

Guantanamo/Belmarsh and the Horror of Performative Memes

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Abstract: Both the US and the UK societies are split in every imaginable way and yet they are extremely powerful. Both have two coexisting and mutually antagonistic democracies, the populist and the liberal. Both have developed two simultaneous and contradictory forms of government: one that upholds human rights and the rule of law and another that uses the concept of national security and the secret services to make sure that suspected terrorists can be eliminated offstage and without trial – with UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles). This paper traces the development of US/UK's Janus-faced democracy by focusing on the legacy of two pieces of legislation which were drafted as a reaction to the 9/11 attacks: the USA PATRIOT Act 2001 and the UK Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001.

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1. INTRODUCTION

I have to confess that 9/11 and Usuk's¹ reaction to it appeared to me as if an evil genius had been sent to perform black magic, and the magic trick was the recovery of a this-world transcendence for fascism, Nazism, and other forms of totalitarianism. Let me get poetic here, for what I am about to say is too horrific to say it in academic prose:

Unsuspectedly from the bottom of democracy's fountain, something bitter rises up: a touch of nausea, a whiff of blood, a music that sounds like baby cries, the trembling reflection of thousands of refugees. Ephemeral and immaterial as these sensations might be, they bring, with appalling convincingness, feelings of doom coming from a darker region. The dark world of the spy agencies, with its hit lists, drone strikes and secret operations, requires a very thick skin and a certain independence from parliamentary control. But, above all, it requires a guarantee of continuity against changes in policies caused by democratic elections. If the secret services can adapt procedures and self-presentation in order to repair their credibility after the faulty intelligence that led to the Iraq war and the revelations of mass-surveillance by Snowden, why

¹ In my poems, essays and stories, the US and the UK are two countries incarnated in one biblical Usuk. A descendant of Goliath, Usuk stands alone and against the concept of civilisation and the rest of the countries of the world. The fact that Israel's special relation with God had to be proved using a giant's death meant not only that David by himself had little chance of defeating Goliath but also that the giant had magical or demonic powers which could not be overcome by human intervention alone. Perhaps this is why David said to Goliath, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, whom you have defied . . . today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air . . . and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel . . . it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands.' 1 Samuel 17: 45-47.

should they worry about the future? The truth is: they can survive forever! Any other private or public institution besieged by such high-profile scandals and facing similar levels of failure would have collapsed years ago.

Since 9/11, failure has stamped the spy agencies at every turn. The merrier the rule of law, the warmer and more sparkling parliament's law-making and the judges' application by day, the ruddier the bonfires in the wilderness of national security by night, and the more poignant the sadness with which one must take in the meaning of terrorism as a total situation, for whatever else the spy agencies are intended to do, they are not intended to succeed: failure is the terrorist act allotted. There's nothing new in that. What's new is the new world order triggered by that disproportionate reaction to an act of terror.² About 14 years ago, when Tony Blair and George Bush, the leaders of Usuk, flew east to punish those who destroyed the Twin Towers, they threw all of us into the scales of the balance against a worthless act.

The worrying thing is that neither Blair nor Bush were thought to be mad. And when they sacrificed the rule of law to rid their armies of that putrid east wind of decomposing children, rendition operations and other forms of torture were authorised.³ Some high judges got upset and called torture a monstrous act.⁴ But kidnapping, rape, enhanced interrogation techniques, incarceration and killing seemed to cheer up their demoralised armies. Anyway, all that is in the past. The victory is Usuk's. A good enough end was secured. Yet victory has come at a price none of us can pay. The disproportionality of the attack is now embedded in the social fabric of those bellicose nations, like a curse. And the best that they can think and say is permanently bent, twisted and unbalanced, though nobody seems to notice. An asymmetry of blood has found its way into their moral code, so men are killing women⁵, whites are killing blacks⁶, the day is killing

² On the morning of 11 September 2001, four commercial airplanes travelling over the US were hijacked. The first and second airplane crashed into the North and South towers of the World Trade Center, respectively, resulting in their collapse. The third airplane crashed into the southwest side of the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. And the fourth airplane crashed in Stoney Creek Township, Pennsylvania. These crashes resulted in the deaths of 2,972 persons in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

³ MI6 and CIA were involved in clandestine abductions and incarcerations that led to suspected extremists being tortured. It is now public knowledge that the former head of MI5, Eliza Manningham-Buller, caused a rift with MI6 because their renditions operations abroad not only compromised the security and safety of MI5 spies and their informants at home but also put a question mark over our efficiency as a 'domestic' agency in a globalised world. A letter was recently discovered by investigators examining whether British Intelligence officers should face criminal charges over the rendition of an exiled Libyan opposition leader, Abdul Hakim Belhaj. The letter is from the head of MI5, Eliza Manningham-Buller, to the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Manningham-Buller was writing to complain to the Prime Minister for his policy of authorising MI6 agents to aid and abet the CIA in abductions that led to suspected extremists being tortured. Mr Belhaj was seized in Bangkok in March, 2004 in a Usuk rendition operation, and handed over to the CIA. He was tortured and injected with truth serum before flying him and his family to Tripoli to be interrogated by Gaddafi's henchmen. British MI6 agents can be neither charged nor prosecuted because they were following government policy.

⁴ In the UK, politicians had to placate the Law Lords who had revelled against Tony Blair's government for its rendition and incarceration policies. The most serious condemnation or revolt by the judiciary against a UK government in recorded history was the Belmarsh decision led by Lord Bingham of Cornhill – more formally known as *A v. Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2004] UKHL 56.

⁵ In the UK two women are killed each week by their partner or ex-partner. And nearly 20 women per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the US. At least a third of all women murdered in the US are killed by male partners, according to *The Huffington Post*, 10 September 2014.

⁶ The oppression of black people, and their exclusion from 'real' citizenship by a vicious cycle of racial conflict, deprivation and disillusionment, has been advocated freely and destructively through the killings of black people by the police in both the US and the UK. This has often led to riots. According to Wikipedia, 'between 6 and 11 August 2011, thousands of people rioted in several London boroughs and in cities and towns across England. The resulting chaos generated looting, arson, and mass deployment of police.' The 2011 London riots were blamed on the unlawful killing of Mark Duggan by the police. And young black men killed by US police was at its highest rate in the year 2015 with 1,134 deaths, according to the Guardian newspaper. See *The Guardian*, 31 December 2015. There were riots in the US too, when an unarmed black teenager called Michael Brown was killed by Darren Wilson, a white cop in Ferguson, Missouri, on 9th August, 2014. There are contrasting stories about what happened to Brown. Some say he was another victim of police brutality. Others considered him an aggressive bully who had robbed a convenience store and then attacked a policeman who was acting in self-defence. Even more troubling than Darren Wilson's of Ferguson is the case of Daniel Pantaleo, a NY police officer, who killed Eric Garner in Staten Island on 17th July, 2014. The video of Garner's arrest shows a frustrated man resisting arrest for a very minor crime – selling cigarettes that lack the requisite stamps. Garner (height: 6-foot-3; weight: 350 pounds) is forcibly brought down by four officers while he shouts: 'I can't breathe.'

the night, and reason is killing passion. Those classic binary oppositions which we used to take for granted are now coming back with a vengeance none of us can afford.⁷

None of us can afford now the decision taken 14 years ago to invade Iraq under Tony Blair and George Bush. Blair told us then, with great conviction and solemn gaze, that Saddam could attack us in 45 minutes⁸. He told us that to take no action in Iraq would be suicidal, that one couldn't stand aside, that there was a plan to introduce democracy after the invasion, and that the intelligence agencies had given him sound proof that there were weapons of mass destruction. Similar arguments were put forward by politicians on both sides of the Atlantic for the removal of Gaddafi and Assad. The collapse of Libya could be blamed on intelligence blunders and the lack of a coherent strategy for the aftermath of removing Gaddafi. As the country collapsed into a power vacuum, Isis seized control of part of the country while people-smugglers made fortunes by sending migrants towards Europe in rickety boats.⁹ Because adaptability to the information age is both an asset for survival and an existential threat, the most common work done by the agencies these days is not fighting terrorism but fabricating it – or is it a form of project management?¹⁰ It is as if spies could only come alive through their blunders, their misdeeds, and their lost opportunities. In the end being secretive, unaccountable and unknown to the public, is part and parcel of being a failure.

Yet the secret services aim for success and expect continuity without ever having to bother about its binary opposite: rupture. Their shocking transformation from being the heroes of the cold war to becoming liabilities to progress and civilisation has been marked by both their inability to admit that they have crossed a red line¹¹ by fabricating terrorism and their refusal to recognise the point at which they have ceased to be useful to the maintenance and expansion of democratic freedoms. The spy agencies, without any concern for the safety of civilians, simply concentrate on the engineering of systems that generate complacency at home and minimise rupture abroad – particularly in countries where human rights violations coexist with a lack of rule-of-law democracy.

The spy agencies might be at the height of their powers. But they are dying too, very slowly and in great agony, in some paranoid schizophrenic world so remote from ordinary human experience that not even the biggest scandal or the most horrific killing can damage them further. It is as if the polonium 210 used by the secret services to kill a Russian spy¹²

⁷ Hélène Cixous proposed a classic set of binaries (Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night) under the question 'Where is she?' See Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties', in *New French Feminisms: an Anthology, translated and edited with introductions by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron* (London: Harvester Press, 1981), p. 90.

⁸ On 24 September 2003, the UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made the following claim in Parliament: 'Saddam has existing and active military plans to use chemical and biological weapons, which could be activated within 45 minutes'. That afternoon, London's *Evening Standard* carried the headline: '45 minutes from attack'. The following day, 25 September 2003, *The Sun* newspaper had this headline: 'Brits 45 mins from doom'.

⁹ There have been thousands of deaths by drowning in the Mediterranean since the beginning of the refugee crisis, driven by a destructive mix of conflict and violence in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and other regions of North Africa. But it took one searing image to produce an evident change in public opinion in Usuk and indeed around the world: the body of a little Syrian boy called Aylan Kurdi found on a beach in Turkey. Less than one month before, David Cameron was happily referring to refugees from the Middle East as a 'swarm'; since that picture of one dead white child washed up on a Turkish beach appeared on newspaper front pages, Cameron had been backtracking on refugee policy so fast that he was in danger of giving his game away. 'We are proposing that Britain will take 20,000 refugees,' he announced to loud cheers in Parliament on Monday 7 September 2015. A psychotic society like Usuk would not react to the 'Many' who have already died: it would react to 'One' under the rule One/Many_exception/rule together with One/One_a(=)a which translates into a dead white toddler (a) being more or less like (=) the a-live white toddler (a/b binarised as 'a') at home – one who could be your own son.

¹⁰ For the practice by Western powers of fabricating terrorism abroad see Jeremy Keenan, *Report on In Amenas: Inquest Cover-up and Western Involvement in Algerian State Crimes* (London: International State Crime Initiative, Queen Mary University of London, 2016). For state-funded terrorism in the pre-digital age, see Daniele Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London & New York: Frank Cass, 2005).

¹¹ Is it a red line or a white one? Indeed, it can be argued that the secret services involvement in terrorism's manufacturing process is, paradoxically, the most effective way to contain it.

¹² The Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko was poisoned in November 2006 during a meeting at a Mayfair hotel in London. He died three weeks later. Tests revealed that he ingested a rare isotope, polonium 210, which is very hard to obtain and even harder to detect. Those who wish to go into the details of one of the most horrific killings in recent history can read the written report of the £2.3m six-month public inquiry led by Sir Robert Owen, the High Court judge.

was just there as a red signal for the public to realize the cruelty, the hollowness, and the darkness of contemporary spying. There they are, can you see them? Hollow men poisoning each other behind an unarmed crowd – seemingly the leading actors of a theatre piece played to a selected audience behind closed doors; so, after the performance, these VIPs can boast to the rest: ‘If you’ve seen what I’ve seen!’¹³ But in reality spies are not actors but absurd puppets pushed to and fro by the will of the grey power behind. When professional spies turn tyrants through bribery, kidnapping, rendition and red-flag operations, torture or assassination, it is their own freedom that they destroy. They become hollow, posing dummies, the typified figures of a James Bond movie. Still, people deserve to know why the spy the agencies are both dying and thriving at the moment. Of course, they have been emboldened by snoopers’ charters.¹⁴ But the main reason, I believe, for their increasing power is the combination of two favourable political environments, one abroad and another at home.

Let me begin with political hybridity at home. In previous Western history, periods dominated by a hate for the foreigner, the Jew, the Muslim, and the outsider, were immediately followed by the opposite trend, or periods when the finger was pointed at the powerful – especially, from the 1960s onwards, at the government and the intelligence agencies (JFK, Watergate). We are, clearly, in an unprecedented hybrid situation at the moment, because anti-establishment feeling (Brexit/Trump) coexists with a deep distrust of Muslims. Conspiracy theories are thriving and multiplying at the moment thanks to a lack of transparency whenever ‘national security’ is invoked. Mystery and secrecy still surround all matters relating to the intelligence agencies. Often the whole Muslim community is blamed for terrorist atrocities committed by a few extremists. And no one can come up with sound arguments to disprove this outrageous claim because the evidence is being excluded from the Data Commons¹⁵. In our information society, where data can be more precious than gold, the spy agencies are allowed to deplete the national patrimony by deliberately hiding and removing vital information. How many more years we have to put up with this absurd situation?

2. PSYCHOTIC SOCIETY¹⁶

Usuk’s psychotic society is built on very sharp contradictions. Although there cannot be a united stand in Usuk’s society because its members seem to have developed a separate kind of hate for the government and its secret agencies on the one hand¹⁷ and for Muslims on the other, there is nevertheless a totally artificial and synthetic unity which I have theorised as One¹⁸. The horror and beauty of One is that it makes most members of Usuk highly dependent on information and

See *The Litvinenko Inquiry: Report into the death of Alexander Litvinenko* by Sir Robert Owen. Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 26 of the Inquiries Act 2005. Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 21 January 2016.

¹³ Whichever side you are on the debate on ‘national security’, I think you ought to be properly informed. And this elite (that is entitled to see things the rest of society is not allowed to see) ought to be forced to disclose what it is that they have seen which you haven’t.

¹⁴ The *Draft Communications Data Bill* (2012), the *Draft Investigatory Powers Bill* (2015), and the *Investigatory Powers Act* (2016) are nicknamed “snoopers’ charters” by their opponents. These are cutting-edge pieces of legislation that facilitate a transnational platform for online spying.

¹⁵ Data Commons is a term coined by Jane Yakowitz to designate anonymised research data comprised of the disparate and diffuse collections of data made broadly available to researchers with only minimal barriers to entry. See Jane Yakowitz, ‘Tragedy of the Data Commons’, in *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology*, Volume 25, Number 1, Fall 2011, pp. 1-67.

¹⁶ See Fred Perez, ‘Psychotic Society: An Introduction with a Glossary’ in *International Journal of social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 5:1, pp. 403-418.

¹⁷ After the 2009 financial crisis, the emergence of anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, anti-banks, and anti-globalisation movements have coincided with a growing access to the internet and an spectacular rise of social media networking thanks to new cloud technology and the Web 2.0. But this movement can be seen as a global electronic fabric of struggle of ambivalent political virulence – basically, it is reactionary slacktivism, which is neither dangerous nor threatening to the status quo. Two recent books that reflect such ambivalent anti-establishment struggle are *Revolution* (2014) by Russell Brand and *The Establishment* (2014) by Owen Jones.

¹⁸ The psychopathy of One can be expressed as: One/One is to a(=)a as One/Many is to exception/rule. a(=)a can be defined as the relationship ‘(=)’ between ‘a’ and ‘a’, where ‘a’ can be either ‘a’ or the delusional ‘a’ which is more like a ‘b’ and where ‘(=)’ being variable can be anything from ‘wanting to be’/ ‘more or less equal to’ / ‘not completely being’ to anything that can be similarly and randomly thought. ‘(=)’ implies that two things cannot be exactly the same unless there is an observer imagining that they are the same. The first [qualitative, a(=)a=One/One] relationship is related to the ‘identity’ component of the psychotic desire, mania or obsession for total equality as read from the I/eye. The second [quantitative, exception/rule=One/Many] relationship is related to the extreme/borderline ‘value’ of the psychotic

communication technologies for their survival while at the same time it gives them an enormous cohesive power. Usuk's psychotic society is split in every imaginable way and yet it is extremely powerful. They have two coexisting and mutually antagonistic democracies, the populist and the liberal. They have developed two simultaneous and contradictory forms of government: one that upholds human rights and the rule of law and another that uses the concept of national security and the secret services to make sure that suspected terrorists are eliminated without trial. In the end, the main moral issue that the systematic assassination of jihadis by UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) raises is the undemocratic totalitarian aggressiveness with which these men are treated – like prostitutes, offstage.

At various points in recent history, the West has been prepared to hold its nose and deal with Saddam, Gaddafi, Assad, Mubarak and many others considered too monstrous to be tolerated. As UK's Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond writing in *The Independent* euphemistically put it, this is 'our own, British way of promoting human rights abroad – a strategy in which relationships with the likes of Saudi Arabia are nurtured by quiet and continued engagement behind the scenes.'¹⁹ As the spy agencies' extrajudicial habits escalate and their taste for torture, violence, and secrecy grows more extreme, such rationalisations as 'our own British way' might be difficult to sustain. Whether extrajudicial snooping or illegal detention of suspects, whether lumping security into trade talks or killing jihadis with drones, all behind-the-scene manoeuvres by government officials should have their limits. And yet it is increasingly difficult to set up legal limits to the agencies in a shifting and hybrid political landscape.

The global political environment is changing in the spy agencies' favour. The expansion and consolidation of autocratic governments abroad have created a perfect storm where extrajudicial operations including abduction, torture, incarceration without trial and extrajudicial killings can be carried out without hindrance or challenge. Currently, there are 49 dictatorships in the world: 21 in Africa, 18 in Asia, 7 in the Middle East, 1 in Europe, and 2 in Central and South America.²⁰ Since 9/11, the global trend consists of human rights and freedoms ebbing away from the kind of liberal democracy that guarantees freedom of expression and religion; that defends minorities and strives towards gender equality; that upholds the rule of law and maintains the independence of the judiciary.

In less than sixteen years since 9/11, abuse, discrimination and the threat of violent assault have become a normal experience for Muslims in Usuk; antisemitism is growing in all monotheistic societies, and authoritarian regimes rule unchallenged in many parts of the globe. It is within this context of a general downward trend from liberalism to autocracy that I place the rise of the secret services as a powerful, reactionary and influential transnational force. For critics of Usuk's policies living in the UK, for example, the chances of being tortured, killed or tossed into jail are not too high. But the moment you put a foot outside their territory, you are at the mercy of friends and allies, who do not need to keep up the pretence of being the world's main benefactors and human rights' protectors in front of their own people.²¹

experience. It is about the rarity, uniqueness, exceptionality, oddity, scarcity, and life-changing potential of the psycho/semio experience. The I/eye is the site of sovereignty in a psychotic society; an imaginary point from which the moral code is read/shared and the binarised decision is taken.

¹⁹ *The Independent*, 10 December 2015.

²⁰ In Africa, there is a brutal dictatorship in Eritrea, a hyperreal autocracy in Algeria, a cruel regime in Ethiopia; genocide, starvation, and gang rape occur without hindrance in the Nuba Mountains of North Sudan while the horror and ugliness of war in engulfing South Sudan. 1.3 billion people in China have embraced capitalism but are still ruled by Xi Jinping, a one-party dictator who has little idea of what democracy and freedom mean. Thailand is under military rule. Burma is embarking on a hybrid democratic/military experiment which discriminates against Muslims and other non-Burmese ethnic groups. The current nationalistic/religious Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, seems to be succeeding in perpetuating his control over a vast and heterogeneous country with such populist policies as 'toilets first, temples later'. In the Middle East there are radically authoritarian and religious dictatorships in countries like Iran, Turkey and Egypt. The Saudis are killing civilians in Yemen with £3bn-worth of British-made weaponry. In Damascus, a butcher now resides in the presidential palace: Assad has ordered three times to use chemical weapons against his own people. And Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also called Isis, IS, Isol, Isil, and Daesh, aspires to control the world from their deserted caliphate, not before transforming it into a murderous, genocidal, suicidal, homophobic, sexist, and antisemitic purgatory. In Russia, President Putin has appealed to the power of imperialist nostalgia very successfully, annexing Crimea from Ukraine and allowing the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in politics. And then there is the rise of the extreme-right in Europe and America with its sad trend of xenophobia, Islamophobia and racism. From the fringes of democracy, a populist right-wing ideology is penetrating into the centre of politics (if there is such as thing), as exemplified by both Brexit in the UK and Trump's election victory in the US. Shall I go on?

²¹ Let me give you an example. Giulio Regeni disappeared on 25 January 2016 in Cairo, where he was researching independent trade unions for his PhD in Development Studies at the University of Cambridge, UK. On February 3rd his

The point I want to make here is that our psychotic society, our query-hungry society, is now evolving from being a culture that uses 'direct violence'²², torture and body-to-body confrontation into a culture of proxies that facilitates and procures the means for violent actions to be taken on their behalf by third party operators in non-psychotic societies where physical reality still has some value. The higher the number of non-psychotic countries that turn into dictatorships the easier it is for the spy services to find friends and allies that can serve as proxies. Current authoritarian and dictatorial regimes are unified by the fact that they can act on behalf of or instead of highly-developed rule-of-law democracies in their own local areas of influence, exerting physical force in exchange for aid, arms, information, money, or favours.²³

9/11 and the war on terror that followed might have strengthened the security services in many Western countries but have weakened the safety of their clients. The higher the body count of dead Muslims, the more enemies Usuk acquires around the world; likewise, the more Usuk spends on counter-terrorism the less effective their operations become. To spread the belief that the only kind of terrorism is the Muslim kind, the agencies must rely on the ideological manipulation of their clients by the media. Their simplistic reductionism tends to develop effects contrary to the political aim of achieving a lasting peace as the scope of counter-terrorist operations increases around the world. But this paradoxical effect is masked by governments assuming a therapeutic and compassionate image through foreign aid and charitable work.

In fact, most foreign aid is a vehicle for corruption. Spying and learning about foreigners are activities which least need manipulation and instruction by others. Spying abroad requires no teaching. Curiosity about exotic practices and curious customs is rather the result of unhampered participation in meaningful settings. Most people spy best by being 'in it'. Yet the government and its agencies force them to identify their own cognitive growth and interest with institutional funding, planning and professional manipulation. The spy agencies digitally enslave them, profoundly and systematically, since only the agencies are credited with the principal function of forming snooping judgement. Institutional spying touches diplomacy and international relations so intimately that no foreign secretary can expect to be liberated from it by something else. Once diplomats or foreign government officials have accepted the need for the spy agencies, they are easy prey to other institutional extravagances. The James Bond myth smothers the horizon of their diplomatic imaginations.

body was found bearing signs of severe torture which human rights groups say are the signs of the Egyptian security forces. We know that enforced disappearances and torture have become all too common in Egypt lately. So Giulio's case is not an isolated incident but part of broader state policy. Still, due to the watchful influence exerted by the CIA in Egypt, this question remains: By proxy, can Western powers be responsible for Giulio's death? Wasn't he on their watch?

²² Even though softer tactics such as cyberstalking, flaming, exclusion, outing, masquerading, and other forms of cowardly harassment online are increasingly substituting the old body-to-body confrontations, this assertion about 'direct violence' must be qualified by the fact that the only place in the world that can resist US rule now is Russia, and it's not a coincidence that Edward Snowden is hiding there. Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela offered to give him asylum. But they were not wise choices. The US wouldn't think twice about sending commandos into every country in the world, except Russia and, perhaps, China. All they need is the presidential authority and the GPS coordinates and they can kill anyone in the world within 72 hours.

²³ A paradigmatic example are the Kurds who, in exchange for fighting Isis in Syria and Iraq, have been given millions of pounds in aid and weapons. They have been armed and trained by the British conservative government acting within an old-fashioned but still potent imperialist framework where colonial soldiers used to bear the brunt of the fighting. It is sometimes suggested that ideology plays no real part in the devotion of British political leaders for Kurdistan; that the sole reason for the UK's persistent involvement in the area is to secure its oil resources. As I see it, this has never been more than an ideological/colonial fantasy of the kind which, now and then, when the country's morale is low, helps politicians to re-ignite the grandiosity of Empire, a previous time of glory when the Kurdish people could expect the support of the British in their right to self determination – a right promoted by Winston Churchill and Lord Curzon at the Cairo Conference (1921) and at the Treaty of Sèvres signed by the victorious allies with the Ottoman Empire after the end of World War One (1920). Today, the Kurds face total extinction. Isis and al-Qaeda are in charge of a genocidal project under the supervision of the Turks whose current President, Mr Erdogan, pretends to combat Isis while actively encouraging the massacre of the Kurds. As Shia groups (including the Lebanese Hizbollah, Iran, and Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria) prepare to make common cause with the West against Isis, Turkey naturally becomes a neutral ally and therefore the most effective partner of Isis in red-flag and cover-up operations. Yet Turkey, until now, hasn't been neutral. While Iran was and still is the main provider of arms, fighters and finance to the Assad regime, Turkey (in conjunction with Saudi Arabia and Qatar) has backed the rebels.

The test of back-door politics is foreign aid.²⁴ Only 10% of that aid reaches the needy. The same goes for democracy, only 10% of all political decisions in a democratic country are taken by the people through their representatives; the rest is wasted (especially money) in a reckless and foolish way. Swiss accounts are getting fatter by the minute. And bogus companies are formed to divert funds from one account to another in untraceable and discrete ways.²⁵ The hostility to foreign-aid criticism of the majority of the official friends of Usuk really conceals a fear not of the fragility of Western democracy, but of the fragility of their own sympathy with it. After all, having themselves arrived at a blind alley, both the EU and Usuk tend to block the road for their so-called 'friends' in developing countries to their internal markets. International aid has become a tool for playing hide and seek, for catching up with and outstripping. In these circumstances, an analysis of psychotic societies cannot for a minute neglect to consider that asymmetrical equilibrium under which a stifled but passionate struggle against terrorism is being waged across the world.

Understanding asymmetrical equilibrium²⁶ in the binary oppositions that make up the moral code would kill political action: action depends on a veil of illusion – this is what a great judge would teach us: not from the stock interpretation of case law, not from too much legal reasoning, not from an excess of possibilities, the judge fails to convict the rapist. Not reason, not that! True understanding, insight into the terrible logic of a moral code that turns every woman into a prostitute and every black man into a rapist. No legalistic solace will be of any use from now on, desire passes over a world of video games and pornography towards death, beyond God herself; existence, radiantly reflected in the cult of celebrity or in an immortal afterlife, is up for grabs. Once people understand what asymmetrical equilibrium means, they understand the wisdom of Silenus; they can see the horror and absurdity of psychotic existence. This horror must be covered with a blanket. The psychotic's main function is to mask the psychotic.²⁷

²⁴ Britain's foreign aid budget, for example, was so swollen in 2015 that it accounted for £1 in every £7 given by rich Western countries. While the UK was asking other countries to step up spending so they wouldn't look like the odd one out, the 0.75 GDP UK foreign-aid target had been enshrined in law. Thus providing a 'hole' in the rule of law that can accommodate non-democratic extra-judicial practices. Examples of this inflated spending include a £30 million 'Girl Hub' initiative that paid officials to learn about the lives of teenage girls in Ethiopia, including their equivalent of the Spice girls. Some £3 million went to the Chinese to increase awareness of British football. China got another £22.5 million to spend on role play sessions for children so they learn about climate change. Another £15 million was spent on climate-change awareness, this time on a drive to reduce the flatulence of Colombian cattle. What these schemes tell you about foreign aid is that it serves the purpose of providing a charitable front or mask for the numerous hand-outs the UK pays to the leaders of developing countries in order to gain political and economic influence. Notice how the new site for global political activism, both contested and shared by establishment and anti-establishment groups, is ecology and global warming. It is not a coincidence that more than £1 billion was sent to the 20 countries judged the most corrupt by campaigners. Britain's 2015 £12 billion aid budget is now second only to that of the US, and you have to compare the size of both countries to realize that something doesn't tally. Britain spends three times as much per head as the US, whose population of 332 million means it gave £61 per person that year. The UK, with 65 million people gave £188 a head. This huge cost is the price a tiny island on the north-West corner of Europe has to pay to punch above its weight and to have a saying in the world. Yet, perhaps, this 'saying' is more a whisper in the ear of corrupt government officials than the voice of a great prophet crying in the desert.

²⁵ Some people in power, particularly in government, can be unscrupulous and benefit from loopholes in the laws they themselves create. For example, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced (in April 2016) a £10m taskforce led jointly by HM Revenue and Customs and the NCA (National Crime Agency) to deal with the leaked so-called Panama papers that exposed the secretive world of tax havens. Yet he was facing questions about the extent to which he had benefited from money located in tax havens after it emerged that he received a lump sum of £300,000 from an offshore investment fund set up by his late father, plus £200,000 from his mother, Mary Cameron, who is believed to have inherited shares in her husband's Blairmore fund, which was based in Panama and then in Ireland, and money he left in Jersey, another tax heaven. The interesting thing is that what Cameron was doing was perfectly legal.

²⁶ A psychotic leap is needed to perform the miracle of equality in an unequal society as the sovereign reads the moral code of the society it rules from the I/eye. Binarisation or asymmetrical equilibrium is achieved by the I/eye. In other words, the assumed symmetrical equality between individuals, which is the basis of equal treatment before the law, collapses when people's lives are framed by an asymmetrical moral code. After observing the dissymmetries between man and woman, white and black, West and East, North and South, and so forth, one cannot wait any longer to break the news to the public: Individuals can pretend to be equal (as units of the social mass), but they are not equal before the law. For 'I/eye' see 'Glossary' in Fred Perez, 'Psychotic Society: An Introduction with a Glossary' in *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 5:1, pp. 403-418.

²⁷ Let us go back to the hypothetical situation that the spy agencies collapsed: 'When the spy agencies stopped functioning, it wasn't because someone left the infosphere and stopped 'breathing' information. It was because someone

An awareness of the mask/face distinction expressively forbids me trying to give an exhaustive definition of the psychotic. From the outset one must understand that the essence of the psychotic is related to the question of what is specific to the psychotic: (1) that it presupposes a unit: One infinite compression or abstraction out of a multiplicity of people; (2) that it falls under binary oppositional logic and the psychosis of binarisation; or the phenomenon by which different realms of human knowledge/action set up their ultimate distinctions. In the realm of morality, for instance, the final distinctions are between good and evil; in the realm of aesthetics, between beautiful and ugly; in the realm of economics, between profitable and unprofitable; in the realm of the political, between friend and enemy; and in the realm of the psychotic is the person/individual distinction that rules the roast in tandem with reality/fantasy. Although the psychotic is summary and summation of all the other distinctions that have come before, it is morally coded under good and evil; it is made of binary oppositions that 'semiotise' the language making it common/shared from the 'I'/eye; that is, usable across different platforms, realms and disciplines. Under a(=)a, the realm of the psychotic makes one distinction equivalent and analogous to all other distinctions – unlike any other domain.

All domains of human thought and action are now totally dependent on each other and totally overwhelmed by One. Liberal/democratic delusions of autonomy are products of psychotic leaps and binarisations. The matter-of-factness, the neatness, the concreteness of the moral code of Western societies points towards one big delusion of binarisation in which one of the sides of the binary opposition (say, 'terrorism' in the democracy/terrorism distinction) is utterly repressed though utterly necessary (so 'democracy' becomes dependent on 'terrorism', and vice versa). Under the psychotic, however, Western nation states and their security services have moved from the possibility of total destruction by nuclear confrontation to the present state, in which they have scored a hat trick; for they have three awesome capabilities which they didn't possess during the cold war: the information and communication technologies to engineer new realities, the networking intelligence to create their own preferred and most suitable environments, and the money to wrap their future in a bright and perennial bubble.

3. DOUBLING

In 1986, Robert Jay Lifton introduced a concept that came very close to my concept of binarisation: 'doubling' is 'the division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self acts as an entire self'; that is to say, 'an active psychological process whose major function is to avoid guilt by disavowing the second self that does the dirty work.'²⁸ The post-9/11 political environment has become sufficiently extreme and terror-pornified so as to allow 'doubling' to take hold of all those who choose to remain in it. As the precursor of psychotic 'binarisation', the concept of 'doubling' can help us to understand how some Western politicians manage the conflict between their self-image as decent, ethical people and their endorsement of policies which might violate their own ethical standards – such as aerial bombing and drone strikes.

Lifton's doubling would explain the division of democratic governments into two functioning parts/selves – the liberal and the popular, the legal and the extra-legal – while the legal/liberal part-self acts as an entire self; that is to say, governing under the rule of law is an active psychological process whose major function is to avoid guilt by disavowing the second self – the secret services, the police, and the military – that do the dirty work. The problem with applying doubling to contemporary politics is that, in most decisions to kill people abroad made by MPs in parliament today, the element of 'guilt' is completely absent. While 'guilt' was a vital component of 20th-century neurosis, it doesn't figure at all in 21st-century psychosis. The 21st century is guilt-free.

In the age of psychosis, 'binarisation' supersedes 'doubling' as a way to explain, for example, how a perfect gentleman and a pacifist like Barack Obama could end up being nicknamed the 'King of the Drone'. When Obama came into office, he was generally seen as a decent liberal alternative to the brutal counter-terrorism policies of the Bush administration. While in office, however, he repeatedly disappointed his liberal followers, as revelations about drone killings and mass surveillance overshadowed his beautiful anti-war rhetoric. Of course, one can blame John Brennan, his CIA director, with whom he seemed have forged a strong bond, for having guiding him (a complete beginner in military matters) from being a pacifist to becoming the King of the Drone.

removed the mask that hid the 'horror' – the face of the psychotic. Liberal democracy had not eliminated the psychotic from the face of the earth but only had hidden it by means of a Platonic anti-psychotic discourse and a set of practices that effectively mark out in reality what does not exist.' Fred Perez, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

²⁸ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), pp. 418, 422.

Yet that would be too simplistic, because the whole of Obama's presidency can be brutally summarised as an attempt to get back to 'normal' – 'normality' being the most complex of all 'obvious' concepts. His historic visit to Cuba, for example, put the seal on a sober, sustained and intelligent attempt to redeem the reputation of the US abroad – a reputation irredeemably sullied by the cavalry charges of the George Bush years. Repeatedly, President Obama tried to set aside historical resentments and Cold War hangovers, attempting to redraw the international political map by sensible calculation rather than brute force. Yet his spy agencies had been conducting their weird business as usual, as if nothing had changed since 9/11, as if James Bond were real, as if the office of President of the USA didn't exist outside of a Hollywood movie.

Due to the lack of evidence surrounding *all* matters of national security and the possibility of *all* news being fake, any serious attempt to tell the story of the killing of Osama bin Laden could end up looking like the latest James Bond movie. My imagination is drawn to the mythical figure of 007 and his latest enemy: a trans-boundary network of terror and crime that bears an uncanny resemblance to the activities of bin Laden in Sudan and, to a lesser extent, in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden was shown to be an 'invisible master' intent on causing great damage to the West. For a moment, I think of SPECTRE (Special Executive for Counterintelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion). This secret organisation became the model for *Spectre*, the latest in the Bond series: really, a group of rich people messing with Usuk just to get a kick out of it. The chief protagonist is an evil genius who heads an international terrorist syndicate that seeks to destroy the current world order in order to achieve total domination. It all sounds a bit silly. But then, what was bin Laden but a rich man who enjoyed playing with guns and explosives?

North America's most powerful ideological weapon is the superhero. Even though my favourite hero was the Mexican Zorro, I have to admit that my childhood wouldn't have been the same without Batman, Spiderman & Superman. Perhaps the Americans don't know this, but the point of fear for the international super-criminal is the fact that the superhero can locate him. Remove this power and you remove this fear – for it will be proven that the imaginary 'fact' is 'more real than the physical' (psychotic). For the criminal, the fugitive, the illegal, and the terrorist, there is nowhere to hide: there is no escape. The last desperate attempt to prove the awesome power this myth was the killing of bin Laden. He was found in Pakistan and killed – after a ten-year world-wide search; and, for a year or so, it appeared that the US had the same special skills as Liam Neeson in *Taken 1* ('I will look for you, I will find you, and I will kill you'). Thus the Twin Towers disaster movie seemed to have ended in Pakistan with the elimination of the super-baddie.

However, the US's locating superpowers are always under threat. In a recent and embarrassing episode, Usuk's reconnaissance aircrafts flying sorties over Nigeria in search of 200 school girls seized by Boko Haram years ago failed to locate them. This was a simple case of kidnapping/ransom which could have been dealt locally by the Nigerian government (by paying the ransom, as it is customary to do as a sign of respect; or weakness – if your power derives from petro-dollars). Yet the West was quick to spice the kidnapping up with fears of 'rape' and 'sexual slavery' which is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much, because it brings back to life the work of Edward Said on culture and imperialism & orientalism, where Africa is almost a European invention, a collective delusion identifying 'us' Europeans against all 'those' non-Europeans, reiterating 'our' superiority over 'their' backwardness, positioning 'ourselves' above a landscape of romance, exotic beings, polygamists, cannibals, and peculiarly African women, binarised as athletic, luxuriant & unbounded sexual objects, symbols of fecundity, sites of horror & witchcraft, and targets of conversion & redemption by the Christian civilising mission.

Since the killing of bin Laden, the White House has been looking at virtual reality: at the chance to experience the best seat at, say, a counter-terrorist operation without ever leaving your sofa – SAS-style special forces heat maps or killing stats on your wraparound screen at the wink of an eye. Nearly 4,000 miles from the scene of the killing, the President of the United States of America sat in a room with his closest collaborators in front of TV screens to watch the event live as it happened. Globe-spanning communications allowed a worldwide audience to see the President watching as the operation unfolded. This cosy setup made the destruction of human life less like killing and more like a high-adrenaline game. Distance and technology have made counter-terrorist operations much easier for Western audiences.

Strangely enough, this President was no soldier. Obama seemed to possess a unique purity, a saintly demeanour. He was more like a high priest and didn't like anything military. But, unlike other presidents and prime ministers before him, he had become addicted to battlefield-pornography by demanding to see real-time pictures of operations in progress. And the killing of bin Laden was no exception. He demanded that the CIA set up a direct line of communication with the

commandoes of the Navy's Seal Team 6 who carried out the killing. He expected ever more insight, in super-slow-mo from twenty-seven angles. His aides' idea of calling the programme *Terrorist Grand Stand* was anathema to him now given his expectation of witnessing the end of the hostage situation from close quarters, with some cameras fixed to the helmets of the SWAT team; perhaps, one day, the CIA will give the President an inside view of a nuclear explosion.

While he got on with his supremely difficult job as President with matter-of-fact heroism, Barack Obama became not only the master of the drone strike but also of the man who ordered the summary execution of Osama bin Laden. Not surprisingly, when he finally wanted to do something about Assad's chemical arsenal, he failed to get legislative authority from Congress for a drive-by shooting. About the present threat posed by Isis (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham), he didn't see its strategic value. He didn't want to understand the psychotic impossibility that Islamic State is in Syria and Iraq to stay and expand with frugality and delusional zeal towards the West, conquering Persia, Egypt, Africa, and Spain, building up a new empire of the caliphs, or successors of Mahomet – as their ancestors did with amazing speed from 600 to 750 AD. Obama didn't grasp that the Pax Americana (like the Pax Romana, Hispanica, Ottomana, Europaea, or Syriana) had existed because it was backed up by a credible threat of force. Weakness is the worst possible provocation for 'bad' actors like Isis, and some of the world's most dangerous individuals were provoked by Obama.

I have said before that President Obama had tried to set aside historical resentments and ideological hang-ups. But was he able to redraw the diplomatic map not by brute force but sensible calculation? The killing of Osama bin Laden, for example: doesn't it make his counter-terrorism campaign rather weak that rather than engaging with the argument he had to go for the man? From Achilles' reaction to the killing of Patroclus, we can gather that denying proper burial to the enemy is the worst possible provocation one can do to a 'good' soldier. Soldiers need to remember two things above all others: first, to follow orders; second, to show respect for their enemy. Remember that your valour, sufferance and endurance are shared with and sometimes surpassed by the enemy soldier. However monstrous bin Laden was, he deserved a proper burial. His body should have been given to his people, so they could wash his body and say their prayers. Even enemies can show respect. It is for this dishonourable act that Obama will be remembered in Africa and the Middle East.

But I digress. My intention with the whole Obama/Osama episode was to draw attention to the fact that in 21st-century counter-terrorism operations there is an asymmetry between the swift and brutal reaction to terrorist attacks in the West and the lack of concern with the destruction and loss of life which retaliation leaves behind – that is, Western powers' complete inability to cope with the most elementary problems of post-conflict reconstruction abroad. What I am referring here to is the permanent and devastating effects of the 'war on terror' in Africa and the Middle East: to the many towns and cities that still lie devastated, godforsaken places where alienation and violence are rife; and to the millions of men, women, and children are languishing in refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. To put it simply, there is a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions at the moment, and yet there is neither a sense of 'collective guilt' nor 'reparations'.

This 21st-century lack of guilt contrasts greatly with post-conflict resolutions in the 20th century; when Germany, for example, spent the first half of the century moaning about 'reparations' and the second half debating the concept of 'collective guilt'. It is this lack of guilt that betrays current military actions by Western powers in Africa and the Middle East as products of psychotic binarisation, rather than doubling. Remember, the binarisation of Us/Them in counter-terrorist operations means that 'they', the locals, get nothing; even if their whole country lies in ruins because of aerial bombardment, they don't get 'reparations'; nor do 'they' get our compassion because 'they' literally don't exist. Of course, by becoming transparent or in-existent, the enemy also becomes redundant as a physical agency. So, unless this immaterial agency is discreetly removed and completely dismantled soon from the imagination of Western powers, it will cause enormous embarrassment to future Usuk governments; as they see historical cases of military psychotic episodes disintegrate in front of their eyes by their own inefficiency and inability to cope with new forms of mental illness – particularly, when group psychosis begins to be linked to the massive loss of human lives in military conflicts around the world.

4. THE RISE OF THE SECRET SERVICES AFTER 9/11

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western secret services lost their traditional enemy. Poor souls, the CIA and MI6 had been in limbo since the end of the Cold War. But all that changed after 9/11: both CIA and MI6 were under quite

extraordinary pressure by politicians to market intelligence before it was fully validated. This gave them a kind of creative freedom. As they scrambled to understand al-Qaeda and then to confront it in Afghanistan, politicians turned to their spies and particularly to the agencies responsible for gathering intelligence overseas. Spy bosses seized their chance to shine with sexed-up dossiers and became part of the Usuk government inner circle. In the UK, for example, Richard Dearlove was taken in by claims that Saddam was developing weapons of mass destruction. How could the boss of MI6 get it so wrong? In December 2001, Sir Richard had been sent to Washington to engage with the CIA about intelligence gathering on Iraq. He produced a report from September 11, 2002 heralding a significant breakthrough after recruiting a spy in Iraq with phenomenal access, codenamed Curveball. He was able to unlock the secret of Saddam's biological and chemical weapons programme. Saddam had expanded the deadly arsenal he had used so effectively against the Kurds and in the Iran-Iraq war by developing mobile chemical weapons laboratories; another source said that chemical missiles could be launched within 45 minutes of an order to use them – later, this became the source for Tony Blair headline-grabbing claim in the Commons on 24 September 2003.²⁹

The highly-placed, single, uncorroborated source reported that Iraq had built new facilities across the country for the accelerated production of chemical and biological agents and was concentrating its efforts on the production of anthrax. A second high impact report from the same source, circulated by MI6 two weeks later, stated that sarin and other nerve agents were being stored in 'hollow glass spheres'. Interestingly, one report noted that his description of glass containers (not generally used to store nerve gas) was remarkably similar to the fictional chemical weapon of mass destruction portrayed in the film *The Rock*, starring Nicholas Cage. By February 2003, the spy had been identified as a fake, a fabricator who had lied from the outset. So the weight and urgency given to the report was not only the product of wishful thinking, or the desire to make evidence fit a pre-existing belief (which is the bane of all intelligence work), but also betrayed a desire to sex-up or spice up the ordinary grey job of the typical intelligence analyst – by living the dream of playing the hero in a James Bond movie.

I don't know about you, but I grew up on a diet of American cop films and Westerns. Often I can see myself being chased by the good guys with guns over rooftops. Whenever boredom grabs me by the neck, I spin this fiction out of a Hollywood movie. Yes, I must confess that I have managed to function in our terror-dominated environment by developing a 'movie self'; indeed, if an environment is sufficiently extreme, and one chooses to remain in it, one may be able to do so only by means of psychosis. For Western politicians, civil servants, and security personnel, terror porn offers a different way to accept their own participation in sadomasochistic operations involving intrusive surveillance of suspects, extrajudicial arrest, kidnapping, imprisonment, torture, assassination, and so on – one best illustrated by the name and logo of a porn company called Jekyll and Hyde Productions.³⁰ The home page shows the cartoon-like picture of a man's face divided in half. His left side is a normal white man's face, with a slightly smug expression and, significantly, eyes closed. This side can easily represent the 'good' side of democracy, its liberal side, the one that upholds human rights. The right side is the face of a green monster with jagged teeth and menacing eyes. This side can represent the 'bad' side of democracy, its wild and sinister side. As the Jekyll and Hyde logo suggests, the terror-porn consumer, whether s/he is a member of the public or the security forces, can create a second self, one that exists in an extreme environment that he regards as 'real' but which, in fact, belongs to the realm of fantasy.

Unfortunately, drone strikes do not belong to the realm of fantasy. They not only lack entertaining value, but they are devoid of 'real' military effectiveness. We are told that UAVs are precision bombs which are used to blow up the Isis factories where terrorists manufacture 'evil'. Yet Western politicians are committing a worse 'evil' than that which we initially feared. They are being fed faulty intelligence by opportunists who know what they want to discover and are happy to invent it. Jihadi John, for example, is a British invention. He grew up in Britain on a diet of American hero movies and Sony PlayStation. Yet he was killed by a drone, like a character in one of his games. Why would you destroy your own creation unless you are horrified by it? It is astonishing that we still apply ourselves to the analysis of deadly military strikes and gruesome single deaths which no longer possess anything but episodic importance, yet we bypass the statistics of civilians killed and wounded in air raids approved by MPs in parliament. Perhaps this indicates that the exception/rule psychotic turn, which Britain seems to be suffering at the moment, didn't start in 2001 with the 9/11 attacks but that it has a pre-genealogy which can be traced as far back as World War Two.

²⁹ See note 8.

³⁰ See <http://www.jhpxxx.com> (accessed 07 July 2016).

The first political consequence of World War Two was that Europe became a poisoned chalice for many British prime ministers. It destroyed Harold Macmillan's government, Heath's government, Margaret Thatcher's government, John Major's government, broke up the Labour Party in the 1980s, and it obliterated the conservative government of David Cameron in 2016. And the reason why Brexit has been so difficult and has divided parties is because it raises fundamental questions about British identity. What sort of people are we? Are we European or are we not? ³¹

UK's history is quite different from that of the European continent in that the continental countries had to begin again from Zero after the Second World War. But most institutions in the UK remained unsullied after the war. UK's political history, too, is quite different from that of the continent, and that is summed up in the strange idea of the sovereignty of parliament. Of course, this sovereignty of parliament is incompatible with European law and institutions that place EU law above national parliaments. Every British Prime Minister since Harold Macmillan has wanted the UK to be in Europe because they perceived the economic advantages of being there, while they had on the whole not accepted the ideology of Europeanism that 'we' want to be part of a European unity, or monetary unity, or financial unity.

One can argue that democratic institutions in the UK are much older than European ones. This would be OK if parliamentary democracy were in her prime. But it has achieved that maturity beyond which there is only decline and death. UK's democracy has both chronic illnesses and geriatric syndromes – in other words, chronic political diseases often co-occur. Having poor health and more difficult functioning than the democracies of continental Europe, UK's democracy needs more health-care services and is likely to die earlier. Geriatric symptoms are very common in British politics: especially, delirium (a kind of temporary confusion) and dementia (an illness, such as Alzheimer's disease, characterised by ongoing confusion, psychosis and memory loss).

9/11 and the 'war on terror' that followed introduced a new Jekyll and Hyde model of politics to the UK. The transformation from the political to the psychotic seemed inevitable although parliamentarians were opposed to changing liberal democracy for something more ordinary, even on its deathbed. By the early 2010s, the oldest democracy in the world appeared senile and outdated when confronted by the fresh populist thrust of right-wing libertarian parties like Ukip. Both the right and the left struggled with the reality that traditional parties were in decline – and parliamentary politics was losing respect. The divide between geriatric political institutions and the reality on the ground had become obvious. These senile political institutions had become vulnerable to conmen and fraudsters.

Precisely the same ingredients of a scam on old people ³² came together in the run-up to the Iraq war: a plausible impostor with a sad story, intense pressure for results, a preconceived but inaccurate picture of reality caused by dementia, and a disinclination to challenge the source even when people realise they are being scammed because they are too afraid to come forward. Although senile and divided, the UK has built infrastructures and modernised its economy. It has successfully passed from an industrial economy to an internet-based service one. These fundamental change has led to the emergence of a technological class that is extremely active and yearning for change and freedom. A digital divide is emerging as the computer_literate/computer_illiterate distinction becomes the head of a string or stack of binary oppositions composed of developed/developing countries, information_rich/information_poor, insiders/outsideers. ³³

But it is the political class of digital outsiders together with those high-tech spy agencies that prey on their e-analphabetism (for funding purposes) which will bury liberal democracy once and for all. Of course, before that happens, we will have to deal with the success stories of the information age; people like Angela Merkel, potentially Justin Trudeau and perhaps – it may be premature to add – Teresa May. Merkel poses an enormous challenge to political philosophers because she does not try to solve the world's problems in the grand sweeping, delusional way that Blair or Bush preferred. Instead, she responds practically, according to the changing reality on the ground. She is willing to change things that do not work, cultivates her own individual ordinariness, and stays out of military adventures. She is a formidable politician and a role model to follow if you want to salvage democracy from an ignominious end.

The second consequence of World War Two is the human rights' divide between Usuk and Europe. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, human rights were created so they could protect civilian minorities like the Jews. However, with the

³¹ The Americans exhibit a similar insecurity regarding Europe. Are we Europeans? Are we civilised? Are we descendants of the Romans and the Greeks?

³² See BBC ONE programmes such as *Fake Britain* and *Don't Get Done Get Dom*.

³³ Luciano Floridi, 'Information Ethics: An Environmental Approach to the Digital Divide' in *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, 9:1, Spring-Summer 2001, p. 2.

bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the US made it clear that it was OK to kill civilians, regardless of ethnicity. Sadly, the UK has a penchant for killing civilians too. Their aerial bombing in Kosovo left 1,000 civilians dead and, in the invasion of Iraq, over 150,000 civilians died. Perhaps the main difference between World War One and World War Two is that the later normalised the mass killing of civilians; or worse, civilians became (delusions of) soldiers. The US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan taught us this lesson: the cure can be worse than the disease. These wars in which more civilians than soldiers have been killed and in which the innocent have suffered indescribable cruelty are an appalling disaster.

After the 9/11 attacks, Western powers made delusional risk assessments and thought psychotically about the threat posed by Islamist fundamentalism. Group psychosis on the spectrum of paranoid schizophrenia shows up in the increasing gap between the Muslim-centred anti-terrorist agenda proclaimed by Western governments and what actually happens in real life. MI5, MI6, GCHQ, and their American counterparts have devoted a greater share of their resources to countering Islamist terrorism than they did to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Since the 1970s, Irish terrorism in the UK and ETA terrorism in Spain have cost the lives of more UK and Spanish citizens than al-Qaeda, yet they have received less attention by the government and the media since 9/11. This lack of attention/acknowledgement may have contributed to the ETA/IRA demise. For who can bear to feel himself forgotten? No, nobody likes to be ignored, not even terrorists.

5. CYBERSPACE

Thinking is not reasoning. In order to think in the information age, one has to stop and ask the question ‘Where?’ Where is s/he? If s/he is in parliament, s/he is a politician – even if s/he is a visitor. If s/he is in prison, s/he is a criminal – even if s/he is a prison officer. Democratic states have responded psychotically to the colossal threat the internet poses to their territorial sovereignty by unconsciously asking the question ‘Where is the terrorist?’ which invariably returns a localised result: in schools, in mosques, in ghettos, in prisons, in universities. Of course, there is more than one kind of people in a certain place. This is why the question ‘Where?’ is the test of psychosis.

Where is sovereignty located? The I/eye imposes a kind of absolute sovereignty upon the social body which might be accessed and shared as a server is accessed by millions of personal computers. The I/eye is the location of the right to ‘moral’ authority. So it is common and shared by various kinds of bodies rather than kept out of bounds by a centralised administration. The I/eye gives an extraordinary sense of cohesion to societies that are split in every conceivable way. Remember, the psychotic main function is to mask the psychotic. The I/eye main function is to mask the precariousness of civil society with an essentially delusional sense of unity but not, for this reason, less valid and real.³⁴

Usuk’s desire to ‘control’ cyberspace (that intensity to legislate against ISPs/OSPs³⁵) crafts their ignorance. It is this tendency to control the uncontrollable that betrays their unthinkingness.³⁶ It also marks them as naive, old-fashioned and

³⁴ In his *Leviathan*, the great Thomas Hobbes brings to the table a very deep sense of the precariousness of civil society. In the course of his life, he began an investigation into the question of what allows a state to exist and to subsist in time. He comes to the conclusion that nobody has been able to provide an adequate explanation of this miracle yet. When Hobbes talks about Leviathan, he makes clear that he is talking in the abstract about the seat of power not the person who occupies the seat. So he is asking the question ‘Where?’ rather than ‘Who?’

³⁵ ISPs are Internet Service Providers – corporate entities offering access to the internet. They provide mailboxes, hosting, transit/transmission, routing, bandwidth deals, peering and, in general, connections for digital online communication. In the UK, for example, BT, Sky Broadband, Virgin Media, and TalkTalk, provide internet access for a monthly fee. OSPs are ‘free’ Online Service Providers – such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, AOL, Apple, LinkedIn, Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft. Technologically-illiterate politicians keep on asking these tech companies to provide ‘back-door’ access for their spy agencies. The latest and saddest case is that of Amber Rudd, the UK home secretary, who tried to defy the laws of mathematics by saying WhatsApp should allow her spy agencies to intercept end-to-end encryption. See *Andrew Marr Show*, BBC1, 26 March 2017.

³⁶ The term ‘unthinkingness’ refers to mental responses that are profoundly avoidant of thoughts, feelings, and places which have become the norm in affluent democracies. ‘Unthinkingness’ is living in an unreflective way, thinking by internal habit or external guidance, independently of one’s own reason. But most fundamentally it refers to ‘time’ and to the impossibility of stopping when you go at ‘speed’ or you are in a ‘hurry’. Agustín García Calvo realized, gorgeously contradicting himself, that time-cutting is the thing in need of most urgent review: ‘Lo que se reconoce como urgente es más que nada no tener prisa, pararse un poco a recibir algo de calma y de sosiego.’ (‘What can be recognised as more urgent than other things is not to be in a hurry, to stop a little to receive some peace and quiet.’) See *Comunicado urgente*

outdated in the sense that they are still going on about a project of modernity in the post-modern age, and about a project of truth in the port-truth age, and about a project of neurosis in the psychotic age. Above all, what makes their technical discourse most out of sync with today's transnational and dephysicalized cyberspace is their obsession with 'back-doors', as if the digital/internet world were made of physical walls. Sorry, building physical walls and prisons is not going to work in an increasingly immaterial and typified infoworld. If anything, walls will make group psychosis worse; for example, prisoners will confront us with the horrible paradox of being in two places at the same time: both in prison and in the infosphere³⁷. Literally, every prisoner who has to access to a smart TV, tablet, laptop or phone, automatically becomes an informational organism that is both inside and outside prison. It is not that the walls of the prison disappear in front of his/her eyes but that s/he becomes an interface or biological machine networked to other mechanical machines such as computers, cables and routers, and semiotic machines that generate codes and languages.

Most politicians are digitally illiterate. Perhaps this is why they desire digital/internet technologies so much; they love smart phones and computers with such passion that thinking and living without them is barred from their minds. For when they really think, they don't exactly know why the issues that divide us matter at all. All they can see is the present and the past binarised into One big hoo haa: the present expanding into a massive and hollow middle where they don't fit but fall: a no-space, a fugue, a black hole, a kind of Zero where they eternally fall/float. The problem of this hollow middle exercised the minds of Socrates, Aristotle, Jesus and St Augustine. And it goes as follows: 'Only the present moment exists now, the past no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist.' Yet psychotic patterning in the brain/mind decodes the present as the middle *where* you are – a position in mind-space that is not that different from the position an American might be at present. And however anti-American I may be, and however much I want to prove to you that the US has spoiled the world for everyone else with its policy of military intervention abroad, and however much I want to believe that the US is doomed, I can't ultimately force my point on you by showing I am right. I can only back my hunches and make my case the best I can, which makes me painfully aware than I am not that different from the people I consider dumb.

The real problem Usuk faces at the moment is not that its adversaries are so formidable, but that it fails to see that they are not just One. It's an uncomfortable truth that the enemy, whether it is the Nazis, the IRA or Isis, has always been binarised as One under the friend/enemy delusion. The Usuk story of Afghanistan and Iraq over the last fifteen years is the oscillation between saying: 'we want to create a new and better country where girls don't get raped on their way to school'; and, on the other hand, saying: 'we are just trying to eliminate these two countries as havens for international terrorists who kill innocent people and kidnap/rape girls on their way to school.' Tyrants or liberators? When the story is moving across one binary opposition continuously, then it becomes very difficult to explain to the public what they are actually doing there. For the message is not only confused but polarised. This is One's golden rule: 'There can be only One in a binary.' A 'good' psychotic population can only take one position at a time when the message is binarised; that is, when it is locked in a binary opposition such as friend/foe, construction/destruction, democracy/tyranny. The fact that you only hear one and the same thing again and again, 'Muslim, Muslim, Muslim or Isis, Isis, Isis,' makes you wonder whether there is anything else in the world of Usuk apart from the psychopathy of One.

Another real problem Usuk faces is the exception/rule delusion. It just takes one terrorist attack to declare the state of exception. Europe's and America's record in dealing with terror/terrorism suggests that civil liberties are sacrificed quickly when terrorist trouble is afoot. How many more outrages on the scale of New York 9/11, Madrid 11-M, London 7/7, Paris Charlie Hebdo and 13-N, or Brussels 22-M, are needed before we become police states? After each of these attacks, collective responsibility on the benches of both parliament and the courts of justice is temporarily suspended. This changes the way democratic politicians/judges think and behave. Remember how West Germany came close to

contra el despilfarro (Comuna Antinacionalista Zamorana, Paris: Luis Manuel Rodriguez Editor, 1977). Also: 'It was this absence of thinking – which is so ordinary an experience in our everyday life, where we have hardly the time, let alone the inclination, to *stop* and think – that awakened my interest.' Hannah Arendt, Introduction to *The Life of the Mind*, One-Volume Edition (San Diego, London & New York: Harcourt, 1978), p. 4. 'Unthinkingness' is a borderline concept developed by Fred Perez from Calvo and Arendt to engage with the time/speed dimension of thought in a psychotic society. It is not that people have lost the capacity for thought; it is rather that people have lost the ability to 'stop and think'.

³⁷ Infosphere is a space made of information, 'where memory as registration and timeless preservation (the Platonic view) is replaced by memory as accumulation and refinement.' Luciano Floridi, *Episteme*, 6:1, Feb. 2009, p. 32.

suspending the rule of law when facing the relatively small threat posed by the Baader-Meinhof gang in the 1970s. And how Italy reacted against the Red Brigades. France was ruthless in the early 1960s with Algerian-related terrorists and terrorism. But Britain, perhaps, was the toughest, judging by its record in Northern Ireland: internment without trial, torture, shoot to kill, collusion with Unionist paramilitaries and the conviction of innocent people on planted evidence.

Modern technology has made the slide from liberty and legality (that inevitably follows every terrorist attack) even steeper: data-based stop-and-fingerprint and facial recognition substitutes stop and search; tracking devices (mobile phones, laptops, tablets and smartphones), internet browsing records and biometric data archives make it easier for plods (police) and spooks to profile suspects. But beyond that, I think it is the relentless pressure from the executive to fight a 'war on terror' – but only of one kind (Islamic terror/terrorism, leaving out the rest of it) – that is killing liberal democracy. Absent from the 'war on terror' are a multitude of terrorist groups of extreme right and left denominations that cause as many casualties put together as the jihadis do. Perhaps this explains why none of the twenty-two successful terrorist acts in Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement (10 April 1998) has been given any publicity in mainland UK. And the white supremacist movement in the US, which has a strong association with violence and criminal activity from drug/arms dealing to ideologically related crimes such as racial/hate crimes and terrorist acts, is not even mentioned by the media despite that every week new criminal incidents emerge. Both in the US and the UK, left-wing terrorists have been responsible for bombings, assassinations, robberies, and planned attacks on infrastructure targets. Yet neither of these two countries is keen to acknowledge this fact.

6. THE BELMARSH CASE

The Belmarsh Prison case decision by the Law Lords led by Lord Bingham of Cornhill³⁸ was brought by a number of foreign nationals who were held indefinitely in Belmarsh Prison in London because the British Government suspected them of being international terrorists. They were imprisoned under special powers granted to the Government by the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (which has since been repealed). This legislation was enacted at speed in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and provided for the indefinite detention without charge or trial, of suspected terrorists who could not lawfully be deported. The detainees were unable to see intelligence evidence against them and were confined to their cells for up to 22 hours a day. The scene for the Anti-terrorism Act 2001 in the UK was set by the Patriot Act in the US signed into law by President George Bush on 26 October 2001.³⁹ USA PATRIOT stands for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.

Rather than strengthening the position of America in the world, USA PATRIOT represented a clear departure from customary international law and the most flagrant sign of disunion between US and the international community. Efforts by the Bush Administration and its solicitors to circumvent rules of international law to facilitate detention, treatment and interrogation techniques (which amounted to torture) led to the manufacture of ambiguous categories such as 'unlawful combatants'⁴⁰ and dark-age concepts like the 'war on terror'. In January 2002, the US established a military prison in Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. More than 600 detainees – including four Britons – were held following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The iconic images of the detainees at Guantanamo in fluorescent orange jump suits being led around in manacles are now part of the popular imagination. The terrorist is put in chains and displayed on TV. This is the stuff of nightmares, associated whether accurately or inaccurately with the rise of the 'horror' genre in the movie and film industries. The horrific conditions the detainees were kept under at Guantanamo have been linked to the conditions at Belmarsh: inadequate health care, restricted access to legal advice, to the outside world and, most importantly, to practising their religion.

³⁸ More formally known as *A v. Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2004] UKHL 56.

³⁹ In 2001, with the USA PATRIOT Act and the UK Anti-terrorism Act 2001, Usuk entered fully into its psychotic phase; a moral psychosis which had been brewing since the end of World War Two through identity-based insecurities with continental Europe around binaries such as in/out, us/them, civilised/barbarian, and so on. Brexit and Trump's election victory are the latest chapters of Usuk's psychopathy.

⁴⁰ In the USA PATRIOT Act, euphemisms such as 'illegal combatants', 'extraordinary rendition', or 'enhanced interrogation techniques' show a deep insensitivity/insensibility towards the idea that the 'Law should be about certainty not fairness', while at the same time they are part and parcel of a debate within the international intellectual community about the loss of referents or the increasing gap between words/concepts/categories and what actually happens in real life.

It is understandable that the 9/11 attacks inevitably caused acute concerns about security in other Western countries, particularly those which were particularly prominent in their support for the US and its military response to al-Qaeda, the organisation identified as responsible for the attacks. Yet the perfect mimicry of the UK's reaction to an attack that happened 3,465 miles away to other people, invites further consideration with regards to psychotic patterning in the human brain or group psychosis under a(=)a_exception/rule. The parallel between binary relationships such as USA_PATRIOT_Act_2001/Anti-terrorism_Crime_and_Security_Act_2001 and Guantanamo/Belmarsh begs disbelief, raising the suspicion that the perfect One/One_One/Many reaction psychoticised as a(=)a_exception/rule might have morally en-coded (framed) the mental content of those who decided on the exception. To me, the rule/exception component in One goes beyond the question of whether the decision to suspend habeas corpus – to allow arbitrary detention on mere suspicion – was justified or not: it is also about how that very big imaginary picture painted by a tiny minority related to and impacted upon real people.

International law (in particular, human rights) is an ongoing process of decision through which members of a select elite group identify, clarify and secure their common interests. Sometimes, these people at the very top of society, like those at the very bottom, are marginalised and unpopular, and the question arises whether the majority in society are and should be free to treat that people as they wish. Should the law prevent the majority from advancing their own interests at the expense of the weaker and the more vulnerable? If so, how does one reconcile the protection given by the law to the weaker and the more vulnerable with the will or desire to protect these people being psychotically strong? Under One/Many_exception/rule, the power of the minority in government stems from the same psychotic will/desire as the power of those who fall into a so-called 'victim group' which is protected by the law.

For most people, democracy is only about the rule of the majority. It is just about passively voting (and counting votes) once every few years – this is the most restrictive, extreme and simplistic definition of democracy. Yet, for other, more enlightened members of democratic societies, democracy is not just about the rule of the majority or about counting votes, it is also about respecting everybody equally and protecting the fundamental rights of minorities, some of whom are unpopular. This would be the position of the high-minded judges, barristers, solicitors, and certain politicians who run the government because they pretend to know what's best for the common people. From a logical perspective, there is a kind of symmetry between protecting the rights of persecuted and disadvantaged minorities and protecting yourself from the majority when you are a member of the elite, which is a minority too that has been known in the past to suffer the wrath of the mob.

Today the legacy of the medieval castle is the modern high-security prison. Guantanamo/Belmarsh is the new Bastille. If the castle was the ultimate expression of military might, the state is the ultimate expression of the rule of law. And yet, the state is a castle made of law. It doesn't have a material existence expressed in stone: it has a psychotic existence (that is, an enhanced, more real than the physical existence) expressed in abstract signs that relate to each other but not to the reality on the ground. These are concepts and categories that are treated as a kind of cryptology in which each sign can be translated into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key. The moral code of a society is the fixed key against which crypto-laws are interpreted. These are some of the paradoxes and contradictions that make Belmarsh decision case such an interesting case.

Our story begins, however, 3,465 miles from the place where the Belmarsh case was decided. It begins in the North East of the United States. Events at the World Trade Centre in New York changed the course of recent history. As a key ally of the UK, it was perfectly reasonable to suppose that, if al-Qaeda could strike in Washington DC and New York City, then London might be next. Against that background, legislation which became the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 was rushed at top speed through the UK Parliament in the days and the weeks following 9/11. Of all the desperate provisions contained within the act, one known as 'part 4' was especially striking. The Home Secretary could issue a certificate against somebody if these conditions were met: 1. She had to reasonably believe that the person's presence in the UK was a risk to national security; 2. She had to reasonably suspect the person of being an international terrorist; 3. The person concerned had to be a foreigner – not a UK citizen. If it was not possible to deport this person, then they could be detained instead; that is, they could be imprisoned for an open-ended period on the say-so of a government minister without having being convicted of a criminal offence following a fair trial in an independent court of law.

Of course, after World War Two, most people have human rights. The sad thing is that 6,000 million Jews had to die in Nazi concentration camps for world leaders to take false imprisonment seriously. This is why the prohibition of torture

together with the right to liberty are some of the most fundamental and precious human rights today. The right to liberty has been recognised in British law for centuries and it is now enshrined in Art 5 of the European Convention of Human Rights. To imprison someone indefinitely without a fair trial and under the direction, not of an independent judge, but of a government minister is quite clearly a breach to the right to liberty under Art 5 of the Convention. Yet article 15 of the Convention allows, under very grave circumstances, the suspension of some human rights including the right to liberty. At the same time, there are some rights that art. 15 does not allow to be suspended. One such right is art. 3 or the right not to be tortured, which includes the right not to be deported to countries where there is a real risk of torture. Apparently, this was the main reason behind the government keeping terror suspects in prison indefinitely: they came from countries where they would most definitely face torture if deported. Interestingly, the conditions at Belmarsh were cruel, inhuman, and degrading; so much so that it could be argued that they amounted to torture.

The logical impossibility of torture happening at home relies on the binarisation of the home/abroad distinction for its psychotic effectiveness. When I say that something is ‘psychotically effective’, what I mean (following Freud) is that it raises an irresistible claim to truth against which logical objections remain powerless.⁴¹ One of the questions that the House of Lords (more specifically, its judicial arm before it was transferred to what’s now the UK’s Supreme Court) had to resolve in the Belmarsh case regarding Art 15 (2) of the Convention was whether indefinite detention without charge or trial was an adequate response to the emergency that the majority of judges was prepared to acknowledge in relation to Art 15 (1). The eight judges who thought there was a public emergency (all except One – Lord Hoffmann) went on to consider whether the nature and seriousness of the emergency was sufficient to justify the desperate step which had been taken (that is, to detain foreign suspects without charge or trial). Seven of the eight judges who addressed this point said that it was not: the Government had failed to show that lesser steps, such as surveillance, monitoring, and tagging of suspects would not suffice. More crucially, the Government had not adequately shown why the detention regime applied only to ‘foreign’ terror suspects. As One of the judges, Baroness Hale, pointed out,

there is absolutely no reason to think that the problem [the right to liberty] applies only to foreigners. Quite the reverse. There is every reason to think that there are British nationals living here who are international terrorists within the meaning of the Act; who cannot be shown to be such in a court of law; and who cannot be deported to another country because they have every right to be here. Yet the Government does not think that it is necessary to lock them up. Indeed, it has publicly stated that locking up nationals is a draconian step which could not at present be justified. But it has provided us with no real explanation of why it is necessary to lock up one group of people sharing exactly the same characteristics [and the same right to liberty] as another group which does not think necessary to lock up.⁴²

Even though the majority of judges concluded that the extrajudicial detention of foreign suspects had not been shown to be a necessary response to 9/11 emergency, the question remained as to why the UK government didn’t consider it necessary to detain British terror suspects and, at the same time, did consider it necessary to detain foreign (but equally dangerous) suspects. When the observation about torture only happening abroad was made, my assumption was that the logical impossibility of torture happening at home relied on the binarisation of the ‘home/abroad’ distinction for its psychotic effectiveness. Similarly, the logical impossibility of terrorists happening at home (that is, being born and raised in Britain) relies on the binarisation of the national/non-national or native/immigrant distinction for its effectiveness. No wonder the judges couldn’t make sense of it. My dear Law Lords, you are dealing here with a psychotic product of binarisation whose logic is not that of reasonable people. Yet, who in their right mind would be willing to accept that sovereign governments are capable of psychotic reactions which may affect the quality/quantity of their decisions? Isn’t it strange, for example, that it just takes a single terrorist act in mainland Europe for the UK government to announce an increase in security spending?⁴³

However, the government at the time did listen to reason. Had they not listened to the Law Lords’ reasons, the case would have gone to the European Court in Strasburg and the embarrassment would have been far worse, because it would have

⁴¹ ‘Each portion which returns from oblivion asserts itself with peculiar force, exercises an incomparably powerful influence on people in the mass, and raises an irresistible claim to truth against which logical objections remain powerless [...] This remarkable feature can only be understood on the pattern of the delusions of the psychotics.’ Sigmund Freud, ‘Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays’, in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XXIII (1939), p. 85.

⁴² See *A v. Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2004] UKHL 56.

⁴³ David Cameron, for example, announced on 16 November 2015 that 2,000 new spies would be recruited shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris.

come from abroad. If Parliament didn't accept the Law Lords' invitation to change the Act under their 'declaration of incompatibility', then it was very likely that it would have been required to do so by the European Court. After the Belmarsh decision, the detainees remained in prison until the offending part (Part 4) of the Anti-terrorism Act 2001 was repealed. Why? Because the detention of non-British suspects was provided for in an Act of Parliament, and Parliament is sovereign. That means that there is no legal limits on the laws it can make. It has the legal authority to enact whatever laws it wishes, and no one, including the highest court in the land, can overrule a law made by parliament, even if that law is shown to be irrational, illogical or, quite simply, mad. Now, parliament in the UK is made of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Following Baroness Hale's intuition that there is something odd about the Commons' post-9/11 habit of rushing legislation at top speed, one could argue that the better the Lords become at listening to the Commons, and at holding them to account, the more chances the UK Parliament will have of making it into the next century.

The Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 had been a swift and very popular reaction to the events of September 11th in America. The UK parliament had manufactured a law that was clearly inconsistent with the international obligations binding the UK with the EU. The UK was not legally entitled to derogate from those obligations under the sneaky 'derogation order' 2001 that was added to the Human Rights Act 1998 (SI 2001/3644). Instead of humiliating parliament as they deserved (for their unthinkingness), Lord Bingham of Cornhill came up with a brilliant alternative. He gave the elective representatives of England a sense of their own history and made them feel proud by reminding them the words of the 1215 Magna Carta: 'No one should be imprisoned except according to the law.' This is nothing but the old *habeas corpus*; yet, when English MPs were told that they had invented it, they somehow got all patriotic and felt proud and started believing in it.⁴⁴ The government changed its mind. Before the Belmarsh decision, tough anti-terrorist measures had been popular. Once the government heard the Law Lords arguments, a lot of support for the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 evaporated.

Superseding the hard pre-Belmarsh system of direct and tough intervention against terrorism, there is now a softer new regime composed of solicitors, barristers, judges, and jurists whose main job is to find loopholes in the law and circumvent it in the least traceable way for the benefit of their powerful masters. These new law technologists have produced cutting edge pieces of legislation such as snoopers' charters and prevent strategies, which must be read in the tradition of Jean Baudrillard as experimental alterity, unexchangeable diversion, deviation, curvature; an indefinable strategy of shadows betraying the rule of law as its Nazi/fascist abstract/symbolic other.⁴⁵ If Belmarsh is so important in international relations today it is because it signals a change from hard to soft power: from direct body-to-body confrontations, kidnapping and imprisonment of suspected terrorist to smart surveillance, control orders, monitoring, and tagging; from on-the-ground military operations to cyberwar or the continuation of conflict by digital means; and from direct extra-judicial interventions by the spy agencies abroad to acting by proxy.

After Belmarsh, Usuk's security services act by proxy in the international arena – rather than acting directly. Under the protection of the law, or rather under its shadow, Western national security agencies have been involved in red-flag operations in Africa and the Middle East. By proxy they are responsible for bribes, ransoms, drone killings, armament deals, exchanges of prisoners, cover-up operations, tender-fixing, money laundering, tax-evading and other shoddy practices. The use of proxies guarantees that violence and corruption can spread muscularly on the ground with complete autonomy from any referential meaning. The new proxy regime might be neither appropriate nor justified. Yet it cannot be proven to be disproportionate or unlimited – because of a total lack of referents.

To the victims and the families of the dead, however, the distinction between proxy and non-proxy state-sponsored terrorism might not matter at all. Their anger and their grief must overwhelm any theoretical consideration. But the distinction matters enormously to me. Why? Because I can give a voice to those who have died at the hands of third-party operators in far-away lands by warning Usuk's spy agencies that their new by-proxy methods of counter-terrorism, being less certain, more deviant, more fuzzy and more ambiguous, are also less efficient, more desperate, risky and unpredictable. Further, these by-proxy methods end up being exposed and elaborated upon – uncertainty and ambiguity

⁴⁴ With a blatant disregard for human rights, the secret services were threatening a long libertarian tradition in 'English law, dating back to chapter 39 of Magna Carta 1215, given effect in the ancient remedy of habeas corpus, declared in the Petition of Right 1628, upheld in a series of landmark decisions down the centuries and embodied in the substance and procedure of the law to our own day,' as Lord Bingham put it in the Belmarsh decision.

⁴⁵ See Jean Baudrillard, 'The Roots of Evil' in *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: Semotext (e) Intervention Series, 2011).

give way to speculation, producing all sorts of monsters in the minds of investigators and researchers. Third-party double-dealings, bribes, torture, kidnappings, disappearances and assassinations in developing countries not only leave many clues and traces behind but also trigger an unbounded curiosity in interested parties. Besides, these are hardly the methods one would like to associate with 'free' democratic societies.

Most importantly, suspicious deaths bring public enquiries by friends and family of the disappeared. Many of these enquiries end up in the English courts⁴⁶, which have become a magnet for human rights activists since the Belmarsh Prison case decision – which came as a real surprise; not because the government's argument wasn't weak but because the highest court in the land was prepared to recognise that weakness and condemn the government's position. With the condemnation of the government came the denunciation of its spy services as undemocratic. This opened the door to a redefinition of concept of 'national security'. The Law Lords found 'national security' unnerving to say the least. Killing a 'stranger' is always a bit nerve-racking, even if it is done in the name of 'national security'. Judges are uncomfortable with this performative expression. As with porn, spies can count that 'national security' will make the average man in the street go hard – as James Bond does. But the judges can't live in this pornographic world, crammed as it is with images of S&M, kidnapping, imprisonment, torture and murder.

The confusion, collusion and collision between immigration issues and security issues is also seen as a problem by the judges. The latest of such judicial objections to the confusion between security and immigration has happened in the US where federal judge James L. Robart effectively opposed Trump's 90-day ban on entry by citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries (as well as refugee admission for 120 days) with a temporary restraining order. The import/export of state-terrorism to/from other countries is considered a major dilemma for the judiciary. It is against this background of institutional challenge and rebellion by the highest judges in the land (who are losing their patience with spies and spooks) that the secret services' participation in Usuk's offensive by-proxy and cyberwar programmes can be read. As cyberspace becomes more important in the conflict between nations (being a newish fashionable battleground) and as governments increase their 'offensive' and 'defensive' cyberwar capabilities, the judges are becoming increasingly concerned about *where* this new war is being waged (everywhere?) and *how* (in secret?) and by *whom* (the intelligence agencies?).

The 'Insurrection of the Law Lords' of England and Wales in 2004 against the Labour Government can be easily compared with the rebellion of the Barons against King John in 1215. Previous to Carta Magna, revolt against misgovernment typically took the form of killing, eliminating, or removing one person to replace it for another person. But the Magna Carta gave written expression to a revolutionary programme of legal and governmental reform by peaceful means. Since Magna Carta, English parliamentary democracy represents success at managing reform without revolution. The 2004 insurrection of the Law Lords against the Labour government was embodied in the form of a Belmarsh judgement which had the capacity to resonate beyond the shores of the UK because there is a common law context out-there, including the US, and that informs the construction of that judgement. It is surprising to find how much of the Magna-Carta spirit still breathes through a 2004 judgement that is premised largely on the common law, the European Convention of Human Rights, and also on a global convention against torture.

Like the Magna Carta, the Belmarsh judgement aspires to be something bigger and better. It significantly enhances the role of English judges and the English Legal System in the eyes of many other places in the world. It impresses friends and enemies alike. But, most importantly, it sets up a new paradigm for the judicial as a separate entity from the political. Judicial democracy, on the one hand, is a minority democracy or anti-majority democracy based on Human Rights who are especially meant for the people who are alienated, discriminated against, trodden, and abused – the unpopular people and the dangerous people, including 'terrorists'. These are the people whose rights have to be respected the same as everybody else. And, on the other hand, there is a majority democracy based on the will of ordinary people whose elected representatives incarnate in the exception of the decision. The exception, which is not codified in the existing legal order, can at best be characterised after 9/11 as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state posed by international terrorism. This is an existential situation, an extreme case of conflict that can be comprehended and distinguished by being framed within the friend/enemy binary opposition. Essentially, 'terrorists' intend to negate one's

⁴⁶ One of those revelatory enquiries began in Court 73 of London's Royal Courts of Justice on 15 September 2014 and was concluded on 26 February 2015. HM Assistant Coroner for West Sussex, His Honour Judge Nicholas Hilliard QC, conducted the inquest. See Jeremy Keenan, *Report on In Amenas: Inquest Cover-up and Western Involvement in Algerian State Crimes* (London: International State Crime Initiative, Queen Mary University of London, 2016).

way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's form of existence. The friend/enemy antithesis is the strongest and most intense distinction or categorisation of the political.

7. PARLIAMENTARY PSYCHOSIS

What if members of parliament are 'good' psychotics who churn out irrational though perfectly consistent legislation? Perhaps there is nothing wrong with the MPs themselves but something wrong their 'vision'. The scandal of psychosis in the UK Parliament is to 'see' the world through the prism of the Middle East. The Middle Easternisation of Westminster is often a form of violence, a sly kind of imperialist tyranny. Perhaps it is just Dr Who's time travelling: an impossible return back to the future – to the New Middle Ages perhaps? The Crusades in the Middle Ages were a series of wars which the Christians of Europe launched against the Muslims. Today's crusade is one 'in reverse', as Isis attracts fighters from all over the world, like the crusaders did in the medieval known world. Like Dr Who, MPs are able to evolve their biology by debating important issues in parliament, so they can be Jekyll when they feel constructive and positive and Hyde when they feel destructive and like killing a few Muslims. Like Dr Who, MPs love planet Earth, so they enlist earthlings (the secret services) to help them with the task of gathering intelligence to save some poor souls from the tyranny of the supervillain. Saddam, Gaddafi, and now Assad: aren't these dictators' fate discussed in the UK parliament with more passion than any item of domestic policy?

I hope that I am not stretching my comparison too much by saying that the House of Commons is like a mental institution that houses all sorts of mentally ill patients, most of them suffering from psychotic episodes, paranoia, and delusions of grandeur; and that the House of Lords is like the doctors and staff residence, accommodating the psychologists, the psychiatrists, and the nurses that take care of the patients. Mentally ill patients usually listen to their doctors and nurses. When the Lords told the Commons that it was incompatible to lock people up indefinitely without trial on suspicion of being terrorists because 'they only did it to foreigners', they listened. To their credit, the Commons didn't renew that legislation; instead, they introduced 'control orders' for both nationals and non-nationals suspected of terrorism in the new 2005 Act. Interestingly, these are preventive orders, falling short of detention and imprisonment, aimed at controlling the activities of people being suspected of being terrorists. But the discriminatory way in which the Act gives the judge total knowledge of the case (including secrets passed on by the Home Secretary) and the total ignorance by the controlled person about the case against him/her (partially remedied by a Special Advocate who does have full access and can test the secret material to decide if any of it can be revealed to the controlled person) invited a novel interpretation by the judges to reverse effect. The Lords said that you couldn't withhold material if the withholding of the material would mean that the controlled person did not have a fair hearing in court. So the judge can, after all, order the Home Secretary to disclose that secret information. And the Home Secretary has a choice: either to disclose it or to withdraw the application for the control order.

From the above one can gather that secrecy which, until recently, had been a prerogative of the government and its agencies, is up for grabs and can no longer be guaranteed. It is in the context of this loss of control over secrecy and against the Belmarsh case (the most magisterial and eloquent judicial rebuke to an Attorney General since Lord Denning in *Gouriet v. Union of Post Office Workers*, 1997) that the Snowden scandal begins to make some sort of sense. The last decade of the twentieth century had been disastrous for the spy agencies. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought the friend/foe delusion to an abrupt end, and with their 40-year-old foe's disappearance a crisis of identity ensued, particularly in the US. An attempt was made to reconstruct the friend/enemy distinction via the Islamist threat. And only when the American Dream of being number One in the world began to reassert itself in the national psyche thanks to their overwhelming military presence in the Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and everywhere else in our planet, something unexpected occurred: the global rise of internet/digital technologies.

The same war communications weapons which the US military had helped to create were now in civilian hands. Within the spy agencies there was deep frustration that they couldn't get things done. The eyes of the media, civil liberties groups and hacker organisations were on them. And as a result of that, they looked at influencing government to change legislation in their favour. But, when the opportunity arose to make that change, when the state of emergency was invoked to protect governmental actions from close scrutiny and accountability in the days and the weeks following 9/11, the spy-friendly legislation which was rushed at top speed through parliament backfired. After the Belmarsh decision, there was even more frustration within the agencies that they couldn't get things done.

In the years that followed the Belmarsh case, even British troops were weakened in their fight against terrorists because they feared human rights lawyers would take them to court. By 2015, British taxpayers were facing a £150 million bill for defending more than 2,000 separate legal cases brought by people claiming to have suffered breaches of their human rights in Iraq and Afghanistan. The ‘consejo-de-guerra’ type of trial which, until the globalisation of human rights legislation, had been a prerogative of the military, was going civil; uncannily following a similar evolutionary path to the religious courts in the late middle ages under Western secularisation. And, as a result of that progressive erosion of military authority, they looked at measures other than the traditional ones to attempt a resurrection. This is how the Snowden scandal begins to acquire a pre-history. During the twentieth century, the agencies had been at the heart of the establishment since the glorious days of Bletchley Park, and throughout the Cold War they had a star role to play in a copy version of *From Russia with Love* (one of the best Fleming stories), but now, with some justification, they were and still are very angry with the government, with parliament and with the judiciary. Today, the agencies are full of anger and frustration at the government and its legislation, because it has worked against them. Both the Patriot Act in the US and its transcontinental twin, the Anti-terrorism Act 2001 in the UK, were meant to facilitate the surveillance, arrest, capture and prosecution of terrorist suspects. But they ended up being a hurdle or impasse which made the work of the agencies much more difficult and much more exposed to the scrutiny of a powerful minority than before 9/11.

Anyone visiting Paris, New York or London – with their armed police, airport security, blast barriers, even train announcements to remain vigilant – senses governments in thrall to terror. The magic of post-referential language informs the general trend of de-referentialisation, depoliticisation and neutralisation that occurs when terror becomes semio-terror. As symbolism experimented with the separation of the linguistic signifier from its denotative and referential function, so law-makers lend themselves to psychosis by breaking the referential-denotative link between the word and the world – and not ‘just’ through dodgy laws and traceable loopholes that favour the rich. They are also subjected to the hegemonic power of de-referentialisation through excessive media attention and popular political drama TV shows, such as *The House of Cards* and *The Good Wife*, which give politicians the vicarious illusion of action and the false security of political entitlement.

8. THE HORROR OF PERFORMATIVE MEMES

Before the ideas of French Revolution were consolidated and expanded by Napoleon, there were only persons. A person could be insulted personally. A person had honour, that is, a reputation to maintain, a network of friends and enemies, patrons and servants, slaves and dependants, a whole spider web of human relationships which could be tarnished by the insult. The person was sovereign. He ruled on the exception. He was the owner of an authoritative opinion. The existence/subsistence of a human body as the repository of an idea was the heritage/legacy of many centuries of oral tradition and the educational monopoly of the Church. Physical persons were, so to speak, administrative entities of their own concepts and categories, with property rights over them. Physical persons were also responsible for concepts and categories, opinions and ideas which could be proven to be too competitive or destabilising of the current paradigm. Arius, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Miguel Servet, Spinoza, and Uriel Acosta, were all guarantors, physical possessors, and receptacles of dangerous heresies and ideas which could be eliminated by burning, destroying, or torturing their originator/carrier. To be king one had to be of the same blood as the previous one; to take her or his place one had to kill her/him or wait for them to die naturally. One could also usurp her/his throne by dubious means. But it was always a physical ‘person’ not an ‘idea’ who had to be fought, misled, demoted, defeated, or killed.

The process of getting rid of a king or president or prime minister is completely different today. The state is no longer worried about that archaic superstition that made physical killing a must among high achievers. An opinion is not embodied by a physical person but by an immaterial entity: a big database that returns crunched or very limited results as a consequence of being queried – due to pattern matching and an increase in the multiplication of instances of the same/similar. The bigger the database the smaller the number of opinions that circulate in a society. This phenomenon was already prognosticated by the great John Maynard Keynes before the advent of computers.⁴⁷ The mass of individuals

⁴⁷ In his *Treatise on Probability*, chapter XX, on ‘Pure Induction’, Keynes not only expands on Hume’s fumbblings with cause/effect interactions but also improves on Hegel’s flirtations with quantitative/qualitative relations (pls. see Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences, Part 1. The Logic*, secs.107-111 on ‘Quantity C. Measure’), explaining stagnation and the limits of growth with elegant simplicity by a mere multiplication of instances increasing towards certainty.

which forms this society is educated/indoctrinated/manipulated/formed by the mass/social-media. Yet their opinions are remarkably similar and extremely narrow. This permits democracy to thrive. A few gimmicks or memes may suffice a candidate to get elected for office. For example, the slogan ‘Yes we can’ won Obama the presidency of the US. And this slogan helped Trump get elected President: ‘Make America Great Again’. This shouldn’t surprise us. The techniques of commercial advertising have infected American politics to such an extent that the electorate has become critically vulnerable to this kind of short and mysterious phrases.

However, ever since Richard Dawkins came up with the concept of ‘meme’⁴⁸, we can say that Americans are used to reason in memes. Dawkins’ meme is a rough but genial conception which brings to my mind the more sophisticated work of the great (though now largely forgotten) Victor Klemperer on how the Third Reich in Nazi Germany ‘permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms and sentence structures that were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously’.⁴⁹ Klemperer was the first to notice that Hitler’s world was made of small patterns and repetitions. Because our world is also made of small patterns and repetitions, we have to ask the following question: What if our world is Hitler’s world, the world as he had imagined it?⁵⁰

In our age of information, online services providers, such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Twitter, offer users free information sharing services, and facilitate their digital communication, expression, and interaction. But users’ arguments and exchanges are expected to be short. Twitter, for example, limits its tweets’ length to 140 characters. And Facebook’s ubiquitous ‘like’ makes slacktivism easy. In the age of psychosis, in the era of unreason, no one is expected to argue their point. Saying, for example, ‘I am a feminist’ suffices to be considered a feminist. The magic of certain words, their performative/repetitive incantation resonates in the hearts and minds of the people louder and clearer than any balanced argument or argued reasoning. In our age, there isn’t objective truth: facts really don’t matter, reasons don’t matter, arguments don’t matter, and even if they did, only a tiny minority has retained the ability to argue, the capacity to reason.

Western democratic states and their spy agencies have both merged into and define something that one might call the post-truth age; the fact that no one expects anybody to back up their claims with truth anymore, either by unconscious choice or by having lost the capacity to reason, turns democracy into superstition. Voting, touching wood, throwing salt, not walking under ladders, not using certain numbers, cursing, are all things I prefer not to take seriously, even if the rest of the world honours them, according to ancient pagan or religious references. People don’t expect political leaders and, least of all their agencies, to give explanations anymore; they don’t need to invoke secrecy or national security to excuse their lack of transparency. Even if they had the freedom to reveal their most guarded secrets, no one expects them to back up their claims with truth: ‘This election is a total sham and a travesty. We are not a democracy!’ tweeted Donald Trump on 7th November 2012 at 4:33 AM. This kind of post-reasoning heralds the end of that liberal/democratic modernity which began with the enlightenment almost three hundred years ago.

Why is this important? Why should this matter to us? This should matter enormously to us because it can lead to raining bombs on poor countries in response to terrorist attacks. The use of out-of-the-blue short sentences is euphemistically called ‘straight talking politics’ when it should really be called ‘slips of the tongue’; and whether it is Jeremy Corbyn

⁴⁸ The ‘meme’ is a unit of cultural transmission. Tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, slogans, and clothes fashions are examples of memes. ‘Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation’. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 192.

⁴⁹ Political discourse in America (in the early 2010s) is permeated by unconscious structures (e.g., ‘yes we can’) linguistically similar to those of Nazi Germany. As Klemperer put it: ‘What was the most powerful Hitlerian propaganda tool? Was it the individual speeches of Hitler and Goebbels, their pronouncements on this or that theme, their rabble-raising against the Jews, against Bolshevism? Certainly not, because a lot of this was not even understood by the masses, or it bored them in its endless repetitions [. . .] No, the most powerful influence was exerted neither by individual speeches nor by articles or flyers, posters or flags; it was not achieved by things which one had to absorb by conscious thought or conscious emotions. Instead Nazism permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously.’ Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich* (London & New York: The Athlone Press, 2012), pp. 13-14.

⁵⁰ Hitler comparisons are always tricky. 2017 is not 1945. Trump and Putin are not Roosevelt and Stalin. Angela Merkel is not Adolf Hitler. And yet the latter’s semio-populist incantatory repetitive world - as described by Klemperer - and Usuk’s obsession with memes might belong to the realm of the same and the similar.

saying 'I don't care', or Boris Johnson saying 'Israel is democratic', or David Cameron going public about when he was going to leave government, the question remains: Is this what's expected from typical politicians? Or does it represent something deeper, hidden, and much more sinister? Let me stop here for a second to look at a recent example of parliamentary psychosis in the feverish run-up to military action in Syria after the attacks in Paris that killed 129 people on Friday 13th November, 2015.

Nobody expected to see Francois Hollande making the same mistakes as George Bush did with his post-9/11 Patriot Act, seeking to defend liberty by destroying liberty. Although of short stature, Hollande is no Napoleon. He who decides on the exception is meant to be exceptional. But Hollande is everyman. On his new aggressive/militaristic/imperialistic role, he is out of his comfort zone and sounds hardly convincing. His speech at the Palace of Versailles resounded with the words 'Islam' or 'Muslim' or 'Islamism'; words he never once had the courage to pronounce before that day. More surprisingly, he spoke of 'assassins' and 'jihadist terrorists', and of 'Frenchmen who had murdered other French people' to 'attack our values and our way of life.' The Us/Them distinction is what happens to weak men when they have to prove they are tough macho men: they just become dangerous!

On Saturday 14th November 2015, a day after the Paris attacks, the French Constitution was amended to allow for the state of emergency to be declared for a three-month period. The 300 police raids and arrests made on suspected Islamist sympathisers in the following days would have not been possible without the state of emergency being declared on Saturday 14th. What is the 'state of emergency'? It is a temporary suspension of the 'rule of law' which gives draconian powers of extrajudicial investigation and arrest to the state. Hollande announced an extra 9,500 jobs in security, judicial and border control services; a rapprochement with Russia to strengthen military action against Isis (Islamic State); and radical legal reforms to allow easier expulsion of illegal immigrants and the stripping of French citizenship from terrorists with dual nationality.

The choice of an immigration measure to address a security problem has the inevitable result of failing to address the problem that, as suspected international terrorists, their departure for another country could amount to exporting terrorism – a form of 'terror-mercantilism' which is part of a larger 'migro-mercantilism'; or the doctrine by which you block people coming into the country, encourage people leaving (particularly Muslims), and keep the 'good' human stock at home, monitored by spooks and protected by high walls.⁵¹ As we have learnt from the Belmarsh case, further legal problems arise when you allow non-French suspected terrorist to leave the country with impunity and leave French nationals suspected terrorists at large, while imposing, under the state of emergency, extrajudicial detention on persons who, even if reasonably suspected of having links to Isis, may harbour no hostile intentions towards France. To round off his hard-line reaction to the Paris attacks, Hollande also announced that he was triggering the 'mutual defence' clause in the EU Lisbon Treaty to oblige the other 27 member countries to join in the fight against 'war terrorism'.

European Union defence ministers meeting in Brussels unanimously agreed to provide military aid to help France fight Isis invoking Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty whereby if a member country 'is the victim of armed aggression on its territory' other members are obliged to provide 'aid and assistance by all the means in their power'. Article 42.7 is similar in language – though not in scope – to NATO's Article 5 which says an attack on one ally is an attack on all; indeed, NATO's article 5 was invoked by the US government immediately after 9/11. Among the countries that expressed their strongest support and readiness to act in response to the Paris attacks was the UK. Its Prime Minister, David Cameron, was paying his respects nine days after the attacks outside the Bataclan concert venue where 89 people were killed, before standing with Hollande in the Élysée Palace offering the use of Britain's RAF base on Cyprus to launch airstrikes against Isis in Syria.

Natural born politicians like David Cameron tend to get carried away by the state of exception because it's one of those rare moments in democratic politics where one can be sovereign – that is, be 'he who decides on the exception' – according to Carl Schmitt's definition.⁵² Mr Cameron handed specific intelligence on threats and suspects to Hollande which, for unknown reasons, had not been passed on to him by the DGSI and DGSE, the French equivalents of MI5 and MI6. This was just a hint of how much Europe needed Cameron in its fight against terror and terrorism. But it was also a

⁵¹ Donald Trump's obtuse plan (1) to build an 'impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful, southern border wall' between the US and Mexico and his insensitive plan (2) to ban all Muslims from entering the US: Aren't they reminders of this psychotic confusion between security and immigration?

⁵² Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 5.

symptom of politics by the back door and undisclosed, behind-the-scenes, top-secret offers of help. By extending this manner of doing politics to the EU negotiation with Poland, for example, the UK Prime Minister might be overstepping his/her state-of-exception sovereign power. Two months later, the deal-breaker to ensure Polish support for an emergency brake allowing Britain to cut in-work benefits for EU migrant workers was the back-door offer (by Michael Fallon, the UK defence secretary, to his Polish counterpart Witold Waszczykowski) to send British troops to Poland, both on exercises and as part of NATO presence there to counteract Russia's threat. Although both sides have denied a trade-off, it is strange how progress on one issue can be made in separate and apparently unrelated negotiations.

When David Cameron called on the UK Parliament to back air strikes on Isis in Syria, he made no mention of the possibility of reclaiming back the holy city of Jerusalem nor did he pledge to send British ground troops to Syria or Iraq. Of course, ground troops are there alright; apparently, providing aid, training and assisting the 'moderates'. According to Cameron, there were 70,000 local moderates who were ready to chew Isis to death once our brave pilots dropped the bombs. Isn't insulting to one's intelligence to hear a proposal to throw more bombs on an area where thousands had already been killed and millions displaced? As in the times of the British Empire, one must let the 'darker races' do the dirtiest jobs. In other words, what Cameron was desiring something which was totally absent, inaccessible to him and not in his possession – that is, except in history books: the continued presence of the colonial-troops racist delusion. The British Parliament had taken lethal war decisions before, but never as a result of such shadow and indeterminate claim as 'there are 70,000 moderates on the ground ready to help us'. Even Tony Blair was extremely specific when he hinted that Saddam could attack us in 45 minutes. It took MPs 11 hours and 24 minutes to vote in favour of sending the RAF into Syria. But this feat of physical endurance by MPs wasn't match by an equal dosage of intellectual brilliance. To start with, David Cameron called his opponents 'terrorist sympathisers' while the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, said that Mr Cameron 'demeaned his office' with such a remark. And many other MPs interrupted the MP in vain, seeking an apology. The opportunity was missed to see in Cameron's One=All equation a symptom of group psychosis in the aftermath of Paris' traumatic events.

But there was an even better opportunity to spot something of real significance here by challenging the idea that one needed to be convinced by someone's argument. 'The action we propose to take is legal, it is necessary and it is the right thing to do to keep our country safe,' said Cameron. In reply, Mr Corbyn lambasted the Prime Minister's case as full of holes. And one could see the hand of Labour's new spin doctor, Seumas Milne, in the following: 'the lack of a strategy worth the name, the absence of credible ground troops, the missing diplomatic plan for Syrian settlement, the failure to address the impact on the terrorist threat or the refugee crisis and civilian casualties. . . It has become increasingly clear that the Prime Minister's proposal for military action simply doesn't stack up.' Of course, it doesn't stack up and it is full of holes. In perhaps as long as 10 hours of tense debate, ill-informed MPs, stuffed with incoherent arguments – like honking geese forced-fed nostalgia and hate to produce a revolting pâté of groundless opinion – voted in favour of air strikes that killed hundreds and terrified thousands.

In the age of psychosis, there aren't objective truths: facts really don't matter, reasons don't matter, arguments don't matter, and even if they did, only a tiny minority has retained the ability to argue, the capacity to reason. Interestingly, Cameron's arguments were too short and too furious to be considered arguments. They rather fall under the category of out-of-the-blue assumptions. For example, opening the war debate in the House of Commons, he said: 'We face a fundamental threat to our security.' Shortly after he went on to assure MPs that 'this threat is very real' in case they thought he had invented the whole scenario. 'And the question is: Do we work together with our allies to degrade and destroy this threat? And do we go after these terrorists in their heartlands, from where they are plotting to kill British people? Or do we sit back and wait for them to attack us?' Then, if anyone objected, he replied: 'Look, we must move on.'⁵³ Indeed, MPs were expected to move on with such bewildering haste that the only option was to conceal their sorrow. Most people would agree that, after such momentous vote whereby hundreds of people are going to get killed in far-away lands, grief cannot be measured in hours, months, or even years. It might take a life time for the MPs to wash their blood-stained hands. And several generations for the descendants of those killed to forget about the bombing.

One can easily predict that, in 10 years' time, lots of MPs who had voted for military action then, will consider that the bombing of Syria was a catastrophe, a not-too-different fiasco from the one caused by the decision taken 10 years before to invade Iraq under Tony Blair. Blair told us then that Saddam could attack us in 45 minutes. Yet, unlike Cameron, Blair

⁵³ See note 36 on the concept of 'unthinkingness'.

did construct whole arguments and did finish his sentences. Now we were told by Cameron that he has intelligence confirming the fact that there are 70,000 moderates waiting for us to help out. It doesn't take a consultation with Seumas Milne (who knows that there isn't just one but about 20 different Jihadi groups in the area and can recite them at high speed) to call into question the existence of '70,000 moderates'. It was a fiction, a desire for something that was ultimately lacking, a delusion supported by the cartoon-like pornified intelligence provided by the spy agencies. Presumably now, most people would believe Cameron if he said: 'Get rid of the spy agencies and you get rid of the fiction.'

Even though memes are immaterial, they are hardly fictional. Why? Because they fuel hate. They acquire their psychotic destructive power by 'binarisation', or the process of accumulation and refinement that converts all dyads into One. Unconsciously repressing the ambivalence of Two, hate is 'binarised' from the dyad 'love/hate' into either hate or love – either love or hate is felt but the two are kept apart. 'Good' parliamentary psychosis keeps the idealised and demonised polarity of 'love and hate' under the radar of a reality where they tend to coexist as simultaneous and non-exclusive emotions. Floating free from the grounding complications of everyday reality, hate energises the hearts and the souls of the elected representatives of the people, getting them hooked on this intensity of feeling, this all-or-nothing abandonment to the purity of One. So MPs can order air raids in foreign lands and kill innocent civilians while, at the same time, they can feel proud of themselves – since the purity of One justifies extremes of behaviour towards the hated, licensing violence towards them.

The highest level of hate and violence is reserved for those groups that pose a threat to the purity of the nation through inter-breeding. It is all to do with breeding, and the sick idea is that groups like Jews, Muslims and Gypsies are inbreeding bad antisocial values and therefore they shouldn't be allowed to breed. This is why the same antisemitism that was absolute common currency in 19th-century Europe has boomeranged its way via the 20th-century holocaust catastrophe in a full ellipse to manifest itself in the anti-Muslim feeling of today.⁵⁴ Above all, it is important to be aware of the problem of MPs unconsciously mixing a target with a position. If their target is a certain group of Muslims, then you have to ask the question 'Where?' to find where that target might be. Well, the position of the Muslim target today is the same position occupied by the Jew target in the 20th century.

By masking representative democracy with floating, independent signifieds, MPs targets are totally detached from their referent on the ground. Binary oppositions can be compared to the blades of a helicopter: when they start rotating, wind is blown, a lift is produced; such is the height of the lift achieved by the binary oppositional 'helicopter' that all contact with earth is lost. Thus admitting that parliament is 'real' and that the government has something to do with 'reality', say, by hate-voting in favour of bombing Muslims, is like admitting that the state apparatus is not delusional, that it represents the reality on the ground when, in fact, it represents representation for its own sake – because it is no longer a parliamentary democracy but a parliamentary semiocracy.

The political is the psychotic by-and-through the delusion of representation. Governments 'psychopathise' under the gravity of One and the phenomenon of binarisation. Western democratic leaders don't govern over realities: they govern over symbols, brands, labels, patents, memes, and icons. Binary oppositional thinking produces a parthenogenesis⁵⁵ of

⁵⁴ Casual anti-Semitism appears in most of the great works of literature of the 19th century. Coexisting side by side with the artistry on the page, you had the Dreyfus case in France, the pogroms in Russia, and Karl Lueger doing good things in Vienna in terms of urban improvements (though he was a virulent antisemite). And I think what is novel in this era is the growth of the kind of pseudo-scientific rationale for antisemitism. Reflected in essays like Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau ('An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races') which is not only antisemitic but also claims that there is a scientific basis for it.

⁵⁵ Since modern members of parliament break the referential-denotative link between the law and its generative intervention in physical matter and muscular work, their legal parthenogenesis eliminates any possibility for courts and parliaments to achieve a single consistent rule of law, unless laws are reproduced in a simplified version to cover up extrajudicial actions by the security services, which are both simulated and stimulated by bribery, corruption, set-ups, traitors and informers employed for the benefit of government. However shiny and promising the idea of the rule of law may at first have seemed, it couldn't be expressed, or taken hold of, unless it was blown up into little pieces and dispersed so that, hovering above the world, the little pieces had meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another independently of what was happening on the ground. This is what in the jargon-studded literary theory of my student days was referred to as 'structuralism' in the writings of Claude Lévi-strauss, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida.

meaning: signs produce and reproduce signs without any longer passing through the flesh. For instance, the financial automation of the world produces monetary value without being first realised through the material production of goods, and individuals are valued in a similar fashion according to a series of tags which are independent of the body to which they refer. Similarly, in psychotic societies like Usuk, memes win elections without meaning anything in particular. Paradigmatic examples (repeated already) are Obama's 'yes, we can' and Trump's 'Make America Great Again'.

Parliamentary democracy is leading the experimental phase of the 'parthenogenesis of terror' or the creation of terror through terror without the generative intervention of physical matter and muscular work. So I would like to add '45 minutes' and '70,000 moderates' to my list of 'killer memes'. For both the 45-minutes claim by Blair and the 70,000-moderates claim by Cameron served the purpose of getting MPs to vote in favour of killing people abroad. What is important here is to realise that we are no longer concerned with the 'content' of these expressions. The meaning of '45 minutes' & '70,000 moderates' is irrelevant. What we care about right now is whether we can establish a commonality of form, pattern or idea with other expressions, and from those links we can draw inferences. What these memes have in common is their shortness, their lack of meaning, and their hollowness. Politicians need no longer to reflect on the world; they can produce words and images like artists, semotically and reflectively throwing words to-and-fro, perfecting and repeating them back to themselves. So, in this sense, the criminal minority that order mass killings from the comfort of their seats in parliament, belong to the human race not as individuals but as persons reflecting perfection and beauty through the patterns they so convincingly create – catchy and repetitive memes which, unlike them, might be beautiful, interesting, and compelling.

What their extremely contagious memes actually 'mean' is the rejection of every intellectually conscious decision and the adoption of the moment as the ultimate source of political inspiration. Since that historical period called 'romanticism', artists are creatures of talent, instinct, inspiration, irrationality, and boundless energy. Politicians now fall into that category. Like artists, politicians cannot be blamed for the 'evil' they cause, because they fall into the second definition of 'evil' by Spinoza as 'naturae potential'. To put it simply, politicians are evil like the beasts – by which one has to understand their evil as innocent because it is without real sin. All sovereign semiocratic decisions taken in parliament are representational and therefore impossible, for if they were possible they would have to live in a different dimensionality of space/time. The second important thing we should care about regarding memes is whether one can claim that they have originated from one person alone or from the whole society and whether that person or society is capable of 'evil'. Thomas Hobbes, for example, understood 'evil' as innocent because he denied sin. He understood man as by nature free, that is, without obligation. Here one has in embryonic form the idea of human rights as claims of individuals upon the state and contrary to a state born of that subtle distinction between society and the state.⁵⁶

Beyond the political and the judicial, the psychotic is marked by the articulation of a particular kind of discourse and a set of practices around the repetition of single words, idioms, slogans, and short sentence structures – which I have called 'memes' following Dawkins' definition. Rather than saying things with such persuasive authority that there is no room for manoeuvre but to agree, contemporary MPs go 'morally viral' with short phrases and couplings of words which can penetrate the moral code of a society (unconsciously) by mimicking the structure of binary oppositions. The essence of memes is that they are meant to be small and virulent; that is to say, effective by infection and able to multiply only within the living moral code of a psychotic society. They are not pure intellectual controversies nor beautifully formulated arguments like those of Lord Bingham. And this, I would argue, is why memes as 'mental weapons' are so attractive at a

⁵⁶ The I/eye middle-ground position of the psychotic results in the non-polemical description of the psychotic. As such the I/eye position opposes Hobbes's description of the state of nature. Hobbes had presented the state of nature as impossible in a society. For the state of nature is the state of war against all; in the state of nature everyone is the enemy of everyone else. Everyone/everything presupposes a threat. The TOTAL threatens One's existence. This is why, according to Carl Schmitt, the subjects of the state of nature are not individuals but totalities; and why the subjects of the state of psychosis are not persons but individuals; they are zombies or units of the social mass, which can quantitatively add themselves or associate themselves to each other 'not thinking but counting'. So, alongside the 'real' possibility of self-destruction, the psychotic possibilities of enmity/friendship and neutrality also exist. The state of psychosis so understood would be in itself impossible if it were 'real'. It is made possible by being illusionary, delusionary, and i-real. We live in a world of delusions and imagination.

time when people tend to be in thrall to the magic of performative language and any master of language (say, Barack Obama) can win a symbolic combat that keeps his audience totally under his control.

9. IS USUK'S REACTION TO TERROR/TERRORISM DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE?

Previously, I seem to have confused 9/11 with the Paris attacks as if the reactions of the US and France to terror/terrorism had been one and the same. I would like to make a little but subtle distinction between these attacks. The main difference between the foreign policies of the US and France is that the US' pre-9/11 military-diplomatic apparatuses have metamorphosed into post-9/11 military-spy apparatuses. The 'war on terror' is now US's foreign policy – let's say in its relations with other states, the state, or rather government according to the main project and desire of most sovereigns and governments in the Middle Ages, which was to occupy the imperial position with regard to other states – so that one will have a decisive role both in history and in the theophany of delivering the world from Evil. Now, the question is: What is entailed by US's international policy, by that transnational police/policing state? Well, it entails precisely an objective which could be described as unlimited: mass surveillance at a global scale. There is no limit to the objective of the US government when it is a question of managing 'evil'. The usual competition between states is precisely hinged by this unlimited objective of getting rid of terror. The binarised correlative of liberal limitations in domestic policy is the absence of a limit in the exercise of government in international relations with regard to counter-terrorism.

In actual fact, something curious has taken place. The old states of Europe, now associated under the European Union, have reiterated their right to defend their own interests, and defend them absolutely, under the seventeenth-century principle of *Raison d'État*. The idea is that each state limits its own objectives, ensures its independence and, most importantly, ensures that its forces are such that it will never be in an inferior position with respect to the set of other countries. Military-diplomatic policy is organised by the principle of the state's self-limitation and also to the principle of necessary, sufficient and fair competition between states. Let me bring France's response to their latest terrorist attack as an example to furnish my argument. There had been no terrorist attacks in France between 1996 and 2012, and it seemed that other European countries wanted to follow their example in counter-terrorism policing. Yet, after Saturday 14th November 2015, everything changed. Since the Paris attacks, the French are in a very unhappy place. They have a 'state of emergency'; they are conducting warrantless searches; large numbers of citizens are under curfew or suffering from other types of house arrests. So their practice of government in response to a major terrorist attack has organised and embodied itself in a practice of internal management, that is to say, what at this time is called 'Police State', which entails an objective or set of objectives that could be described as unlimited. The object of the Police state is almost infinite, taking charge of the activity of terrorist suspects in their territory at the most detailed, individual level. What France wants to reaffirm after the Paris terrorist attack is both their specificity and autonomy as a sovereign nation; to reinforce their borders and their sovereignty: France's identity, its existence through and for itself – only as states, in the plural.

This contrast greatly with the US's reaction to 9/11, which was very similar in content but very different in structure. The content of the reaction (state of emergency) was the same. But the structure of the reaction, its method/application, was very different. Rather than collapsing into its own 'internal' infinity, as in a fusion, the US expanded its own 'external' infinity, as in an explosion. Suddenly, the US was all over the world, over-stretching itself to ensure the material salvation of its subjects in the here-future; extending its paternal benevolence over foreign subjects and establishing father-child relationships with them, which often went no further than the offering of a few hard or chewy candies (foreign aid). Even though long-established conventions regarding human rights and civil liberties were dispensed with, the 'shit' – as the Americans say – was happening abroad: the new legal category of 'enemy combatant' in the US helped to legitimise new super-prisons and detention camps outside mainland US, where suspected terrorists were introduced to harsh interrogation techniques and to being held indefinitely without charge and often without evidence.

If the current position of Usuk is one of total international isolation it is neither because of Trump nor Brexit. Rather, it is because the object of their programmes of mass surveillance has been almost 'infinite' – and their reaction to terror/terrorism has been 'absolute'; thus, they have encroached upon other countries' sovereignty: they have carried out extrajudicial killings in other countries, breaking the 'trust' between states that ensues when they can be called upon to fix limits to *Raison d'État* under the rule of law. Of course, the US needed a partner in crime, someone with a foot in Europe and ample expertise in spy operations: the UK. Without the UK, the US is 'nothing'; and vice versa. What seems to drive the UK's defence policy in the first decade of the twenty-first century is its alliance with the US. And no UK government

feels the need to communicate this uncomfortable truth to an ‘unthinking’ population, because it wants to pretend that it continues to have an independent defence policy.⁵⁷

10. CONCLUSION

I am not proposing the closure of the spy agencies. Rather, I am stating that they are going through an existential crisis and that they are vulnerable to self-combustion. The chances of an unintended destruction of the agencies are much higher if a significant minority, like the Law Lords of England and Wales, loses faith in the secret services because liberal values have been compromised. This would endanger their survival not only at a financial level by withdrawing their funding, but equally at a political level. The post-9/11 political consensus increasingly relies on the production and management of threats, terrorist or otherwise, into which the people are delivered by spy bosses, politicians and the media. Thanks to the liberal elite that stood up to the James Bond type, gone are the good old days when you could kidnap and torture your target. The rise of human rights law in recent decades has ensured that the prohibition of torture falls under the category of *jus cogens* norms, i.e. norms which do not require state consent and for which derogation is never allowed. Gone are the days when you had a ‘licence to kill’. Still, sometimes I wonder whether the high political cost of the agencies is dictated by elaborations on a basic fantasy product: James Bond. And to sell James Bond to the masses is to hook society on the entire spy package.

The subtlest forms of suffering known to man are connected with the poisonous humiliations incidental to the perpetual dependence of the spy agencies on the James Bond myth. What these professional operators don't seem to recognise is how in certain forms of terrorism the religious consciousness takes on a monstrously ascetic form. There are terrorists who have literally fed on the negative principle, on humiliation and privation at the hands of secret security personnel, and the thought of suffering and death – their souls growing in happiness in proportion as their outward state grew more intolerable. Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and Belmarsh Prison in London have contributed more to extremism and radicalisation than any hate preacher you can think of. The scandal of torture in these two prisons absolutely forbids us to be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our Western democratic one. Even prisons have their special revelation: Hands off! Torture commands us to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may seem to us.

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⁵⁷ The latest international episode symptomatic of US/UK indivisibility in military & strategic matters happened right before the Trump administration took over on the Israel/Palestine issue. The UK government betrayed its position from a week before essentially attacking the Obama administration on a Security Council Resolution that the UK had drafted and voted for. The fear of separation from the new American government seems to be the most likely reason for this ideological betrayal. Any UK government would have this problem of blood dependency on the US in the future.

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