place *anywhere* (Žižek 2002: 49), which is, paradoxically, the aim of the war for "infinite justice" that maps a smooth, infinite terrain for politics of security. The problem is not the "*external* barbarism" (Berman 2001. Thus one of the fault lines that proliferate in the war against terror is the depiction of 9/11 attacks as *non*civilization, or as the ultimate other of order: nomadism. However, in today's "liquid modernity" power itself goes nomadic: thus we are "witnessing the revenge of nomadism over the principle of territoriality and settlement" (Bauman 2000: 13). Both terror and the war against terror are increasingly deterritorialised and disengaged from the local masses. Consequently, the citizens of the West are reduced to spectators, even when they demonstrate en masse, while the citizens of the non-West become victims: refugees, the recipients of humanitarian help, and the casualties of "collateral damage".

One should add to this diagnosis that a central aspect of a network is that its strength is also its weakness (Baudrillard 2002: 8). A virus destroys the network from inside, causing implosion (Baudrillard 1993: 39). Viral terror breaks the public rules, offers no explanation or negotiation, and claims no responsibility. It is a subterranean micro-power: "the viruses are part and parcel of the hyperlogical consistency of our systems; they follow all the pathways of those systems, and even up new ones (computer viruses explore possibilities of networks that were never anticipated by those networks' designers)" (Baudrillard 1993: 39). In fact, the essence of technology is not what it can do but the accident it enables (Virilio 1997: 39). In this respect viral terror is uncanny in that it brings with it the spectre of an invisible and "immaterial" war in which "at the level of visible material reality, nothing happens, no big explosions, and yet the known universe starts to collapse, life disintegrates... We are entering a new era of paranoiac warfare in which the biggest task will be to identify the enemy and his weapons" (Žižek 2002: 25). In such a world it does not make sense to speak of an attack on the US; what is central is rather the international recession that the attack triggers.

Terror reflects the object it targets. The new terror works in the form of networking and the smooth space in which "networks of terror" operate is the network society itself. There is not a topological contradiction but a homology between the *ou-topia* of Empire and of "terror networks". Terror has become reticular and "as global an enterprise as Coke or Pepsi or Nike. At the first sign of trouble, terrorists can pull up stakes and move their 'factories' from country to country in search of a better deal. Just like the multinationals" (Roy 2001). They can, like post-modern businesses, "go with the flow" (Thrift 1997: 39). Devoid of clear centres and boundaries, networks of terror have a "fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character that is never captured by the notions of levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structure, systems" (Latour 1996: 370). Al-Qaeda is not only an ideology or a cosmology; it is, above all, an invisibly mutating virus - the answer of terrorism to McDonalds (Escobar 2002).

Asymmetries

Viral terror demands a more complex answer than those offered by the rhetoric of the war against terrorism. Indeed, "one cannot resist a slightly paranoid temptation: what if … the *true* target of the 'war on terror' is the American society itself, i.e. the disciplining of its emancipatory excesses" (Žižek 2003: 6). If so, it is worth focussing on the strategies employed in the war against terror in more detail. We want to do this by distinguishing four dispositifs. The first is sovereignty in the Foucauldian sense, that is, the actions through which particular individuals are excommunicated by power, that is, placed outside the domain of the law. This is what happens to the inmates in camp Guatamolo, for instance. The second, discipline, like sovereign power, builds upon the distinction between an inside and an outside, but it targets the whole society rather than focusing on a certain group. Border control might be a good example. Control, our third dispositif, works by codifying the flows, e.g. electronic surveillance and monitoring. And finally there is terror, which also addresses the population as a whole but breaks with the regularity of the flows, working instead through a stochastic principle.

Terror is a form of asymmetric war in three senses. First, it is characterised by the dissolution of the distinctions between friends and enemies, the civil and the military, inside and outside, and war and peace. Second, terror is asymmetrical in relation to resources necessary for both attack and defence. And third, there is in terror, as in asymmetric war, no direct contact

between the attacker and the attacked (Bauman 2002: 99-102). How can a symmetric strategy against terror be conceived of? If terror aims at the production of insecurity, uncertainty and unsafety, then a counter strategy could, in all its simplicity, seek to produce security, certainty and safety, maintaining that trust makes the society robust against attacks. Herein lies the reason for the interest in pre-emptive strategies; hence contemporary spaces are increasingly organised around the logic of risk management that aims to control not only events but, more importantly, eventualities (see Lyon 2001: 54). The emerging problem is however that this pre-emptive logic breaks with the constitutional state built upon the assumption that one can only be judged by one's actions. Further, this logic seals off the public spaces. For instance, the increasingly intensified strategy of zoning for security-related purposes (e.g. in sport events or in top-level meetings) excludes many from public spaces. No wonder, therefore, that this strategy is also an object of intensive military research. As wars increasingly move into cities today, new strategies to remote-control cities are in high demand (Marvin 2002): putting the city out of function, cutting electricity (as was done in the war on Serbia) , or setting central transportation systems out of function (e.g. the underground) . Such strategies target urban infrastructures and public spaces as well as unpredictable and uncontrollable masses (e.g. tear gas).

Hence the demise of the agora; it has become a risk to gather. In the network society politics has become an infinitely difficult activity for nobody can master the net (that is nobody can be held "responsible" for anything). The pre-emptive politics of security intensify this problem. The problem is no longer the short time interval between action and reaction (because of time-space compression), but that there is only time for reflex but not for reflection. With the pre-emptive logic, the problem is that reaction comes before action, which is also the reason why critique, e.g. regarding the undemocratic aspects of the war against terrorism, is difficult. To discuss this, in the rest of the article we focus on the condition of the political in the "age of terrorism". We start with an international perspective and then discuss its consequences at a national level.

Clash of fundamentalisms

Both Bush and Blair underlined that the war against terrorism is a war between terrorism and civilisation as such. However, the metaphor of the "clash" of civilisations has been uncannily decisive in the mobilisation necessary for the war against terrorism as official denunciations merely invited more aggressive and transgressive focus on religious differences all over the world. Meanwhile, Bush did not hold back from calling the war a "crusade", and Blair emphasised in his messianic speeches that the war against terrorism was a "just war". Bin Laden answered with the same appeal to "clash": "events have divided the world into two camps … faithful/infidels". Hence "you are either with us or against us". That is, the clash metaphor helps to overlook all the possible (per)versions of the "hybridization between enemies" (Pieterse 1995) and displaces politics onto a false choice: "McWorld" or "Jihad" (see Barber 1995), 7/11 or 9/11.

> [One] cannot resist the temptation to recall here the Freudian opposition of the public Law and its obscene superego double: along the same lines, are not 'international terrorist organizations' the obscene double of the big multinational corporations - the ultimate rhizomatic machine, omnipresent, albeit with no clear territorial base? Are they not the form in which nationalist and/or religious 'fundamentalism' accommodated itself to global capitalism? (Žižek 2001: 38).

However, confronted with the choice between freedom and religious fundamentalism, nobody can meaningfully choose fundamentalism (Žižek 2002: 3). Dedication to a cause, religious or political, and genuine belief becomes a sign of danger, which calls for surveillance or intervention, while critique borders on "lack of patriotism". The question is thus whether 9/11 did not exhibit the weakness of the West rather than that of the radical, fundamentalist Islam - the inability of the West to act politically and to speak the "language of the evil" (Baudrillard 1993: 81-88). Weakened by our materialism and consumerism we, the Westerners, cannot imagine a political cause to fight and die for (Žižek 2001: 1-4). The "paradox" in this context is that:

Two philosophical references immediately impose themselves apropos this ideological antagonism between the Western consumerist way of life and the Muslim radicalism: Hegel and Nietzsche. Is this antagonism not the one between what Nietzsche called 'passive' and

'active' nihilism? We in the West are the Nietzschean Last Men, immersed in stupid daily pleasures, while the Muslim radicals are ready to risk everything…. Furthermore, if we look at this opposition through the lens of the Hegelian struggle between Master and Servant, we cannot avoid a paradox: although we in the West are perceived as exploiting masters, it is we who occupy the position of the Servant who, since he clings to life and its pleasures, is unable to risk his life (recall Colin Powell's notion of a high-tech war with no human casualties), while the poor Muslim radicals are Masters ready to risk their life… (Žižek 2002: 40-41)

This Hegelian/Nietzschean perspective found perhaps its most ardent twentieth century proponent in Carl Schmitt, and 9/11 proved him right. What is central in Schmitt's controversial distinction between democracy and the parliamentary rule is that democracy involves the idea of an identity between those who rule and those who are ruled, between the sovereign and the subjects (Schmitt 1985: 14, 26). Or, phrased in Schmitt's vocabulary, the condition for democracy is representation. Consequently, the state and the political are more than the sum of the interests of the individuals (Schmitt 1996: 33). The state is elevated above the society, which is why it can constitute a political will and a political community through representation. Thus even a dictator can function democratically (Schmitt 1985: 28). Indeed, this is what happens when a state of exception is declared, when a person, a government or the military is elevated to the status of a sovereign with the purpose of securing the survival of the state or the political community. Schmitt contrasts this to the liberal parliamentary rule, which, according to him can, at best, constitute a political will as a compromise based on open debate (Schmitt 1985: 34-5).

Hence the twisted conclusion: the parliamentary rule is undemocratic (Schmitt 1985: 8); only individuals, not the people, are represented in the parliament. The parliamentary debate is merely a semblance (Schmitt 1985: 6). Like the romantics who consciously avoid making decisions, the liberals respond to the question "Christ or Barabas?" either by organising a "committee" to discuss further or simply by cancelling the meeting (Kennedy 1985: xvi). The parliamentary rule is a form of hyper-politics: everything is politicised, can be discussed, but only in a non-committal way and as a non-conflict. Absolute and irreversible choices are kept away; politics becomes something one can do without making decisions that divide and separate. When pluralism becomes an end in itself, real politics is pushed to other arenas. In the 1920s, when Schmitt wrote, this meant "to the streets"; thus he saw syndicalism and fascism as the only two meaningful real political answers to hyper-politics. He himself preferred fascism for it did not undermine the state's monopoly of violence. However, the two reactions to liberal hyper-politics shared in common the appreciation of the role of myth in the creation of political will. In the myth a given group finds an historical mission (Schmitt 1985: 68). What is central here is the image of a decisive conflict with the enemy (Schmitt 1985: 70).

Schmitt's analysis of the Weimar period is paralleled by Žižek's anaylsis of the post-modern society in which post-politics shows itself in the doctrines of multiculturalism and political correctness (1999: 215-221). We live in an immaterial, artificial universe, which provokes an unbearable drift towards the "real reality". This "passion for the real" is interesting in individual cases, e.g. the "cutters" who cut their own flesh not to punish themselves but to feel corporeality and materiality (Žižek 2002: 19). The same passion can, however, find expression in more out-turned forms, e.g. in racist or hooligan violence:

> Soccer hooligans are merely the most extreme manifestation of this transpolitical conjuncture: they carry participation to its tragic limit, while at the same time daring the State to respond with violence, to liquidate them. In this respect they are no different from terrorists. The reason why such tactics fascinate us, quite apart from moral considerations, is that they constitute a paroxystically up-to-the minute model, a mirror-image of our own disappearance *qua* political society - a disappearance that 'political' pseudo-events strive so desperately to camouflage. (Baudrillard 1993: 79)

Žižek claims that the shock caused by 9/11 did not really originate from the attack itself but from the fact that what was fantasised became real. What is astonishing is that the attack was in a certain sense expected, anticipated and fantasised in Hollywood blockbusters (Žižek 2002: 16-7). With the attack, the American paranoiac fantasy of violence returned in the real. And "what no police could ever guard against is the sort of fascination, of mass appeal, exercised by the terrorist model" (Baudrillard 1993: 76). Did the attack really "change everything", then? This brings us to the friend/enemy distinction and its relation to semblance and reality.

The friend and the enemy

Through the myth one can differentiate an enemy, against whom one stands in a war of life and death. In this respect Schmitt challenges the usual reading of Hobbes' Leviathan, or the image of the state as understood as the sum of individual wills. Leviathan is a myth that has the aim of creating awe in the citizens. Further, liberalism forgets that Leviathan always stood against Behemoth, that the political is always given by a continuous struggle between order and chaos, Leviathan against Behemoth (Schmitt 1996: 21). It is this distinction that leads Schmitt to the understanding of the political as the ability at one's own initiative and decisively to distinguish between friends and enemies. The distinction is substantiated in the final instance by the possibility of war and thus indirectly by the state's monopoly of violence. Schmitt does not claim, as liberalism does, that Leviathan associates to order because it consists of "friends". It is not a "social contract" but the very distinction of friend and enemy that guarantees a political order. Chaos, in turn, is rooted in the absence of such a distinction. When the enemy disappears, the political disappears too; chaos takes over.

The parallel to 9/11 is obvious. With the terror attacks proliferated an enemy (terrorism, radical Islam) creating a myth about how "they hate our freedoms" (Bush quoted in Johnson 2002: 216). In this sense the attacks were a God-sent "gift" that allowed Bush to appear as a statesman who incarnates the sovereignty of the nation. How, then, does this friend/enemy distinction relate to the distinction between the national and the international?

In contrast to Jünger, Schmitt did not glorify the war. The friend/enemy distinction meant that the state could become more than an epiphenomenon so that civil war could be avoided. Chaos (in the form of war) was thus displaced to the international sphere with its minimally institutionalised rules on how to declare, fight and end a war. The perfect correspondence between the two distinctions (friend/enemy and national/international) broke down together with the weakening of the state, which was already visible in the 1920s (hence the critique of the parliamentary rule). In this regard Schmitt focused on the strengthening of the discourse of international law and the increasing importance of partisan war.

Schmitt was sceptical of the international law: it criminalised the enemy and thus made the war more, not less, probable. The humanitarian wars justified by international law were attempts at eating the last cannibal, implying more bloodshed than the tamed war between sovereign states that recognise one another. The international law was an empty law without the force of sanctioning and thus dependent upon a strong state behind it (Balakrishnan 2000: 228-9). When the enemy is stripped of its legitimacy, wars are transformed into "police actions", "humanitarian intervention", "peace-keeping actions", and in extreme cases mass extermination. The other aspect of the weakening of the state was the emergence of partisan wars. With the deterioration of the state's sovereignty, the partisan becomes the hero who can reiterate the friend/enemy distinction instead of the state. To sum up, then, the international law threatens the state from outside and from "above", while the partisan war does the same from inside and from "below". Thus one of the most obvious aspects of the war against terrorism is that the terrorists are depicted not as adversaries or opponents who deserve respect but as an evil to be exterminated. Hence the aim of bombing Afghanistan was, in Donald Rumsfeld's words, "to kill as many Taliban soldiers and Al-Qaeda members as possible" (quoted in Žižek 2002: 91). Such an utterance would be impossible in the times of tamed wars between sovereign states without risking serious clashes with the codes of war. But what is more interesting in a Schmittian perspective is the mixture of the military and the humanitarian.

> [W]e cannot even imagine a neutral humanitarian organization like the Red Cross mediating between the warring parties, organizing the exchange of prisoners, and so on: one side in the conflict (the US-dominated global force) already assumes the role of the Red Cross - it perceives itself not as one of the warring sides, but as a mediating agent of peace and global order crushing particular rebellions and, simultaneously, providing humanitarian aid to the 'local populations'. Perhaps, the ultimate image of the treatment of the 'local population' as homo sacer is that of the American war plane flying above Afghanistan - one is never sure what it will drop, bombs or food parcels. (Žižek 2002: 93-94)

Post-politics

We have now discussed 9/11 in relation to Schmitt's analyses of parliamentary rule/anarchic violence and international law/partisan war. Schmitt's diagnosis of the parliamentary rule grasps something essential regarding the way politics is practised and understood today (in the USA and in Europe) and his critique of the weaknesses of the international law is a considerable contribution to the understanding of international politics (especially the USA's). The distinction between interior and exterior (national/international) politics seems in Empire to be displaced onto a distinction between two forms of post-politics, both emptying out of politics and provoking naked violence. The "problem" when Schmitt analysed the parliamentary rule was syndicalism and its street violence; violence re-emerges today from the extreme right. The "problem" when Schmitt analysed the international law was the partisan; it re-emerges today as international terrorism on the one hand and a politics of security that can hide itself behind humanitarian paroles.

So we are left with an unsatisfactory choice between the genuine political (qua the friend/enemy distinction) that sublimates order as an absolute value and exclusively indexes politics to the politics of security (Žižek 1999: 18 and Balakrishnan 2000: 110) on the one hand and post-politics on the other. Both of the two options, however, are unsatisfactory for they both refuse politicisation in the classical Greek sense, that is, as the metaphorical universalization of particular demands (Žižek 1999: 35), which aims at "more" than negotiation of interests: the restructuring of the social space (Žižek 1999: 208). Politics in this sense is the ability to debate, question and renew the fundament on which political struggle unfolds, the ability to radically criticise a given order and to fight for a new and better one. In a nutshell, then, politics necessitates accepting conflict. Following this, it is necessary to formulate a reservation regarding the Schmittian understanding of conflict.

> Far from simply asserting the proper dimension of the political, he adds the most cunning and radical version of the disavowal, what we are tempted to call ultra-politics: the attempt to depoliticize the conflict by bringing it to its extreme, via direct militarization of politics. In *ultra-politics*, the 'repressed' political returns in the guise of the attempt to resolve the deadlock of political conflict by its false radicalization - by reformulating it as a war between 'Us' and 'Them', our enemy, where there is no common ground for symbolic conflict. […] The clearest indication of this Schmittian disavowal of the political is the primacy of external politics (relations between sovereign states) over internal politics (inner social antagonisms) on which he insists: is not the relationship to an external Other as the enemy a way of disavowing the *internal* struggle which traverses the social body? In contrast to Schmitt, a leftist position should insist on the unconditional primacy of the inherent antagonism as constitutive of the political. (Žižek 1999: 29)

Did the USA turn to the Right or to the Left after 9/11? Was the attack an occasion to revitalise or to deny the political? To answer this question we must clarify how these two positions can use catastrophes politically and which reactionary or progressive forms the "passion for the real" can assume. Žižek analyses 9/11 by reference to the movie *The Matrix*, in which the figures live in a simulated, artificial reality. The US is a similar world, the ultimate truth of which is "the de-materialization of 'real life' itself, its reversal into a spectral show" (Žižek 2001). Thus the attack was comparable to the moment where, in *The* Matrix, a "real" world is discovered behind the simulacra that turns out to be nothing: "welcome to the desert of the real" (Žižek 2001). There is nothing behind the simulacra. The Lacanian concept of the "real" refers here not to social "reality" but to acts, events or objects that transform a given order (e.g. the political). In *The Matrix* the hero is confronted with a choice between red or blue pills. The blue pill makes him forget everything about the matrix, a forgetfulness that is essential for the experience of reality, and gives the innocence of ignorance back to him. The red pill makes it possible for him to see the real world in a new way, but at the same time prevent him from return to the comforts of old world.

The US has chosen the blue pill! The reference to 9/11 is used to consolidate already existing habits and practices. The attacks aimed at global capitalism but were used by the US to consolidate its "imperial" power (Žižek 2002: 32). The same applies to the idea that the US is the most liberal, free and democratic state in the world, while criticism is pushed aside with reference to anti-Americanism. The problem with the American "passion for the real" is this: it constitutes the ultimate trick to avoid the confrontation with the real (Žižek 2002: 16). As a

reactionary "passion for the real" let's recall here the attacks on the Jews in the Crystal Night. This rage was not a challenge for the given order, rather it served to hide a missing ability to intervene in a crisis situation (Žižek 2002: 23, 35). And similarly:

> What if, precisely, nothing epochal happened on September 11? What if - as the massive display of American patriotism seems to demonstrate - the shattering experience of September 11 ultimately served as a means which enabled the hegemonic American ideology to "return to its basics," to reassert its basic ideological coordinates against the anti-globalist and other critical temptations? Perhaps one nonetheless could qualify this statement by introducing the temporality of the *future anterieur*: on September 11, the USA was given the opportunity to realize what kind of a world it was part of. It might have used the opportunity - but it did not, instead of which it rather opted to reassert its traditional ideological commitments: out with the responsibility and guilt feeling towards the impoverished Third World, *we* are the victims now! (Žižek 2002: 46-7)

The two exceptions

Let's return to Schmitt's (2001) conceptualisation of sovereignty at this point. The sovereign is the one who can declare a state of exception, that is, the one who can elevate himself above the law (by declaring a state of exception) or create a new legal system (by ending the state of exception). The parallel to the psychoanalytical notion of the law and its transgression is noticeable. The law is transgressed but it paradoxically cements the law. Similarly, the state of exception relates itself to the law as its suspension and thus declaring a state of exception is an implicit acknowledgement of the primacy of the law. Here a state of exception is thought of as a temporarily and spatially delimited situation. When a state of exception is declared it is done to avoid a true exception, to return to normality (Žižek 2002: 108). Thus the state of exception is per definition reactionary.

The question is, however, whether this classical understanding of the state of exception helps to understand the USA's reaction to 9/11. There are primarily two problems in this context. First, the beginning and the end of a state of exception is no longer clearly marked, and second, the state of exception (including internment without trial, illegal monitoring, torture, and so on) seems to have become a system in its own right next to the legal system. Agamben wrote about the state of exception during the Nazi period that it had become permanently impossible to distinguish between the rule and its exception (Agamben 1998: 168). The exception, in other words, became the rule. At the same time, the Nazi never took the burden of declaring the laws, which they took over from the previous regime, invalid. The law and its exception became, in other words, indistinct. Similarly, it is unclear whether the US today is in a state of exception or not. On the one hand there is a long-term war against terrorism, which legitimises exceptions, and on the other hand the society seems to function normally (see Žižek 2002: 40). Maybe we are confronted with two types of state of exception: a national, which the US quickly ended, and an international, which seems to be infinite. The suspension of the international laws and norms (e.g. the norm of sovereignty) seems to be valid for the whole world with the exception of the USA and their allies.

The difference between a state of war and a state of exception is significant here. To go to war does not necessarily mean the suspension of the national law. The state of exception must be understood as a re-introduction of the distinction between the internal and the external inside the territory of the state, as an upgrading of the political (in the sense of performative use of power) at the expense of the law. In the state of exception the state can relate itself to its own citizens as if they were the enemy. Hostility for Schmitt was not natural but given politically. Potentially everybody can be(come) enemy. The enemy is therefore per definition indefinite and invisible (Žižek 2002: 110). The state's pointing out the enemy is therefore a relieving act: it takes upon itself the burden and identifies an external enemy, thus reducing the complexity of the economy of fear. The state of exception marks the opposite movement by reinstalling fear within the subjects. People start suspecting their neighbours. In Schmitt's words:

> Franz Kafka could have written a novel: the Enemy. Then it would have become clear that the indeterminancy of the enemy evokes anxiety (there is no other kind of anxiety, and it is the essence of angst to sense an indeterminate enemy; by contrast, it is a matter of reason (and in this sense high politics) to determine who is the enemy

(which is always the same as self-determination), and with this determination, the anxiety stops and at most fear remains. (Schmitt quoted in Balakrishnan 2000: 113)

And regarding 9/11 and the American psyche:

They [the terrorists] have even – and this is the height of cunning – used the banality of American everyday life as cover and camouflage. Sleeping in their suburbs, reading and studying with their families, before activating themselves suddenly like time bombs. The faultless mastery of this clandestine style of operation is almost as terroristic as the spectacular act of September 11, since it casts suspicion on any and every individual. (Baudrillard 2002: 20)

Bin Laden has already won; his victory consists of creating an all-consuming fear (Escobar 2001). The most significant impact of 9/11 was not so much the destruction of economic and infrastructural networks as the emergence of a new network, along whose links "raw emotions" flow: "grief, anger, horror, disbelief, fear, and hatred. It was as if we'd all been wired into one immense, convulsing, and reverberating neural network" (Homer-Dixon 2002). Which brings us to the thesis of "risk society" (Beck 1992). Beck (2002) himself extends the concept of risk (the unpredictable consequences of human action) to the attacks on the WTC, to "Chernobyl of terrorism". In this perspective the distinction between danger (characteristic of pre-modern and modern societies) and risk (the central aspect of the late modern risk society) refers to technological change. However, the transition from danger to risk can be related to the above-mentioned process of the weakening of the state. In risk society what is missing is an authority that can symbolise what goes wrong. Risk is, in other words, the danger that cannot be symbolised (Žižek 1999: 322-347). Or better, terror aims at putting the state on the spot and undermines the citizens' sense of security guaranteed by the state. The success of terrorism is the fear it can provoke.

Further, the concept of risk risks missing a fundamental asymmetry: terror is an "unintended consequence" only from the perspective of the victim; what is a catastrophe for the victim is an act of purification for the attacker. And herein we counter another aspect of the distinction between classical and new terrorism. The classical terror, e.g. RAF's, typically sought to show that the state was in reality a totalitarian security state that hides its true essence behind a democratic façade. For the new terror the aim is to weaken rather than to strengthen the state to show that there is nothing (e.g. no security) behind the mask. The diagnosis that follows is this: the most significant and the most fundamental anxiety of the citizens of the West is not their democratic participation but their security. They do not fear the security state, rather the opposite is the case. Which is another face of post-politics: the political is pushed, as in Schmitt's analysis of the Weimar years, from the state to the individual level. In Beck's terminology, politics is individualised. It then becomes an individual task to identify the friend and the enemy. The individualist "hero" is, again, Schmitt's partisan, who can elevate himself to the position of the sovereign.

In the aftermath of 9/11 there have been numerous attacks on Muslims and other "aliens". Almost 1000 cases were reported during the two months following 9/11 that are diverse in their nature: murders, attempted fires in mosques and temples, physical attacks, vandalism, intimidation, knife attacks, and so on (Ahmad 2002: 103-104). The point is that such murders and attacks seem absurd and incomprehensible in the light of a traditional understanding of the enemy as somebody who threatens us. In a Schmittian perspective, however, the explanation is plain: such acts are an expression of the demise of politics. They express a frustration in relation to who the enemy is and articulate the difference between political enmity and the diffuse enmity that follows the processes of demonisation.

Independence Day

If anything, Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996) is *the* film on 9/11. The earth is attacked by hostile powers from the outer space. The gigantic space ship approaching the earth is an evil empire inhabited by aliens/nomads, who move from planet to planet and exploit their resources. They are prepared to annihilate human beings to realise their aim. The attack is initiated in a series of big cities, and the American Army fast and resolutely counter-attacks the space ship. However, protected by an electro-magnetic shield, the alien ship turns out to be indestructible. The rescuer is a scientist (David), who discovers a strange signal emanating from the space ship. It turns out to be a counting-down mechanism. Time to attack

comes, and Washington is the target. The residents of the White House are evacuated to an underground military bunker. It turns out that the bunker contains a research centre for outer space. It includes a UFO that had crashed in an American desert. All of which had naturally been top secret before the aliens' arrival. Meanwhile, David's father-in-law happens to warn him against catching a cold when he sees him sitting on the floor. This of course triggers the redeeming idea: the virus. David develops a virus that can penetrate the protective shield of the space ships. If this works, that is, if their protective shield can be destroyed, the aliens can also be attacked with conventional weapons. The plan is to contaminate the alien's network with the virus. Having no choice, the president accepts the plan and contacts the other nations that without hesitation "unite" against the enemy.

The film seems to have anticipated the American reaction to September the 11th. Evil alien powers attack the house of God and their actions are totally unexplainable. The film never attributes to the aliens a depth in the form of an insight, ability, motives or emotions. Further, they are invincible; their networked weaponry is infinitely superior to what is available on earth. The only choice: us or them, the Good or the Evil. As the sublime incarnation of humanity the US gathers a world-encompassing alliance for the war against the enemy. Such a reading, however, is slightly boring and, what is worse, reifying. It is much more interesting to play with the basic assumption of the film, that it is narrated from an American perspective. What if we saw the hostile space ship as a metaphorical description of a global American empire, which suffocates the local life forms in consumerism and indifference? Is it so clean-cut a matter to decide what the Good and the Evil consist of?

We deliberately excluded a point in our narration of the plot. After the protective shield of the alien ship is penetrated, there emerges an intense battle between American fighter-planes and the aliens. Towards the end of the film every American fighter gets shot down, except one. When the last fighter is to fire its missiles, it turns out that the missiles cannot be detonated. Then its pilot chooses to lead the fighter against the target, transforming his plane into a missile and himself into a suicide attacker. What if the 9/11 pilots conceived of their acts as such a heroic gesture whose aim was to destroy the empire of the evil? The movie condenses the self-conception of the terrorists.

Throughout this article we showed that terror and its adversary mirror each other. We have two networks that stand against, mimic and justify each other. We have two camps, each of which claims to be the good and to fight the evil. And we have two strategies, which dissolves the democratic habitus in a post-political condition. Thus Bin Laden's construction of the "Americans" perfectly mirrors Bush's representation of Al-Qaeda, and the rhetoric of extermination of the evil is what unites the two poles in spite of asymmetries (Johnson 2002: 223). A mental experiment might be helpful in this context. What if we universalise the right the USA proclaims for itself. What if Israel claimed the same right against the Palestinians, and India against Pakistan (Žižek 2002: 125-6)? Žižek mentions one of Bush's speeches where he refers to a letter written by a seven-year-old girl whose father is a fighter pilot in Afghanistan. In the letter she says that even though she loves her father, she is ready to sacrifice him for his fatherland. The question is how we would react if we on TV saw an Arabic Muslim girl who, in front of the camera, claims that she will sacrifice her father in the war against America. We need not think too long to find out that the scene would be received as an expression of fundamentalism or a morbid form of propaganda. The Muslim fundamentalists can even exploit their own children without hesitation (Žižek 2002: 43).

The point of such a dialectic reversal is not to make excuses for terrorism. As Rushdie writes, and at this point we agree, fundamentalists seek more than demolishing skyscrapers: they are the enemies of freedom of expression, democracy, the right to vote, Jews, men without a beard, homosexuals, women's rights, secularism, dance, and so on (Rushdie 2001). It is however central also to insist that the Western tradition is a tradition for democracy and criticism. Rather than undermining democracy in the war against terrorism we must support it; and rather than keeping away from criticising Bush's international policies in the name of patriotism and unity of the nation, we must criticise it mercilessly (Kellner 2002: 154-5). "Independence" could refer to independence in classical Kantian sense, namely as "selbstdenken": independent thinking. The ultimate catastrophe is the simple and simplifying distinction between the good and the evil, a rhetoric that basically copies the terrorist rhetoric (Zulaika 2002: 198) and makes it impossible to think independently. It is in this sense that the dominant paranoid perspective transforms the terrorists into abstract and irrational agents,

pushing aside every explanation that refers to social conditions as an indirect support for terrorism (Žižek 2002: 33).

To conclude, terrorism is basically a mirror to understand the contemporary post-political condition. Terror and the war against it tell something fundamental about the contemporary society. Are we to be content with a society in which the only radical acts - in the sense of fundamentally political acts - are terrorists' (Žižek 2002: 137)? Clausewitz wrote that the war is a continuation of politics with other means. Terror, then, is the continuation of post-politics with other means (see Bauman 2002: 94; Baudrillard 2002: 34).

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