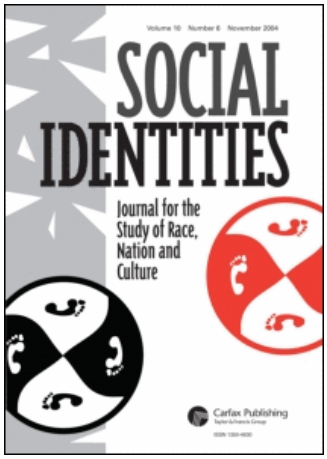

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Empire or Imperialism: implications for a 'New' politics of resistance

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Empire or Imperialism: Implications for a 'New' Politics of Resistance

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ABSTRACT: *Globalisation raises questions about the capacity of the nation-state to function within the national interest. Hardt and Negri argue that nation-state sovereignty is in decline and that Empire — a new supranational and deterritorialising form of sovereignty — has superseded it. The question then arises, where does sovereignty reside if it is no longer existent within the nation-state. It is here that post-colonial theory may well provide insights as post-colonial subjects have had to confront these issues. The following questions are explored through a critical engagement with recent social theory. What is the relationship between the biological and political body within such a context? Furthermore, what are the implications of this for a politics of resistance?*

I want to begin by reflecting on two personal issues precisely because of the broader implications that they raise about globalisation and sovereignty. These are my citizenship and my Sikh identity, both of which intersect in an obvious manifestation of empire, globalisation and diasporic identity. These two issues raise also the more fundamental questions about where sovereignty ultimately resides — that is, in the nation-state or in the body. In many ways, I might well be described as the consummate global citizen who has circulated among the nations of the Commonwealth. I was born a third generation Kenyan to parents of 'Indian' origin, hence my prominent Sikh identity. I went to Canada as a child, moved to Australia to study and ended up living there for the longest period of my life in any single country before moving to the metropolitan centre when I took up the Chair of Politics at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

As I reflect on my own movements around the Commonwealth, I am struck by how my identity has been continuously constructed and reconstructed in contrast with the identity that I may choose to imagine. What I find remarkable about this rootlessness, and to a certain extent uncomfortableness about belonging, is the manner in which I have been entrapped by those most obvious symbols of modernity — the passport and citizenship.

It is these two markers of identity that have followed me wherever I have gone. In Kenya, as an Asian Indian subject (note that in East Africa the term Indian was conflated with Asian), my Africanness was questioned. I was perceived as part of a settler class, albeit a settler class that was inferior to the

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Europeans who lived there. The sense of vulnerability despite my parents having been born there and being Kenyan citizens both by virtue of birth and the taking of formal citizenship at the time of independence, was only revealed in 1972 when Idi Amin in the neighbouring Commonwealth nation of Uganda expelled Asians regardless of their citizenship. This singular event no doubt marked the Asians of East Africa, and my parents migrated to Canada.

Canada and Saskatchewan of the 1970s brings back memories of my world turning upside down. I was no longer a *Singha Singha* (as I was refereed to in common parlance in Kenya) but was now part of a new community to which I never even knew I belonged — I 'became' East Indian. Remarkably, I was transformed from an Asian into an East Indian. I was immediately made an outsider. My African identity was all but erased as this new East Indian identity was thrust upon me.

I remember travelling to the UK and France with my parents a couple of years later and realising that as a Kenyan citizen my passport was a barrier to the places that I could travel without a plethora of visas and questions about my intent.[1] It seemed that everyone was worried that I was a threat, that I would overstay my welcome. My Kenyan identity, which had been transformed into East Indian, was I discovered, a further barrier to being a Commonwealth citizen. There was a certain caché in 'belonging' to the white settler colonies of the Commonwealth. This situation lay behind my parents' decision that I should become a Canadian citizen once I fulfilled the necessary residency requirements. I now had a new citizenship and was formally a Canadian. Having a Canadian passport meant that I was no longer forced to obtain visas in most of the Western world but at every border I was constantly reminded that I was not a 'normal' Canadian. Wherever I travelled, immigration officials were, and are, particularly keen to examine closely my passport — fearing, I suspect, that it may be forged.

In 1984, I went to Adelaide, Australia, to pursue my Ph.D. in African Studies. In Australia, no one ever doubted that I was an Indian. It was always a shock when I said that I was born in Kenya and had lived for many years in Canada. Just as in Canada, I was ascribed a new identity, this time Indian as opposed to East Indian. I had never lived in India and had only visited there as a very young child and yet, everywhere in the white settler colonies, I was an Indian. At best, I existed with a hyphenated identity — East Indian, Indo-Australian, British-Asian, etc.[2]

A few months after I arrived in Australia, I remember waking up one morning to the news that the Indian army under orders from the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, had attacked the Golden Temple at Amritsar. I remember a sense of nausea and baulked at the very idea that I was an Indian. Alone, amongst a very small Sikh community in Adelaide, I began to come to terms with the indignity that every Sikh felt at having their holiest shrine brutally invaded. Operation Bluestar, the Indian Army's code word for the attack, and the subsequent mass killings of Sikhs after the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, left an indelible mark not only on me but also on Sikhs everywhere. It was not until the next year when I went to India with my Australian wife that I was to discover that, as a Canadian East

Indian, I was perceived as a terrorist threat and was denied a visa to visit Punjab and the Golden Temple in Amritsar. I realised that my ascribed 'Indianness' in both Canada and Australia was meaningless. It was at this moment that my Sikh identity, which was always a part of me, came to the fore — indeed I was not an Indian, I was a Sikh regardless of the passport I carried. It was as Edward Said wrote, 'my uniquely punishing destiny' (Said, 1978). It mattered little that I always viewed myself as an African who practised the Sikh religion, who had a commitment to the continent and had, and continue to, dedicate my intellectual life to that project.

The Commonwealth, and moving amongst its various countries, clearly evokes a deep sense of the cosmopolitan nature of diasporic identity, a sense of rootlessness, mobility and indeed globalisation that has become characteristic of this post-modern, post-colonial world — one in which, some argue, nation-state boundaries and national sovereignty are being eroded. Yet, as I travel around the globe, I am constantly reminded about the demarcations that so clearly divide us, the borders that have been erected to keep us separate, and the power of citizenship and the passport — those formal markers of identity that can mean everything to an immigration officer at various border-posts around the world. I will return to these personal issues but let us turn now to consider the question of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* that is germane to this discussion of sovereignty.

Empire

It is now commonplace to speak of a global culture, the global village as well as the speed and spread of globalisation processes that are gripping the world. Globalisation is not an entirely new phenomenon. Nevertheless, new information, communication, transport and manufacturing technologies as well as trade regimes, effected through such multi-lateral organisations as GATT and tariff reductions, have allowed production, commerce and finance to be organised and operated on a global scale. The rise and spread of multi-national corporations operating across nation-state boundaries raises questions about the capacity of the state to function within the national interest. In addition, the mass migrations of peoples from different parts of the world have intensified. While there are considerable arguments for and against the extent and impact of globalisation, there is no denying that the phenomenon currently is on-going (Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1992; Wallerstein, 1990; Waters, 1995; Hoogvelt, 1997; Appadurai, 1990, 1996; Jameson and Miyoshi, 1998). Still, there is little agreement across disciplines on how to theorise globalisation. Malcolm Waters claimed that just as

> postmodernism was the concept of the 1980s, globalization may be the concept of the 1990s, a key idea by which we understand the transition of human society into the third millennium. (1995, p. 1)

It is this transition of human society that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) seek to understand in their book *Empire*. They assert that a new epoch has emerged that can be captured best by borrowing a term from classical

antiquity — empire. The term 'Empire' is meant to invoke the idea of the *imperium* or power as opposed to the idea of territorial acquisition that became integral to the way the term was thought of in relation to recent European empires such as the British and French empires. The idea of 'place', Hardt and Negri insist, belongs to the past, to modernity, whereas the transition to Empire signals a new 'space of imperial sovereignty' which 'in contrast, is smooth' (p. 190). In this new smooth space of Empire, 'there is no *place* of power — it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*' (p. 190). It is here that the multitude, supposedly mobile and innovative, can be free of the very constraints of modernity. Empire is not some form of reconstituted imperialism from a previous epoch; it is essentially a new form of rule. Hardt and Negri argue:

> Empire is materializing before our very eyes. Over the past several decades, as colonial regimes were overthrown and then precipitously after the Soviet barriers to the capitalist world market finally collapsed, we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges. Along with the global market and the global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule — in short, a new form of sovereignty. Empire is the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world. (p. xi)

Their project involves tracing the genealogy of sovereignty and its most obvious linkages to modernity. Modern sovereignty is linked inextricably with Europe where it emerged in conjunction with modernity itself. It was through the project of colonialism that modern sovereignty spread beyond the borders of Europe, rendering it as 'two coextensive and complementary faces of one development: rule within Europe and European rule over the world' (p. 70).

Modernity is from the very beginning seen as being in a state of crisis where the multitude comes into conflict with the forms of ordering authority. In contrast, under the new form of sovereignty, 'Empire is a mere apparatus of capture that lives only off the vitality of the multitude' (p. 62). This passage of sovereignty is best seen as a move towards immanence. The passage to Empire is the informatisation/modernisation of the economy that leads to the dominance of the world-market over the nation-state as the latter has little ability to contain the amorphous capacity of the dynamics of capital. It is this intensification that is indicative of immanence.

The significance of Empire is the very emergence of a global system of power. Hardt and Negri are adamant that the establishment of Empire is a progressive move and reject any political strategy that seeks to return power to the nation-state so that it can challenge global capital (p. 43). Central to their characterisation of Empire is the assertion that 'globalization … is really a condition of liberation of the multitude' (p. 52). The very formation of Empire is a '*response* to proletarian internationalism' (p. 51). As Tony Schirato and Jen Webb (2003) have noted so perceptively, for Hardt and Negri, globalisation *is* Empire.

There is little doubt that nation-states are finding it increasingly difficult to

combat the complex and often contradictory effects of globalisation. Hardt and Negri argue that nation-state sovereignty is in decline and that Empire — a new supranational and deterritorialising form of sovereignty — has superseded it. This new sovereignty is the terrain in which a new mode of critical and revolutionary action is carried out by the multitude. Their claim that there is no outside to Empire underscores the point that there is no capacity to organise resistance from the outside. Rather, a politics of resistance has to come from within it.

The spread of globalisation is desirable precisely because it creates the conditions conducive to an intensified resistance by the multitude. A new form of solidarity and militancy can be seen in varied struggles such as Tianenmen Square, the Intifada, the Chiapas, the race riots in Los Angeles, as well as the French and South Korean mass strikes. Although there seems to be little communication between these largely localised struggles 'in fact they all directly attack the global order of Empire and seek a real alternative' (2000, pp. 56–57).

Hardt and Negri argue, 'postcolonialist theory [is] a very productive tool for rereading history, but it is entirely insufficient for theorizing contemporary global power' (p. 146).[3] The end of colonialism and the diminishing powers of the nation 'are indicative of a general passage of the paradigm of imperial sovereignty' (p. 136). However, as Anthony Burke (2002) has noted it is the perverse perseverance of sovereignty that marks the end of formal colonial rule.

Susan Marks similarly challenges the notion of the irrelevance of postcolonial theory as a theoretical tool for understanding the contemporary post-colonial world. She reminds us that it is important to remember that, 'with deterritorialization comes reterritoriliazation, in the sense that old dichotomies shape the operations of the new more complex systems of domination' (2000, p. 464). Furthermore, she argues that Hardt and Negri themselves point out that the geographical and racial modes of oppression which were established during colonialism not only have not decreased but rather have increased exponentially (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 43). This suggests that rather than the post-colonial nation-state disappearing, it has most likely been restructured.

Partha Chatterjee interrogates closely the thesis that the nation-state's demise is inevitable and imminent. He argues that the so-called crisis of the nation-state can be attributed to two sets of arguments. The first concerns the inability of the state to govern effectively, that is, its inability to meet the 'welfare' needs of its population. The second outlines the

> decay or lack of appropriate civil-social institutions that could provide a secure foundation for a proper relationship between autonomous individual lives in society and the collective political domain of the state. (1998, p. 65)

It is this that explains the dictatorial and authoritarian role of the nation-state. Chatterjee argues that it is the collapse of these two arguments that in turn sets up a dichotomy between globality and modernity which nation-states are

unable to mediate. Rather, he points out that what is required are two kinds of mediation:

> one between globality and modernity, and the other between globality and democracy. The two, at least apparently, cannot be performed by the same set of institutions. (pp. 65–66)

For him, this is the current crisis of the nation-state. The way in which global modernity is being advanced is 'profoundly colonial' whereas the articulation of democracy 'will pronounce modernity itself as inappropriate and deeply flawed' (p. 68).

It is the awareness of these twin pressures that will permit any movement beyond the nation-state. It is precisely this dilemma that is most acutely highlighted by post-colonial theory and a point that Hardt and Negri fail to understand. It is in this context that Sanjay Seth (2002) asks how can they be sure that the forward march of globalisation is progressive and superior to what they are replacing.

Globalisation has illustrated most vividly the insatiable desire for Western consumer goods that pervades the post-colonial world. It was the failure of the Left to account for this desire in the former communist world that rendered its theoretical elaborations most problematic. Adam Smith argued that it was the role of commodities that distinguished between 'civilised' and 'barbarous' nations. An abundance of 'objects of comfort' was the litmus test that distinguished 'civilized and thriving nations' from 'savage' ones, 'so miserably poor' they were reduced to 'mere want' (1776, p. lx). The purpose of destroying barbarism was to create consumption through what Smith called desire — which is central to capitalism and becomes its most important export. Paradoxically, it is the maintenance of different levels of consumption that remain the real markers of difference between nations. The greatest weakness of *Empire,* Crystal Bartolovich points out, is the desire of commodities and the patterns of consumption between and within nations:

> For consumerism indicates why there is still an investment in the 'people' of certain nation-states, or groups of nation-states (EU), seen as interest blocs — in a continued 'boundedness', not predicated merely on Freud's 'narcissism of minor differences' manipulated to the benefit of elites, but on the protection of real generalized privilege. There might not be any 'outside' of capital, but there is definitely an outside to those who benefit from it, relatively and absolutely. (p. 182)

It is this logic of contemporary patterns of consumption that ensures that there is a certain investment in the maintenance of boundaries between people and groups of people who reside in the post-colonial world. Global inequality, Bartolovich argues,

> is *directly* a function not only of 350 or so billionaires, the captains of industry, the heads of wealthy states, but of considerable swathes of the *settled* population in the 'developed' countries who benefit from the status quo at great cost to others. (p. 195)

In a similar vein, Tina Rosenberg wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*, 'so far globalization has failed the world's poor. But it's not trade that has hurt them. It's a rigged system' (as cited in Brenan, 2003, p. 204). Hence, it is not surprising that Benita Parry has argued that, 'where inequalities persist, so do borders remain in place and so are flows of population, cultures and socialities distorted' (2003, p. 302).

It is this maintenance of borders and boundaries between the Western and the post-colonial world as well as the deep investment in and persistence of identity politics with which I began this paper, that raises problems that are simply not dealt with adequately by Negri and Hardt. The question then arises, where does sovereignty reside if it is no longer existent within the nation-state. It is here that post-colonial theory may well provide insights because post-colonial subjects have had to confront these issues. In order to reflect on these questions, it is important to turn to Giorgio Agamben and his discussion of *Homo Sacer*.

Homo Sacer and the Paradox of Sovereignty

The term *homo sacer* refers to the juridical category of ancient Roman law where someone who has committed a crime cannot be sacrificed for that crime. It was from the Roman writer Pompeius Festus that we learn that what is critical about *homo sacer* is that although 'it is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide' (as cited in Agamben, 1998, p. 71). Giorgio Agamben traces this idea throughout Western political thought and argues that it represents a key element of sovereign power. The paradox of sovereignty is that:

> The life caught in the sovereign ban is the life that is originally sacred — that is, that may be killed but not sacrificed — and, in this sense, the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty. The sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both life's subjection to a power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment. (p. 83)

The paradox of sovereignty 'consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order' (p. 15). That is, the sovereign who has the legal power to proclaim a state of exception, in the Schmittian sense, is legally also placed outside the law. Agamben explains that the exception is a type of exclusion where, 'the exclusion from the general rule is an individual case' (p. 17). However, what is excluded is not without relation to the rule. The state of exception, he argues, 'is thus not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension' (p. 18).

A link then is established between sacredness, sovereignty and life, where sovereignty functions to delimit a zone of indistinction that constitutes life as sacred. This sacredness, however, is not linked to any divine notions of sacrifice. Davide Panagia notes,

> sovereign power and bare life are linked precisely because it is sovereignty that constitutes a life as bare through the foundation of a zone of indistinction. (1999, p. 1)

Bare life for Agamben is before the law and as such only can be taken without being sanctioned by the law. Such a bare life is, he argues, manifested in that Foucaultian notion of biopower.[4] Bare life is, in short, the object of that power.

As Peter Fitzpatrick points out, Agamben offers two ways of thinking about what constitutes modern bare life and its relationship to sovereign power:

> One mode is that of the totality, a mode in which the pall of bare life/sovereignty is about to encompass all in a 'catastrophe'. Even now, 'homo sacer is virtually confused with the citizen' and politics has been 'totally transformed into biopolitics', so much so that it is no longer possible to differentiate 'between our biological body and our political body' … The other mode of conceiving of bare life/sovereignty comes with its varied instantiation — in 'the camp', refugees, *zones d'attentes*, and others — added to the rendering of one of them, 'the camp' as paradigm. (2001, pp. 11–12)

It is the inability to differentiate between our biological body and our political body that raises questions about where sovereignty ultimately resides. If one has no confidence in the sovereign or rather if the sovereign power is seen to be illegitimate as it was for colonial subjects, where does sovereignty lie? What is the relationship between the biological and political body within such a context? Furthermore, what are the implications of this for a politics of resistance? It is with this in mind that we need to engage with Achille Mbembe's recent intervention, 'Necropolitics'.

'Necropolitics' and the Politics of Resistance

Mbembe's central problematic is to ascertain the relationship between politics and death in those systems that can function only in a state of emergency or a state of exception. He shows how the trope of death operates in the formulation of one being rendered a subject through an exploration of the very 'work of death'.[5] Foucault's formulation of biopower appears to function through dividing people into those who must live and those who must die. For Foucault, it was the Nazi state that constituted the most comprehensive example of a state exercising its right to kill. The manner in which the imaginary of sovereignty operates under modernity is along the lines that my life is threatened by the existence of the other, which means that in order to secure the potential of my life and security it is necessary to kill the other. This means that

> the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who may die. Hence, to kill or to allow to live constitutes the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes. (Mbembe, 2003, pp. 11–12)

Politics in the age of late capitalism is underpinned by the concept of reason that is critical to both the 'project of modernity and the topos of sovereignty'. Politics in such a configuration is 'a project of autonomy and the achieving of agreement among a collectivity through communication and recognition' (p. 13). It is precisely such a politics of reason that demarcates the civilised from the barbarian and what differentiates politics from a state of war.[6] However, as Agamben has illustrated, in a state of exception or in a zone of indistinction the very lines between the sacredness of life and the proliferation of death are extremely blurred.

Mbembe seeks to understand how 'contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death (necropolitics) profoundly reconfigure the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror' (p. 39). He sums up his project arguing that the notion of necropolitics and necropower are aimed at understanding how

> weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of peoples and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*.

Furthermore, under these conditions, 'the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred' (p. 40).

Mbembe explores different sites of exception that have a bearing on our discussion of sovereignty. One of the first instances of biopolitical experimentation was slavery. The plantation system was itself a paradoxical figure of the state of exception. Slave life was in many ways a form of death-in-life. For the system to operate, it was essential that the slave did not have any capacity for agency. The very existence of a slave was a form of social death where the master had complete power over the slave, to the extent that his or her life could be taken at the will of the master.[7] The very existence of the slave was a condition of loss, a

> loss of a 'home', loss of right over his or her body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical with absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether). (Mbembe, 2003, p. 21)

Another obvious site of exception is the colony, which in modern European thought and practice 'represents the site where sovereignty consists fundamentally in the exercise of a power outside the law' (p. 23). The designation of the colony as a site of exception demonstrates in Schmittian terms the definition of sovereignty. Colonies are:

> … zones in which war and disorder, internal and external figures of the political stand side by side or alternate with each other. As such, the colonies, are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended — the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of civilization. (p. 24)

Perhaps the most extreme example of contemporary necropower, Mbembe argues, is the colonial occupation of Palestine where 'sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not' (p. 27). The Palestinian case 'is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopoliotical, and necropolitical' — a lethal combination providing the 'colonial power an absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory' (p. 29).

It is this absolute domination, whether in the case of the slavery, the colony or the Palestinian occupation, that renders the subject powerless — where living in these situations is like living in a death world. That is, to live in such a world is to be socially dead. Sovereignty in these death worlds resides in what the subject considers an illegitimate power — the master, the coloniser — who has the ultimate power to decide between who can live and who can die. In living a life of unfreedom of being socially dead, there is no capacity for agency. The only agency that is possible is to be found in the very act of actual death. Actual death as opposed to social death is the very instance where agency itself can be exercised.[8] This capacity for agency has been acknowledged by Paul Gilroy who argues that, in those slaves who committed either individual or mass suicide when confronted by slave catchers, death can be seen as being representative of agency — precisely because it is over death that one has power (1993, p. 63).

Political Violence and Resistance

Globalisation, Etienne Balibar points out, has brought in its wake '*the new visibility of extreme violence*' largely due to modern techniques of media coverage and broadcasting (2001, p. 23). What is important about Balibar's observation is that the globalisation of this extreme violence has resulted in a world that can be characterised by life-zones and death-zones. It is between these zones that there has been an appearance of 'a decisive and fragile superborder, which raises fears and concerns about the unity and division of mankind — something like a global and local 'enmity line', like the 'amity line' which existed in the beginning of the modern European seizure of the world' (p. 24). While we may well be in the midst of certain developments that are challenging the sovereignty of the nation-state, including forms of international terrorism, it is important to remember that it is the existence of these life and death zones that produce and reproduce conditions which are akin to the very zones of exception such as slavery and colonial occupation that gave rise to certain forms of agency of which death is the both most gruesome and powerful.

If we were to remove ourselves from the context of the 9/11 attacks, it is not difficult to see that terrorism is not the worst kind of violence nor does it necessarily result in the greatest loss of life as in the case of a war. Indeed, if one looks at the current *intifada* there are far more Palestinians who have lost their lives at the hands of the Israeli military than Israelis themselves. What is remarkable in the post 9/11 world is that to talk of suicide bombing has itself become a taboo subject. If one broaches the subject, one is treated with suspicion and outrage. For example, when a British M.P. spoke out recently,

pointing out vehemently that although she condemned the practice, she could nevertheless understand why Palestinian youth took this route — given their deplorable conditions — she was immediately challenged and shunned by her parliamentary colleagues and vilified by the media. She, of course, was not alone in feeling the effects of this new policing and the political risk of speaking out against the injustices being endured by Palestinians.[9]

Colonialism has always entailed resistance, often violent resistance. The anti-colonial resistance of Fanon and Gandhi entailed certain violence regardless of their methodologies — the very reversal of the colonial order that they sought was violent (Ahluwalia, 2003). As Edward Said noted, to

> ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the past century. (1993, pp. xxii–xiii)

The ANC in South Africa, for example, under Nelson Mandela, engaged in such a campaign of violence as a means to end apartheid. It is ironic that Nelson Mandela, a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, advocated violent resistance to attain liberation. Moreover, it is important to recognise that this global icon of reconciliation never renounced what he considered was the legitimate right to political violence when all other means had failed. What is particularly interesting, is the politics of how one can go from being a convicted terrorist leader to a universally revered global leader or indeed as in the case of Yasser Arafat despite his Nobel Peace Prize be reclassified a 'terrorist'. What is significant about Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Yasser Arafat, leaders who sought or are seeking justice and freedom for their people, is that their place in history is in part the result of the configurations and machinations of global power politics and the legitimacy or illegitimacy of sovereign power against which they exercised their different modes of resistance.

The phenomenon of suicide bombings is by no means new or unique to Islam, as is often portrayed in the media. It is a practice that has been widely deployed as an effective weapon in war. An obvious example is that of the Japanese kamikaze pilots of the Second World War who chose to die in honour of their country. John Seery notes that:

> Most of us Westerners view non-Western cases of political suicide as culturally pathological, and we generally, lump together 'terrorists', guerrilla fighters, *sati* and *satyagrahaas* crazed fanatics. Joyous Day of the Dead celebrations we discuss as dark-skinned exotica. (as cited in Euben, 2002, p. 8).

Hilal Khashan's empirical study of Palestinian suicide bombing (PSB) unsurprisingly reveals that political Islam was indeed a factor in one being prone to suicide bombing,

> especially among refugee camp inhabitants, where dismal poverty coa-

> lesces with radical Islam. Disposition to partaking in suicide attacks cannot take place without provocation that produces intolerable frustration. (2003, p. 1064)

We might well ask then what makes PSB particularly repugnant? Is it merely the fact that their targets are often civilians? Ghassan Hage explains:

> The PSBs disrupt the ability of the colonizers to consolidate a 'normal peaceful life' inside the colonial settler state of Israel. As such they do not respect the Israeli colonizer's division of labor between the military who engage in protecting and facilitating the process of colonization and the civilian population who can peacefully enjoy the fruits of this process. Furthermore, the practice is condemned and considered socially pathological because it involves what anthropologists call *self-sacrifice* on the part of the perpetrators. (2003, pp. 68–69)

The manner in which we approach PSBs and anti-colonial violence differently is indicative of the

> symbolic violence that shapes our understanding of what constitutes ethically and politically illegitimate violence. Indeed, the fact that the terrorist groups never classify themselves as terrorists, instead calling themselves revolutionaries, martyrs, nationalists or freedom fighters, is an indication of the depth of this symbolic violence. (p. 72)

We have pointed out that in the death world of the contemporary colonial occupation of Palestine, the Palestinian subject has to accept the reality of living as socially dead with little or no agency and the inability to challenge what they consider an illegitimate sovereign power. It is in this context that we need to think about why it is that Palestinian youth (across the gender divide) embrace a culture of suicide bombing. The ability to face one of the most formidable military machines with rocks and to risk death is to accumulate the highest cultural capital — whose ultimate expression lies in death as a mode through which life itself is given meaning. Hage explains that the PSBs,

> become a sign that Palestinians have not been broken. They are a sign of life. For what better sign of life is there, in such violent conditions, than the capacity to hurt despite the greater capacity of the other to hurt you. (p. 74)

The point is that Palestinian suicide bombings are a terrible curse and social evil with profound and horrific consequences for both the victims and the Palestinians, who in turn face further violence as the Israeli state engages in a politics of retribution and recrimination. But they should also be a reminder that evil

> resides more in certain social conditions of life where the possibilities of a meaningful life are shrinking, rather than in the individuals trying to survive in such conditions. (Hage, 2003, pp. 88–89)

In the wake of September 11 and the globalisation of violence, Susan Buck-

Morss's (2003) intervention is particularly helpful. She argues that what Hardt and Negri fail to deal with is the problem of the legitimate use of violence — which is absolutely central to the very question of sovereignty. She argues that, 'the hope that a felicitously reconstituted 'post-modern' sovereignty will come about as a new paradigm of power … now seems clearly overly optimistic' (p. 36).

She sets out to examine how the Left can think past terror. In reflecting on the attacks on the twin towers, she notes that Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma city bomber, who was executed in 2000, and the events of September 11 were not allowed to be connected because 'to relate them is to acknowledge the global, rather than domestic, context of political acts' (2003, p. 27). Rather than dealing with the complexity of the message of September 11, that very complexity was reduced simply by George Bush to the proclamation that 'you are with us or against us'.[10] For Buck-Morss, there are two Americas — a democratically elected republic under threat since the Bush election and the security state that always requires an enemy.[11] For the US security state, the biggest threat is that the enemy might disappear. It has to constantly reinvent enemies, which paradoxically means 'that the undemocratic state claims absolute power over the citizens of a free and democratic nation' (p. 29).

Global capitalism needs to be evaluated much like the US security state — it is paradoxical because

> on the one hand, it is the very foundation of the whole possibility of a global public sphere. On the other hand, because it thrives on uneven development and the lack of universal rights within that sphere, it continues to be an indefensible system of brutal exploitation of human labor and nature's labor. (p. 36)

A globalisation that increasingly divides the world between what Balibar calls life-zones and death-zones, a globalisation that operates through furthering the interests of a hegemonic power, and that operates with duplicity and double standards, is unlikely to lead to new forms of sovereignty as envisaged by Hardt and Negri. As Buck-Morss points out:

> Democracy means treating people democratically. If we in the West find that under present economic, political and cultural arrangements of power we cannot do without danger to our own existence, then the defense of democracy demands not military force, but a radical questioning of these power arrangements. (p. 52)

The task of creating a global sphere where the multitude can indeed operate in a new mode of critical and revolutionary action is to recognise that the system of consumption in which the West has a parasitical relationship with the post-colonial world has to change. As long as post-colonial subjects are not allowed true freedom from the very death worlds in which they have been entrapped, they will increasingly encroach on the West's freedom. As Walter Benjamin noted:

> Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the tri-

> umphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate … There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. (as cited in Buck-Morss, 2003, p. 104)

Conclusion

For Carl Schmitt, all political actions and intentions could be summed up in the distinction between friend and enemy. Politics itself was underpinned by the notion that it was possible to kill without hate. The politics of commitment whether motivated by religion or indeed by a secular cause meant that one could, and did, transcend oneself to kill the *public enemy*. The politics of consumption that has created such a wide gulf between the West and the majority of post-colonial subjects is producing a different configuration of power and a different sort of politics — a politics that increasingly looks like that of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* — where a war machinery kills without fear of being held responsible. Whilst most in the West are unwilling to transcend themselves, to die in a war for the nation or indeed their convictions, those trapped in death worlds, largely the making of the West, seem all the more prepared to embrace a Schmittian mode of politics. In such a configuration, the very question of sovereignty and resistance cannot be reduced to that of an all-encompassing multitude. As Bashir Abu-Manneh points out, the irony of Hardt and Negri's position is that,

> after presenting Empire as a realm 'beyond politics' they end up advocating a reformist sort of politics — like the right to global citizenship, a social wage, and the right of reappropriation. (2003, p. 171)

Whilst such a reformist agenda is welcome, the present reality, as I pointed out, is one that entraps post-colonial and diasporic subjects within a web of citizenships, passports and ascribed identities.

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Notes

1. It is important to note that the policing of the borders has been heightened with the perceived influx of refugees. In Australia, refugees have not been allowed to enter the mainland, with extra-territorial zones of exception established to deal with the issue. The idea of hospitality and responsibility to refugees seems to have been all but eroded.

2. The question of this hyphenated identity and the fact that people of colour do not have the choice to lose the hyphen are explored in 'When Does the Settler Become A Native'. See Ahluwalia, 2001.
3. I do not have the space here to engage fully with Hardt and Negri's reading of post-colonial theory that they seem to equate essentially with Homi Bhabha. For a fuller discussion, see Ahluwalia, 2001a and Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001.
4. Tony Schirato and Jen Webb define biopower as 'The technologies, knowledges, discourses, politics and practices used to bring about the production and management of a state's human resources. Biopower analyses, regulates, controls, explains and defines the human subject, its body and its behaviour. For Michel Foucault it is associated most particularly with official institutions that construct spaces and ways of regulating (and so producing) people — schools, hospitals and prisons (2003, p. 214; see also Foucault, 2003).
5. It should be noted that although Mbembe's notion of 'becoming subject' is arrived at very differently, it does bear some resemblance to Mahmood Mamdani's differentiation between citizen and subject. See Mamdani, 1996; Ahluwalia, 2001a.
6. It is this demarcation that underpins the very idea of Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' and the triumphalism of Fukuyama's end of history. See Huntington, 1996; Fukuyama, 1992.
7. Susan Buck-Morss explores the importance of slavery in Western thought and particularly in Hegel. See Buck-Morss, 2000.
8. I am deeply indebted to Abdul JanMohamed for this insight. This problematic is thoroughly worked out by him in his forthcoming book (2004) on Richard Wright.
9. In recent times, other prominent figures, including both Ted Turner and Cherie Blair, were similarly also silenced and forced to apologise for their views.
10. John Kelly has made some interesting observations about the flag and American patriotism. Like the tattered flags flying on cars he suggests 'patriots face the guilty problem of deciding when enough is enough, and how to dispose of their own decayed fetish of love, hate, and unfocussed will' (2003, p. 368).
11. On the invention of an enemy, see Ahluwalia and Sullivan, 2000.

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