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The Logistics of Perception: Paul Virilio and the Concept of Pure War

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I don't claim to define the situation. I try to reveal tendencies. And I think I've revealed a number of important ones: the question of speed; speed as the essence of war; technology as producer of speed; war as logistics, not strategy; war as preparation of means and ends and no longer as battles, declarations of hostilities.—Paul Virilio

Key Words: Paul Virilio, the logistics of perception, pure war, speed-politics, risk management, the closed world, the doctrine of security, the suicidal state, exo-colonization, endo-colonization

I. Introduction

History progresses at the speed of its weapons systems.—Paul Virilio

Paul Virilio (b.1932) is a recognized architect and urbanist as well as a philosopher, having

studied under both Henri Matisse and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Although commonly associated

with that which is generically labeled 'post-modernism', Virilio's primary intellectual concern

has been with the relationship between strategic doctrine and political economy, yielding a new

post-Clausewitzean paradigm that he denotes as ***Pure War***; Virilio is 'one of [the] few French

thinkers to have abandoned the language of philosophy or sociology in favor of…war

discourse.'[2] Pure War may, in turn, be broken down into two constituent components: (i) the

convergence of political economy with strategic doctrine through the medium of speed, yielding

a new paradigm of ***speed-politics***: (ii) the incorporation of Pure War into domestic political and

social space, signified by ***the doctrine of security***. Throughout his work Virilio has substituted

Marx's mode of production with the 'mode of combat' as the primary factor of historical agency,

developing a theoretical model of social and cultural formation based upon the concepts and

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[2] Paul Virilio and Sylvere Lotringer, *Pure War*. Revised edition. Trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 9.

metaphors of both military doctrine and the physical sciences, primarily optics. The entire gamut of Virilio's complex and highly technical terminology is encapsulated in the key notion of ***the logistics of perception***; that is, the total re-configuration of contemporary political economy based upon the techno-optical innovations of surveillance, transparency, simulation, virtual reality, data collection, and targeting systems. Virilio's work represents the apotheosis of the fusion of the techno-military imaginary with the practical operations of governance, political decision making, and social control.

II. The Logistics of Perception

In the twenty-first century we're going to have to stop thinking about things, numbers of things, and mass and think also and maybe even first about speed and agility and precision.—Donald Rumsfeld

The relevance of Virilian analysis for contemporary military thought lies in the fact that Virilio is the first critical theorist to posit a wholly *circulatory theory of power*.[3] This becomes readily apparent in his analysis of the world economy, which he subsumes under the rubric of *cyber-capitalism*, the digitialization of all forms of international exchange; 'The effectiveness of electronic money lies in its mass, which increase its velocity of circulation.'[4] Virilio claims that as the 'last post-industrial resource, acceleration exceeds accumulation…the escape velocity [*vitesse de liberation*] becomes the equivalent of profit.'[5] This, of course, underscores Virilio's eschewing of historical materialism. Although it was Marx who proclaimed 'the annihilation of

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[3] Arthur Kroker, *The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French* Postmodern (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 27.

[4] Cited in Paul Virilio, *Open Sky*. Trans. Julie Rose (Verso: London, 1997), 77. See idem, 'Continental Drift', 69-86, for the digital world-economy.

[5] Paul Virilio, *Negative Horizon: An Essay in Dromoscopy*. Trans. Michael Degener (New York: Continuum, 2005)149.

space through time',[6] *speed* is not a mode of production it is a *factor* of production that has

acquired an autonomous governing force over the mode in the form of velocity.[7] Speed reduces

the being of the State to the panoptical effect of an unlimited transparency that is ultimately self-

consuming, what Virilio calls *'the aesthetics of disappearance'*; 'The state's only original

existence is as a visual hallucination akin to dreaming.'[8] Politics *'disappears into aesthetics'*

precisely through its inability to successfully uphold the 'reality principle', which is premised

upon conventional representational demarcations between the 'real', the 'visual', and the

'virtual'.[9] The centrality of *simulation* to political reality effects a foundational transformation of

social order into what Virilio calls **speed-politics**.

Virilio identifies the ontological and political 'loss of reality' of speed-politics with the

kinematic, which assumes two forms. *Kinematic optics*, or *cinematic motion*, effectively

'dissolves' substance through the acceleration of perception; time supplants space which

'deletes' Being.[10] 'Kinematic acceleration' is realized through the 'dismemberment' of

space/time into isolated 'frames', or editorial 'cuts'. In both instances of the kinematic the virtual

re-presentation of reality is now governed by alterations in the rate, or speed, of perception: 'It is

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[6] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006), 100.

[7] This subversive reversal of the explanatory categories of materialism identifies Virilio as a 'post-modern' theorist: 'while modern philosophers claim that *the substance* is essential and *the accident* relative and contingent, the post-modernists say we are seeing a reversal of this, term for term, since it is the accident that becomes *absolute* and substance, any and every substance, *relative* and contingent.' Virilio, *Open Sky*, 71. Committed to a modernist-derived notion of emancipatory politics, neo-Marxism is unable to authentically come to terms with cynical power. For Virilio as a 'hyper-modernist', see John Armitage, 'From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond: An Interview with Paul Virilio', in John Armitage (ed.), *Paul Virilio: From Modernism and Hypermodernism and Beyond* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), 25-56, passim.

[8] Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*. Trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989), 33.

[9] Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. Trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), passim.

[10] To '*save phenomena is to save their speed of apperception.*' Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 45.

reality [that] we have to measure in a cinematic way.'[11] Virilio locates the moment of the

historical emergence of the kinematic with the development of aerial reconnaissance

photography along the western front in the First World War.

At the turn of the century, cinema and aviation seemed to form a single movement. By 1914, aviation was ceasing to be strictly a means of flying and breaking records…it was becoming one way, or perhaps even the ultimate way, of *seeing*. In fact, contrary to what is generally thought, the air arm [the 'air power' of the 20th century military] grew out of the reconnaissance services, its military value having critically been questioned by the general staffs[12]…*For men at war, the function of the weapon is the function of the eye*. It is therefore quite understandable that, after 1914, the air arm's violent cinematic disruption of the space continuum, together with the lightning advance[13] of military technology, should have literally exploded the old homogeneity of vision and replaced it with the heterogeneity of perceptual fields.[14]

A perceptual 'heterogeneity', I need to add, that was mediated through the mechanical

production and distribution of the 'freeze frame' of the photograph. The 'freeze frame—the

segmentation of both space and time into micro units of measurement—served as the optical-

visual basis for a new form of computation, establishing a material linkage between photography

and the computer; 'The camera-recording of the First World War already prefigured the

statistical memory of computers, both in the management of aerial observation data and in the

ever more rigorous management of the simultaneity of action and reaction.'[15] With the

revolutionary development in optical technology—accompanied by the cultural primacy of the

visual—the human eye itself can now be scientifically classified as a 'weapons system', as was

done by the U.S. Army pamphlet, *Psychology for the Fighting Man*, first published in 1943: 'The

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[11] For these technologies of 'de-realization', see Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 79-89. 'Ours are cinematic societies. They are not only societies of movement, but of the acceleration of the very movement. And hence, of the shortening of distances in terms of time, but, I would also add, of the relation to reality.' Armitage, 27.
[12] Ibid, 17.
[13] A pun?
[14] Ibid, 20.
[15] Ibid, 71.

human eye is one of the most important military instruments that the armed forces possess.'[16] In

1966 the British visual psychologist R.L. Gregory even likened the retinal edge to 'an early

warning device' that was 'used to rotate the eyes to aim the object-recognition part of the system

onto objects likely to be friend or foe rather than neutral.'[17]

   As Virilio has argued, the convergence between speed and kinematic optics is underpinned by

the military drive to create both a functionally perfect and operationally universal system of

surveillance.

One could go on forever listing the technological weapons, the panoply of light-war, the
aesthetic of the electronic battlefield, the military use of space whose conquest was ultimately
the conquest of the image. The electronic image of remote detection; the artificial image
produced by satellites as they endlessly sweep over the surface of continents drawing automatic
maps; life-size cinema in which the day and the light of film-speed succeed the day and light of
astronomical time. It is subliminal light of incomparable transparency, where technology finally
exposes the whole world.[18]

The final outcome is a total 'virtualizing' of reality arising from 'the unprecedented limits

imposed on subjective perception by the instrumental splitting of modes of perception and

representation.'[19] This optical/ontological collapse of politics into speed underlines the key

Virilian notion of ***Pure War***[20] a military metaphor that signifies the centrality of the panoptical to

the contemporary mode of combat. 'The primacy of speed is simultaneously the primacy of the

military';[21]Pure War is the master-sign of a (post-) modern world-system that is governed by

absolute speed, signifying the total reversibility between the 'political', the 'military', and the

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[16] Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), 199.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid, 88.

[19] Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine*. Trans. Julie Rose (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 49.

[20] Virilio and Lotringer*, Pure War,* passim.

[21] Ibid, 51.

'economic'.[22] Politics disappears into a tripartite ***logistics of perception***: military, tele-cinematic,

and techno-scientific.[23]

In geo-strategic terms, pure war is derived from the historical shift in military thought from

defense to offence: 'The very long period of the supremacy of *defence* over *offence* that marked

the history of fortification…is superseded today by the era of the supremacy of the *absolute*

speed of weapons of interdiction on the field of battle over the movement of the *relative speeds*

of mechanized forces.' [24]

At first, the battlefield was local, then it became worldwide and finally became global, which
means satellized with the invention of video and of the spy satellites of observation of the
battlefield. From now on, the battlefield is a global one. It is not worldwide any more in the
sense of the First or Second World War. It is global in the sense of the planet, the geo-sphere.[25]

Accordingly, pure war is 'an optical, or electrico-optical confrontation; its likely slogan,

"winning is keeping the target in constant sight."'[26] From this, Virilio adduces that 'above all, the

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[22] The Second World War 'produced not only new machines, but also forged new bonds between the scientific and military communities. Never before had science been applied at so grand a scale to such a variety of warfare problems. The result of this collaboration, the discipline known as "operations research", has evolved in the hands of Cold Warriors and think tanks into the more inclusive "management science" (Systems Analysis), which in effect transfers the command and control structures of military logistics to the rest of society and economy. Indeed, the armed forces emerged from the war as full-fledged "institutional entrepreneurs".' Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 5.

[23] Paul Virilio, *Polar Inertia*. First edition (New York: SAGE Publications, 1999), passim.

[24] Paul Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*. Trans. Michael Degener (New York: Continuum, 2005), 2. As De Landa reminds us, speed in war, as in optics, is always *relative*: 'Some philosophers of war have seen in speed the very essence of the war machine. A mass of people passing a certain threshold of speed, for instance, acquires a power of assault that males it into a potential war machine. But we must not make the mistake of considering the kind of speed involved in the war machine as an "absolute speed". On the contrary, as far as war is concerned, only relative speed counts. It is not the absolute marching speed of an army that makes it powerful, but its rate of advance relative to that of its opposing forces. Similarly, it is not the absolute speed at which information travels across communications channels that matters in war, but its speed relative to the pace of the unfolding events.' De Landa, 38.

[25] Virilio, cited in James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001),64. See John B. Alexander, *Winning the War: Advanced Weapons, Strategies and Concepts for the Post-9/11 World*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 41-7.

[26] Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 2; see also idem, *Desert Screen*, 78. 'Many inexperienced military observers focus their attention on the destructiveness of new weapons. While awesome power can be delivered, sharpening the point of

field of battle is a *field of perception*, which must be organized in such a way as to control the

movements of the adversary and cause them to follow a false lead, to demoralize them and

exterminate them.'[27] This passage directly echoes General William Westmoreland's militaristic

techno-utopianism concerning 'the electronic battlefield'.

On the battlefield of the future, enemy forces will be located, tracked, and targeted almost
instantaneously through the use of data links, computer assisted intelligence evaluation, and
automated fire control. With first round kill probabilities approaching certainty, and with
surveillance devices that can continually track the enemy, the need for large forces to fix the
opposition physically will be less important.[28]

For Virilio, nuclear weapons, until now the most dreaded of the ubiquitous 'weapons of mass

destruction' are, in fact, bordering on obsolescence in part because of their comparative

slowness.

What will [take the place of nuclear weapons] will be directed-beam weapons using laser
technology, charged particles or electromagnetic forces, which will function at the speed of light,
after the fashion of the high-resolution cameras aboard military observation satellites.[29] When
that stage is reached...the deterrence strategy geared to nuclear weapons will give way to one
based upon ubiquitous orbital vision of enemy territory...'winning' here means the status quo of
a new balance of forces, based not on explosives and delivery systems but on the instant power
of sensors, interceptors and remote electronic detectors [i.e., pre-emption]. As Merleau-Ponty
once wrote: 'The problem of knowing who is the subject of the state and war will be of exactly
the same kind of problem as the problem of knowing who is the subject of perception.'[30]

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the spear is really secondary to locating the enemy. For decades *war games* have proven that it is more important to
improve the military's sensor systems and command and control processes than it is to increase firepower. Once an
adversary is located, we know how to destroy him. This philosophy has driven the research and development
budget.' Alexander, 41. In similar terms, the pioneer of 'nuclear strategy', Alfred Wohlstetter, once opined that 'a
ten-fold improvement in accuracy is roughly equivalent in effectiveness to a thousand-fold increase in the explosive
energy released by a weapon.' Cited in Bacevich, 161.

[27] Virilio, *Desert Screen*, 96. This element of 'Intrusive Information Warfare' plays a central part of the U.S.
military doctrine of 'shock and awe'. 'By "shock", we mean the ability to intimidate perhaps absolutely; to impose
overwhelming fear, terror, vulnerability and the inevitability of destruction or defeat; and to create in the mind of the
adversary impotence, panic, hopelessness, paralysis and the psychological incentives for capitulation. Generally, this
would be achieved with great suddenness, rapidity and unexpectedness.' Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade jr,
*Rapid Dominance—A Force for All Seasons. Technologies and Systems for Achieving Shock and Awe: A Real
Revolution in Military Affairs* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1998), 13. See below.

[28] Edwards, 43.

[29] The correlation between post-nuclear weapons and the speed of light can, of course, be applied even more
profitably to 'cyber-warfare'.

[30] Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 2.

Virilian Pure War has been doctrinally expressed by the Pentagon as *'Rapid Dominance'*,[31] or,

in the vernacular, *'shock and awe'*: in 'crude terms [the invader] should seize control of the

environment and paralyse or so overload an adversary's perceptions and understanding of events

so that the enemy would be incapable of resistance.'[32] More fully

> Control means controlling the 'ether', that is all 'signatures' or detectable emissions from
> infrared, radar, electronic to visual as well as the communications infrastructure and even radio
> and television. Properly applied, control will monitor and regulate what the adversary sees and
> understands and what is not seen and understood. In Rapid Dominance, this definition of control
> means being able to fight 'invisibly', and to control *both* the night and the day.'[33]

As is readily apparent, 'shock and awe' directly correlates with the kinematics optics of Pure

War.[34] 'It is a war of images and sounds, rather than objects and things, in which winning is

simply a matter of not losing sight of the opposition. The will to see all, know all, at every

moment, everywhere, the will to universalised illumination: a scientific permutation on the eye

of God which would forever rule out the surprise, the accident, the irruption of the unforeseen'.[35]

The logistics of perception, as a globalised opticality, yields 'the will to universalized

illumination'. The logistics of perception, therefore, possesses two necessary attributes:

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[31] Ullman and Wade jr, *Rapid Dominance*, passim.

[32] Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, cited in Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster* Capitalism (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 147 and 333. As even the most amateurish of military historians recognizes, 'shock and awe' is a direct continuation of the German doctrine of *blitzkrieg*, a seminal development in the evolution of pure war; 'In a sense blitzkrieg was not the name of a new tactical doctrine but of a new strategy of conquest, which consisted of terrorizing a potential target through air raids and propaganda and then breaking up its will to resist through a series of armoured shock attacks. In this sense the target of a blitzkrieg was less the enemy's forward defences than the morale of its leadership.' De Landa, 75.

[33] Ullman and Wade. *Rapid Dominance*, 18.

[34] Of course, this virtual politic also doubles as a weapons system. Rapid Dominance 'seeks to control the electromagnetic "ether" through complete signature management and control. This means full use of both disinformation and deception as well as disruption. Rapid Dominance clearly seeks to manipulate perceptions and will, hence targets that impact psychological reactions are of great importance.' Ibid, 27. For the practical details of 'Intrusive Information Warfare', see idem, 57-60.

[35] Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 70.

*(i) The **technical**: everything **can** be seen.*

This is the juncture where Virilio encounters 'the ghost of Clausewitz'; as is well known (but less well understood), Clausewitz expresses the essence of the practical experience of combat in terms of fundamental problems of perception and knowledge.

> War is the province of uncertainty: three-fourths of those things upon which actions in War must be calculated, are hidden more or less in the clouds of great uncertainty. Here, then, above all a fine and penetrating mind is called for, to search out the truth by the tact of its judgement.[36]

Applying contemporary language, Clausewitz equates 'the fog of war' with intractable difficulties of information analysis and command and control.[37] In combat, 'most reports are false, and the timidity of men acts as a multiplier of lies and untruths…This difficulty of seeing things correctly, which is one of the greatest sources of friction in War, makes things appear quite different from what was expected.'[38] *Friction* is one Clausewitz's seminal notions, the one that encapsulates the 'real-time' reality of combat; 'Friction is the only conception which in a general way corresponds to that which distinguishes real War from War on paper'[39]—that is, *virtual war*. 'Danger in War belongs to its friction'[40] and this 'danger' is essentially one of perception and representation, consisting of the aggregate of all phenomena, either natural or

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[36] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Edited with an Introduction by Anatol Rapoport (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 140.

[37] 'Lastly, the great uncertainty of all data in War is a peculiar difficulty, because all action must, to a certain extent, be planned in a mere twilight, which in addition not un-frequently—like the effect of a fog or moonshine—gives to things exaggerated dimensions and an unnatural appearance.' Clausewitz, 189.

[38] Ibid, 163. See also idem 263: 'In War more than anywhere else in the world things happen differently to what we had expected, and look differently when near, to what they did at a distance.' Clausewitz frames his discussion of 'command and control' very much in terms of the visual.

[39] Ibid, 164.

[40] Ibid, 160.

man-made, that interfere 'with the implementation of a tactical or strategic plan.'[41] Friction is

intractable and, to the very same degree that it is ineradicable, it traps war within the domain of

chance.

> So in War, through the influence of an infinity of petty circumstances, which cannot properly be
> described on paper, things disappoint us, and we fall short of the mark. This enormous friction,
> which is not concentrated, as in mechanics, at a few points, is therefore everywhere brought into
> contact with chance, and thus incidents take place upon which it is impossible to calculate, their
> chief origin being chance.[42]

The revolution in the logistics of perception, therefore, leads us to consider its second attribute

   (ii) *The **normative**: everything **must** be seen*.

The 'paradox' of Pure War, therefore is that: (a) it relies upon the overwhelming application of

absolute force ('rapid dominance'), but; (b) it is wholly *risk adverse*. This paradox only becomes

greater once we understand the ultimately self-subverting nature of 'the will to universal

illumination'; the prioritization of sight itself creates the threat of military failure through the

innovation and deployment of more effective camouflage or 'anti-detection' counter-measures

by The Enemy—Rumsfeld's nightmarish 'unknown unknowns'.

> On the one hand, the secret of victory is written in the air by the ballistics of projectiles and the
> hyper-ballistics of aeronautics; on the other hand, it is negated by speed since only the speed of
> film exposure is capable of recording that military secret which each protagonist tries to keep by
> camouflaging ever larger objects (artillery batteries, railways, marshalling yards, and eventually
> whole towns as the black-out belatedly responded to the lightning war of 1940).[43]

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[41] De Landa, 60; see also, idem, 78 and 79.
[42] Clausewitz, 164 and 165. See also idem 227: 'All action in War…is directed on probable, not certain results.
Whatever is wanting in certainty must always be left to fate, or chance, call it what you will.'
[43] Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 71. See Chapter Three, 'Policing the Spectrum' in De Landa, 179-231, passim.

The more that victory depends upon—and is virtually *guaranteed*—by perception, the more we become aware of the catastrophic implications of disguise and disappearance, and, thus, of the interminable anxiety over the veracity of our detection. In Virilio's own words, 'if knowledge can be shown as a sphere whose volume is endlessly growing, the area of contact with the unknown is growing out of all proportion.'[44] Or, to paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld, 'We can never know that we don't know', resulting in a literally infinite expansion in our field of sight; for Gary Hill, therefore, 'Vision is no longer the possibility of seeing, but the impossibility of not seeing'[45]—a judicious statement, subliminally linking the radical 'giveness' of the preponderance of sight with the anxiety-driven imperative to not allow anything to remain undetectable. In an almost dialectical manner both sight and disappearance contain within them the 'seeds' of their respective antinomies.[46]

As all characteristics of the instruments of combat are henceforth subjected to this categorical imperative of a *long-distance-non-detection* (velocity, maneuverability, agility, etc.), the central concept of this new war game becomes 'first look, first shot, first kill'…In fact, since seeing the enemy first and keeping him in view constitutes adequate advantage, justifying tactics of surprise and therefore the 'first shot', the 'absolute' speed of waves of electromagnetic detection prevails henceforth over the 'relative' speed of the supersonic or hypersonic flying object. To no longer *lose sight* of the enemy is thus to *gain* the upper hand, or indeed even to win the conflict, this war in which the disappearance from sight tends to prevail over the power of conventional or non-conventional explosives.[47]

The true dilemma is not that one side truly needs to see everything to win; the Allies prevailed in the Second World War operating in a theatre that was well below that of a perfect field of vision.

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[44] Virilio, *The Negative Horizon*, 17.

[45] Cited in Virilio, *Desert Screen*, 89.

[46] Christopher Coker, *War in an Age of Risk* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), passim. In a slightly different context, De Landa makes a point similar to Coker's concerning what he calls the 'data pathologies' of military intelligence; 'when confronted with the incomplete and conflicting information emanating from the battlefield, armies have tried to reduce their uncertainty by centralizing information processing at the top, but the net effect is to increase the overall uncertainty about a situation due to the "bottleneck" flow created by the over-centralization of the command system.' De Landa, 190.

[47] Virilio, *Desert Screen*, 78.

Rather, it is that total surveillance virtually guarantees victory in advance; the absence of a

perfect field of vision, therefore, constitutes in and of itself an *unacceptable level of risk to a*

military strategy that is premised upon absolute certainty of losses and outcomes. Virilio's

emphasis upon the logistics of perception as the central pillar of Pure War enables us to

appreciate in a new way the complex relationship between contemporary warfare and what the

German sociologist Ulrich Beck has named *'the risk society'*.

Risk problems are characterized by having no unambiguous solutions; rather, they are
distinguished by a fundamental ambivalence which can usually be grasped by calculations of
probability, but not removed that way. Their fundamental ambivalence is what distinguishes risk
problems and problems of order which by definition are oriented towards clarity and
decidability.[48]

And this, in turn, signifies a vital connection between Pure War and globalist models of ***risk***

management.

III. Pure War and Global Risk Management

We strive to make the world ultimately <u>safer</u>. Not perfect, just better—Condoleeza Rice

Our challenge in the new century is a difficult one. [It is] *to defend our nation against the
unknown, the uncertain, the unseen and the unexpected.*—Donald Rumsfeld

I am afraid of my ignorance and things I cannot see.—James Blinn

The classic exposition of the almost visceral relationship between war and risk is, of course, that

provided by Clausewitz.

The Art of War has to deal with living and with moral [psychological] forces, the consequences
of which is that it can never attain the absolute and positive. There is therefore everywhere a

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[48] Cited in Coker, 10 **[check reference: Ulrich Beck, *The Reinvention of Politics: Remaking Modernity in the New Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997).]**

margin for the accidental,[49] and just as much in the greatest things as in the smallest...the objective nature of War makes it a calculation of probabilities; now there is only one single element still wanting to make it a game, and that element it certainly is not without; it is chance. There is no human affair which stands so constantly and so generally in close connection with chance as War. But together with chance, the accidental, and along with it good luck, occupy a great place in War.[50]

Ironically, the paradoxical nature of Pure War—absolute speed coupled with zero risk—is the

very basis of its intellectual legitimacy; within the confines of the risk society, war can only be

made legitimate by rendering it compatible with the vocabulary and techniques of risk

management. Governed by risk management, pure war operates under two paramount tactical

considerations: (a) rapid dominance is deployed in order to prevent—or 'pre-empt'—the

emergence of threats to international public order (a 'management' model of collective security);

(b) rapid dominance is deployed in order to reduce the risk to the applier of force to *zero*. There

is, therefore, a parallel phenomenon of an effective conflation of *pre-emption* (an active

principle) and *deterrence* (a passive principle);[51] 'War seems to have escaped the narrow

parameters that it was given in the course of the twentieth century—deterrence and defense.'[52]

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[49] The concept of 'the accident' forms a central component of Virilio's work and explains his over-arching interest in both catastrophe and complexity theory. I do not have the time and space to include a full discussion of the role that the accident plays within Virilio's thought other than to repeat his assertion that the accident *'is a diagnostic of technology.'* James Der Derian and Paul Virilio, "'Is the Author Dead?': An Interview with Paul Virilio", in *The Virilio Reader*. Edited by James Der Derian. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 16-21 at 20. Constituting the 'revelation of the identity of the object'[Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 39], the accident serves as an 'indirect kind of *oeuvre*, a consequence of substance…*An accident is in fact an assault on the propriety of substance*, an unveiling of its nakedness, of the poverty of *whatever*, *whoever* is confronted by *what happens* unexpectedly—to people as much as to their creations.' Paul Virilio*, City of Panic*. Trans. Julie Rose (Oxford: Berg, 2005)*,* 28.
[50] Clausewitz, 117 and 116.
[51] Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-3.
[52] Coker, 63.

For Virilio, this is of the greatest importance, precisely because he holds that 'Deterrence is the last ideology';[53] that is, 'Deterrence is still a humanist category because it implies time for reflection.'[54]

In his seminal text *Deterrence Before Hiroshima*, George H. Quester clearly illustrated that the impossibility of maintaining a clear and certain demarcation between deterrence and pre-emption has plagued military doctrine at least as far back as the innovation of aerial combat World War One. In the opinion of one of the pioneers of the doctrine of strategic, or 'area' bombing, Giulio Douhet

A belief generally held nowadays is that wars will begin in the air, and that large-scale aerial actions will be carried out *even before the declaration of war*, because everyone will be trying to get the advantage of surprise. Aerial warfare will be intense and violent to a superlative degree; for each side will realize the necessity of inflicting upon the enemy the largest possible losses *in the shortest possible time*, and of ridding the air of enemy aerial means so as to prevent any possible retaliation from him.[55]

Not surprisingly, the epistemic precariousness of the borders separating deterrence from pre-emption was paralleled by an equally incoherent doctrinal relationship between strategic and tactical, or 'precision', bombing. According to the formidable General William ('Billy') Mitchell, 'the result of war fare by air will be to bring about *quick decisions*. Superior air power will cause such havoc, or the threat of such havoc, in the opposing country that a long drawn out campaign will be impossible.'[56] The historical manifestation of the reified will to universal

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[53] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 59.
[54] Ibid, 61.
[55] George H. Quester, *Deterrence Before Hiroshima* . Second edition(Oxford: Transaction Books, 1986), 55-56. See also 65 and 135. Emphases added.
[56] Ibid, 57. See also 48, 53 and 55. On Mitchell's wholesale conflation of strategic bombing with 'aerial defense', see Edwards, 84-6. The development of nuclear weaponry, of course, made this process irreversible. 'Atomic bombs

illumination is, therefore, tantamount to the global creation of a system of eternal deterrence;

'Indeed, to achieve information dominance even before the fight began—thereby controlling the

conditions that would determine the war's outcome—was to secure military preeminence on a

permanent basis.'[57] Accordingly, for Christopher Coker, the Second Gulf War and its aegis

Operation Desert Storm 'can be seen as the first conflict of the risk age.'

For the invasion of Kuwait which provoked it had actually been foreseen—the U.S. military had even gamed for it the year before. The risk age puts a premium on anticipatory events; scenario planning has become the norm, although it was first perfected in the closing years of the Cold War. The present age fears the unpredictable. A scenario is a tool for ordering one's perceptions about alternative future environments in which today's decisions might play out. Scenarios involve a set of stories based on usefully constructed plots—put more simply they are a way of rehearsing the future.[58]

Once again, we are faced with another paradox; 'rehearsing the future' necessarily involves

abolishing the past; to achieve true linearity of process and outcomes, the legacy of History—

which is *complexity*—must be removed from awareness. As the military theorist Alain Joxe

reminds us, 'You have to start with complexity. Chaos is a global idea.'[59] Hence, *the elimination*

of complexity is tantamount to the abolition of both memory and uncertainty, which is, of course,

anathema to the humanist Virilio: 'Duration is the proper of man; he is inscribed within it.'[60]

   Following the work of Coker, I will offer a basic schema that illustrates the historical and

cultural divisions separating pre-risk management war from the current form of war within the

risk society.

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seemed to produce an even more overwhelming advantage for the offense—which to [US] Air Force thinking *was* the defense.' Idem, 86.
[57] Bacevich, 168.
[58] Coker, 2.
[59] Alain Joxe, *Empire of Disorder*. Ed. Slyvere Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 2002), 22.
[60] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 34.

(i)   The 'Optimism' of the 18th and 19th centuries: simplicity, linearity = 'the mechanistic world view' (Rene Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, Isaac Newton)>>> a 'closed' world-system (Modernity; The Enlightenment: the world is rendered closed so that it be interpreted as linear *in order that* it be rendered subject to 'social engineering')

(ii) The 'Pessimism' of the 20th century: complexity; chaos theory (Alan Turning, Henri Mandelbrot, Ilya Prigogine)>>> a 'open' world system (Post-Modernity)

For Coker, the unsolvable problem of 'post-risk warfare' is that it is ridden with ideological contradiction; the foundational premise of the operational tools of risk management—chaos theory— is that one will generate, over time, a virtually unlimited awareness of risk. Here, the problem is almost a law of diminishing epistemological returns; 'The more one tries to achieve total certainty, the greater the increase in the information flow needed to run the operation, and therefore the more uncertain the final results.'[61] The radical non-linearity of the world itself [62] threatens the ideological coherence of the risk society.

   It is useful to consider Coker's 'techno-centric' approach to war as risk management—a model that owes much to Virilio—with the more 'cultural studies' oriented work of Paul N. Edwards in his *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (1996).

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[61] De Landa, 79. 'The U.S more than any other country has relied on the digital revolution to pioneer a new form of warfare in which speed is everything...It is this resolution in the transmission of information which enables an army to advance further and faster in the past very largely because it allows it to lift the "fog of war". It enables the military... "to peer into tomorrow"...But it is at this point that we have to ask whether there is any real value in speed if it merely amplifies the unintended consequences of one's own actions. In many ways there is, in so far as it makes it unnecessary to pursue an attritional way of warfare—killing the enemy with battlefield force faster than the enemy can kill you. Situational awareness allows for precision targeting and the use of discriminate force. But leaping in the dark is not necessarily leaping into the future, let alone "peering into tomorrow"'. Coker, 110-11.

[62] 'We call this non-linear behavior because cause and effect do not always work as we expect. Small changes can generate surprises; they can produce emergent properties (such as greater stability) once a critical threshold has been crossed. The study of emergence in all its forms is one of the most important scientific enterprises of the age.'Coker, 152.

For Edwards, ***the closed world*** is both a military and a *militarized* landscape, a perfect literary

and political metaphor for Virilio's 'will to universalized illumination'. A trope of literary

criticism

A 'closed world' is a radically bounded sense of conflict, an inescapably self-referential space
where every thought, word, and action is ultimately directed back toward a central struggle. It is
a world radically divided against itself. Turned inexorably inwards without frontiers or escape, a
closed world threatens to annihilate itself, to implode...Its archetype is the siege, with *The Iliad*
as originary model; war, either figurative or literal, is its driving force.[63]

The closed world received its greatest 'real time' historical expression in the rhetorical and

ideological stratagems of U.S. national security doctrine during what is generically referred to as

the Cold War (1947-89); 'Containment, with its image of an enclosed space surrounded and

sealed by American power, was the central metaphor of closed-world discourse.'[64]

From start to finish the Cold War was constructed around the 'out-puts' of closed systems...Its
major strategic metaphor, 'containment', postulated an American-led policing of closed
Communist borders. Its major military weapon, the atomic bomb, became the cultural
representative of apocalypse, an all-or-nothing, world-consuming flame whose ultimate horizon
encircled all conflict and penetrated its meaning. Cold War military forces took on the character
of systems, increasingly integrated through centralized control as the speed and scale of nuclear
war erased the space of human decision-making and forced reliance on automated, pre-
programmed planning. The official language of the Cold War, produced by think tanks such as
the Rand Corporation, framed global politics in terms of game-theoretic calculation and cost-
benefit analysis.[65]

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[63] Edwards, 12-13.

[64] Ibid, 8. Broadly following Michel Foucault, Edwards defines 'discourse' as 'a way of knowledge, a background of
assumptions and agreements about how reality is to be interpreted and expressed, supported by paradigmatic
metaphors, techniques, and technologies and potentially embodied in social institutions.' Idem, 34. As Edwards
himself makes clear, there is a strong 'family resemblance' between discourse theory and Wittgenstein's notion of
language-games. Idem, 34-7.

[65] Ibid, 6-7.

Throughout its historical existence, the closed world has been signified by two technological

innovations. The first has been the *computer*. 'The computerization of society...has essentially

been a side effect of the computerization of war',[66] computers having made the closed world

'work simultaneously as technology, as political system, and as ideological mirage.'[67]

Computers helped create and sustain [the closed world] discourse in two ways. Firstly, they allowed the partial construction of central real-time military control systems on a gigantic scale. Second, they facilitated the metaphysical understanding of world politics as a sort of system subject to technological management.[68] Closed-world discourse, through metaphors, techniques, and functions, as well as equipment and salient experiences, linked the globalist, hegemonic aims of post-World War II American foreign policy with a high-technology military strategy, an ideology of apocalyptic struggle, and a language of integrated systems.[69]

The second master-sign is an even more philosophically problematic techno-artefact, the *cyborg*.

Both the engineering and the politics of closed-world discourse centred around problems of *human-machine integration*: building weapons, systems, and strategies whose human and machine components could function as a seamless web, even on the global scale and in the vastly compressed time frames [speed] of super power nuclear war. As symbol-manipulating logic machines, computers would automate or assist tasks of perception, reasoning, and control in integrated systems. Such goals, first accomplished in World War II-era anti-aircraft weapons,[70] helped form both cybernetics, the grand theory of information and control in biological and mechanical systems, and artificial intelligence (AI), software that simulated complex symbolic thought.[71]

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[66] Frank Rose cited in Edwards, 65.
[67] Ibid, 1.
[68] The technocratic successor to the ideal of 'social engineering', first proclaimed in the Enlightenment of the 18th Century. See above.
[69] Ibid, 7-8.
[70] 'One feature of the anti-aircraft problem was the cycle involving feedback: information from a radar screen is processed to calculate the adjustments on gun controls to improve aim; the effectiveness of the adjustment is observed and communicated again via radar, and then this new information is used again to re-adjust the aim of the gun, and so on. If the calculations are automated, one is dealing with a self-steering device; if not, the whole system including the participating human beings can be viewed as a self-steering device.' Steve J. Heims, cited in De Landa, 43.
[71] Ibid, 1.

Both the computer and the cyborg, as master-signs of both closed world 'fact' [technology] and

'meaning' [discourse] operate symbiotically.

Computers inspired new psychological theories built around concepts of 'information processing'. Cybernetics, AI, and cognitive psychology relied crucially upon computers as metaphors and models for minds conceived as problem-solving, self-controlling, symbol-processing systems. The word 'cyborg', or cybernetic organism, captures the strategic blurring of boundaries inherent in these metaphors. *Cyborg discourse*, by constituting both human minds and artificial intelligences as information machines, helped to integrate people into complex technological systems.[72]

Although advancing from opposite scales (Virilio from optics towards computers, Edwards from

computers towards optics) what unifies both theorists is their respective correlation of military

doctrine and praxis with *speed*; or, more precisely, computerization is sight plus speed. Through

the medium of the computer terminal, or the 'tele-screen', computer data is the re-presentation of

'truth' in the form of fast moving visual imagery; 'in wartime...it is tactical information that

matters, and the timeliness and usefulness of such data depends directly on the speed at which it

is deciphered.'[73] The parallel development of *radar* is, of course, of pivotal importance. The

radar reproduces the fortress imaginary of the closed world while simultaneously accentuating

the primacy of the optical-visual.

The development of radar resembles the evolution of the fortress design in that it relied on the application of scientific geometric thinking to the problem of maintaining a constant sweeping beam bearing on the enemy, a 'beam' of bullets in the case of fortifications, as well as a beam of radio waves in the case of the de-materialized wall [of radar].[74]

In radar, as with no other contemporary weapons-system, all of the essential elements of the

cyborg are unified into a synthetic whole.

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[72] Ibid, 2.
[73] De Landa, 263 fn. 60.
[74] De Landa, 51.

Making data patterns emerge was...the initial motivation behind the development of computer displays. It was useless to have large banks of information if access to that data was slow and cumbersome. This is particularly true in the case of tactical intelligence (regarding a nuclear missile attack, for instance) in which the immediate response has to be implemented based on the information supplied by radar sensors. For this reason the first computer displays were developed to aid radar operators in the management of electronic walls which began to surround the North American continent in the 1950s. After visual displays were developed for radar they became the main surface of contact between humans and the data bases stored in computers.[75]

As Edwards points out, there is a direct line of historical continuity from the cyborg as a techno-military model, to what he calls *cyborg discourse* as an entire paradigm of social consciousness, one premised upon speed, perception and computation; 'In such highly integrated systems, the limited, slow, error-prone characteristics of human perception and decision-making had to be taken into account. This required a theory of human psychology commensurable with the theory of machines.'[76]

   We are now at a difficult juncture, both moral and philosophical. In contrast to Coker, Edwards, in a more profound agreement with Virilio, has revealed the bleak truth at the heart of both risk management and the closed world: *technical failure is no objection*. If both the political and the strategic will to universalized illumination remains constant—which, I would argue, it has—then we have completely inverted the relationship between the human and the machine: from now on both the objective nature of the world and the subjective nature of the human being will be re-conceptualized so that both may be more fully subordinated to the theoretical precepts and the practical requirements of cyborg discourse. The fundamental problem is the totality of the logistics of perception that encloses in their entirety both the contemporary political and the military landscapes—that is, the 'disappearance' of the State into the condition of Pure War. The risk society always exists within a 'state of tension' with its own precepts: 'It is fear of the

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[75] Ibid, 217. See also, idem, 204 and 219.
[76] Edwards, 20.

unknown, including the unknowable consequences of our actions, that has brought the issue of fear management to the fore.'[77] Through the historical evolution of speed-politics, the 20th century orthodoxy of *'war as defence'*, de-noted by its own set of signifiers—threats, states, regimes, ideologies (statist), fear, defence (local; regional), New World Order (Wilson; Roosevelt)—has been replaced by the 21st century concept of *'war as security'*, signified by risks, non-state actors/ 'rogue' states, collapse of regimes (non-proliferation treaties), ideologies (non-statist), anxiety/individual safety; global disorder. The distinction between these competing models of strategic doctrine is identical to the broader historical and cultural difference between *fear* and *anxiety*.

War as Security

(i)   Fear versus Anxiety

Fear denotes phenomena that we understand (e.g. contagious diseases) but that we may or may not be able to successfully control; consistent with the 'closed world' of The Enlightenment. Fear is bounded, or rendered 'finite', by our collective sense (faith) of the possibility of an attainment of total control, a reflection through subjective consciousness of the objective reality of 'the closed world'. Anxiety, by contrast, denotes phenomena that we may or may not understand but that we are certain that we will never be able to successfully control (e.g. treatment resistant contagious diseases); the 'era of anxiety' is 'post-modern'; 'When life reaches a particular critical limit of complexity it becomes impossible to understand it fully. The paradox that we know that we cannot know is a striking feature of our age, and one that gives rise, of

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[77] Coker, 95.

course, to its prevailing sense of anxiety.'[78] Coker distinguishes fear from anxiety on the basis of

the fact that the latter is 'grounded not on the immediate or perceived, but the imagined.'[79]

Hence, 'To be "at risk" today is to be "powerless to shape the environment"; even worse, to be at

risk is to have a very diminished sense of responsibility for one's own actions. It is this lack of

direct agency which reinforces the anxiety we now feel.'[80] Warfare in the age of anxiety is,

therefore, the obverse side of warfare in the age of risk.

As Clausewitz tells us, unlike the mechanical arts we direct force at an animate object that will react to a will opposed to its own.[81] This operation locks both wills into a feedback loop, and a positive feedback loop can produce runaway processes—Clausewitz's tendency for war to become absolute. The very nature of interaction is bound to make it unpredictable. 'The fundamentally complex and interactive nature of war generates uncertainty,' insists the U.S. Marine Corps; 'Uncertainty is not merely an existing environmental condition; it is a natural by-product[82] of war.[83]

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[78] Ibid, 95. In even stronger terms, 'What makes our age [of anxiety] unique is that risk aversion is now so entrenched in the collective consciousness that we tend to write off almost all risk taking as abnormal, or pathological.' Idem, ix.

[79] Ibid, 88.

[80] Ibid, 64. Theorists such as Henry A. Giroux have, of course, drawn explicit connections between anxiety and the de-regulated operation of neo-liberalism within contemporary globalization. 'Underneath neo-liberalism's corporate ethic and market-based fundamentalism…The [public] spaces in which democracy is produced and nurtured are being eliminated. Democratic values, identities, and social relations along with the public space, the common good, and the obligations of civic responsibility are slowly being overtaken by a market-based notion of freedom and civic indifference in which it becomes more difficult to translate private woes into social issues and collective action or to insist on a language of a public good. The upshot to this evisceration of all notions of sociality is a sense of total abandonment, resulting in fear, anxiety, and insecurity over one's future… All solutions as a result now focus on shoring up a diminished sense of safety, carefully nurtured by a renewed faith in all things military.' Giroux, 25. Of special interest to me has been the crypto-militarization and para-militarization, through the use of private security firms, of the natural disaster relief efforts conducted under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); 'Post-Katrina' New Orleans is an outstanding example of the 'interiorization' of Pure War. See idem, 62-3.

[81] 'War is no activity of the will, which exerts itself upon inanimate matter like the mechanical Arts; or upon a living but still passive and yielding subject, like the human mind and the human feelings in the ideal Arts, *but against a living and reactive force.*' Clausewitz, 203; emphasis added. See also idem 185. Conversely, we direct force at any animate object that acts with a will opposed to our own. See Jean Baudrillard, below, on 'the domestication of the refractory forces on the planet'.

[82] Or an *accident* in Virilio's idiosyncratic use of the term. 'In classic Aristotelian philosophy, substance is necessary and the accident [the attributes or properties of the substance] is relative and contingent. At the moment, there's an inversion: the accident is becoming necessary and substance relative and contingent. Every technology [or 'technique'] produces, provokes, programs a specific accident.' Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 38. Escalation is the accident that is particular to the military technique of intervention.

[83] U.S. Marine Corps, 1996: *Command and Control*, Quantico V.A.: U.S.M.C., cited in Coker, 110.

In other words, uncertainty, and its attendant anxiety, exists within a *feedback loop*, a notion

drawn from the environmental sciences.

(ii)   *Global Disorder: the Precautionary Principle and Anticipatory Self-*

   Defence/Preventive War

 If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long...I believe it is essential that when we see a threat we deal with those threats before they become imminent.—George W. Bush, jnr.

 Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.—Donald Rumsfeld

Coker advances the startling but persuasive hypothesis that the risk society is a direct outgrowth

of the revolutionary development of the environmental sciences over the last fifty years.

The risk society was born from the environmental movement of the 1970s, when for the first time states publicly admitted that there were hazards in the use of any technology, however beneficial...The European Environmental Agency adopted the precautionary principle in January 2002, insisting that disasters could only be forestalled if actions were taken before there was strong proof of harm.[84]

Applied to warfare, the precautionary principle equates almost perfectly to the oxymoronic

construction *anticipatory self-defence*—or, in the alternative, *preventive war*—one that only

makes sense within the historical context of the unification of pre-emption with deterrence under

the state of Pure War; as Coker quite perceptively remarks, 'Never before has pre-emption been

the resort of the strong.'[85]

Anticipatory self-defence was [Europe's] official legal justification for attacking Afghanistan in 2001.[86] The political re-shaping of societies most at risk of fostering terrorism is deemed by some to be a sensible precautionary measure...This way of thinking [Bush and Rumsfeld] is very

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[84] Coker, 99.
[85] Ibid, 27.
[86] One might also add NATO's opting for 'humanitarian intervention' in Kosovo in 1998.

much central to the philosophy underpinning environmentalism: That action is the only sensible course in the face of reasonable doubt.[87]

As we can see, the post-9/11 doctrine of national security rests upon a 'pun'; 'There is no such

thing as an *objectively* secure world. Whether we feel secure or not is *a matter of perception*'—

or, rather, 'of sight'.[88]

The problem our societies face is that the benefits of following a particular course of action may well outweigh the risks, but we have no common currency in which to compare the consequences of different actions. *All risk comparisons are based on the distinction between reality and possibility*. The concept would not make any sense if the future were predetermined, or independent of our own actions. Fears about the future are linked to anxieties about the outcomes that follow from our own actions. For many of the risks we confront are associated with the *unintended* consequences of our own actions.[89]

As should be clear by now, the risk management model that underlines the notion of preventive

war is an a state of constant tension with the foundational Clausewitzean concept of friction—

which, expressed in contemporary language, may be strictly equated to both chaos and

complexity.

The precautionary approach, in short, is not irrational but it is strategically incoherent. It purports to be a universal principle but isn't really. Its incoherence stems from the fact that both action and inaction give rise to different risks, and hence the principle bans what it simultaneously mandates.[90]

In Coker's mind, this gives to a serious dilemma in current strategic doctrine that flows from a

The drawing of a false analogy between military and environmental science.

At least as regards the environment, there is general agreement that carbon emissions need to be reduced, but little agreement on how we should lead live our lives or lives differently so that we might become more eco-friendly. Securing ourselves against others presents us with a very different set of challenges. By definition the precautionary principle cannot be a unifying

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid, 67. Emphasis added.
[89] Ibid, 69.
[90] Ibid, 101.

principle for going to war; it cannot unite the risk communities that alliances like NATO are in the process of becoming.[91]

Coker's normative admonitions aside, the element of 'strategic incoherence' that he identifies can be greatly reduced if we situate the precautionary principle firmly within the historical evolution of Pure War. One again, Donald Rumsfeld unintentionally comes to serve my purpose; 'The Coalition did not act in Iraq because we had discovered dramatic new evidence of Iraq's pursuit of weapons of mass murder [sic]. We acted because we saw the existing evidence *in a new light* through the prism of our experience on September 11.'[92] In my opinion, Coker is on much further grounds when he aids us in refining the Virilian 'speed paradigm' by drawing our attention to the endlessly expansionist dynamic of the precautionary principle: the projection of 'risk' logically culminates in the unceasing application of anticipatory self-defence.

The problem is that precautionary moves taken to deal with a problem can end up with a different series of risks which may prove to be even more serious than the original problems they were designed to redress. Risks, in other words, have become a *structural* feature of advanced industrialization.[93]

The structural nature of risk, to paraphrase Hegel, yields a 'double movement' between the risk management of warfare and the militarization of the risk society. This is of the greatest importance, as it signifies the simultaneous operation of Pure War within external and internal political space; the logistics of perception has effectively appropriated the entirety of both inter-state and intra-state relations. The unanticipated consequence of the logistics of perception into the domestic social spaces of the State is a new form of social order that, in the manner of the 'feedback loop' outlined by Coker, drives the further evolution of Pure War.

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid, 67. As Wayne Dyer has remarked 'When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.' Cited in Coker at 13.

[93] Ibid, 70.

IV.   The Doctrine of Security and the Suicidal State

Is not War merely another kind of writing and language for political thought? It certainly has a grammar of its own, but its logic is not peculiar to itself.—Clausewitz

Is war becoming a template of politics? Do we talk the language of ultimate causes but practice the art of minimum risk?—Christopher Coker

This country must go on the offence and stay on the offence.—George W. Bush, jnr.

If we are to translate speed-politics into a series of concrete historical referants, then the logical

starting point is with the United States following the Second World War, at which time the

'absolute Allied victory supported a vast new confidence in the ability of military force to solve

political problems.'[94] Military analysts such as Andrew Bacevich have identified a

'militarization' of American political culture, which eschews the traditional form of the 'anti-

power ethic'[95] in favor of a valorization of military competence as a new source of nationalism.

Today as never before in their history Americans are enthralled with military power. The global military supremacy that the United States presently enjoys—and is bent on perpetuating—has become central to our national identity. More than America's matchless material abundance or even the effusions of its pop culture, the nation's arsenal of high-tech weaponry and the soldiers who employ that arsenal have come to signify who we are and what we stand for.[96]

What Bacevich labels 'the new militarism' accords remarkably well with Edward's account of

the closed world, the de facto militarization of all forms of social and cultural formation.

One result of this belief that the fulfillment of America's historic mission begins with America's destruction of the old order has been to revive a phenomenon that C. Wright Mills in the early days of the Cold War described as a 'military metaphysics'—a tendency to see international

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[94] Edwards, 57. Or, alternatively, manage political 'risks'.
[95] 'American anti-militarism...is not at all the same as pacificism, or principled objection to armed force itself. Instead, anti-militarism is an instance of what political scientist Samuel Huntington has called the "anti-power ethic" in American society, the enormous value this society has always placed on political limits to power, hierarchy and authority.' Ibid, 56.
[96] Bacevich, 1.

problems as military problems and to discount the likelihood of finding a solution except through military means.[97]

Not surprisingly, the new militarism historically corresponds to a new wave of U.S. interventions abroad, most dramatically in Afghanistan and Iraq. If we were to translate the post-Iraq 'New World Order' in Virilian terms, we would argue for a 'double movement' within both the inter-space and intra-space of States. In terms of inter-space, we witness the increasing penetration of all remaining autarkic national systems and their forcible integration into a neo-liberal model of global governance—a militarized and militant globalization.[98] In terms of intra-space, we observe the absolute 'securitization' of the increasingly enclosed spaces of the interior—the achievement of the closed world simultaneously in both the international and the national plane.

Although I have not been able to find any explicit proof that Virilio has ever read Edwards, his meditations on globalization accord remarkably well to the master metaphor of the closed world. Virilio is not interested in globalization as such but more in the manner in which global currents facilitate the loss, or the 'disappearance', of traditional notions of political and cultural identity. Pure War creates social disorder and alienation (anomie) in two ways. In general terms, velocity, by increasing acceleration, can traumatize a structure through impact, which can lead to what Virilio identifies as a kind of *'decomposition'*.[99] Decomposition occurs in all three of the metaphorical bodies discussed in his work: the territorial, the social, and the 'animal' (the phenomenological). 'Decomposition is everywhere…What is decomposing is the geographical

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[97] Ibid, 2.

[98] Edwards, passim.

[99] 'If all is movement all is at the same time accident and our existence as metabolic vehicle can be summed up as a series of collisions, of traumatisms, some taking on the quality of slow but perceptible caresses; but all this, according to the impulsions lent them, becomes mortal shocks and apotheoses of fire, but above all *a different mode of being*. Speed is a cause of death for which we're not only responsible but of which we are also the creators and inventors.' Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 103.

space, the psychophysical and psycho-physiological space of being. It affects at once the big

territorial body, the small animal body and the social body.'[100] In a more specific way, anomie

results from globalization, understood by Virilio as the globalist operation of Pure War.[101]

Paradoxically, Virilio understands globalization not as a movement towards the exterior but

towards the interior. '[Globalization is] first and foremost, a kind of *journey to the centre of the*

earth, in the darkening gloom of a temporal compression which closes off the human race's

living space once and for all, a thing some utopians have termed the *sixth continent*, though it is

simply the hyper-centre of our environment'.[102]

The world proper is composed within me of the speeds of transference and transmission that
have constructed me—my body proper inside the world proper. This situation of interference
between local distances and global distances, which is modified by speed, explains the present
contraction. It is in the end a contraction in the sense of a compression between the exterior and
the interior of the body proper. The body proper no longer has the same relationship to the world
proper as it did during the crusades or in the days of Marco Polo…And the world proper is
contracting...The contraction of distances in travel leads to the contraction of the world proper,
but through a phenomenon of resonance, an echo effect, the body itself proper itself takes on a
considerable importance…Hence the present contraction between the exterior and the interior of
the body proper is called *glocalization* [sic], which is added to the traditional term,
'globalization'. Faced with this situation, I don't think we can forget the term 'glocalization'.[103]

Edwards has drawn a conclusion similar to that of Virilio; commenting on the 'New Frontier'

rhetoric and discourse of NASA during the Cold War, Edwards draws our attention to the

paradox that the movement into outer space has led directly the complete enclosure of the Earth.

A heavy irony lay behind the discursive *decalage* between the frontier imagery [of NASA] and
the Cold War competition: most of the swarming satellites and spaceships were sent up only to
look *down*. With every launch another orbiting object drew its circle around the planet, marking

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[100] Paul Virilio and Sylvere Lotringer, *Crepuscular Dawn* (New York: Semiotext(e) 2002)*,* 165.
[101] 'The general effect of globalization , its most general strategic definition, could be stated as follows: *the*
disjunction of political, military and economic criteria once coordinated by the state at the geographic level of the
state.' Joxe, 85.
[102] Paul Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*. (London : Thames & Hudson, 2003), 87.
[103] Virilio and Lotringer, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 76-77.

the enclosure of the world within the God's-eye view from the void. Even in the *dizzy technological* euphoria of the first moon landing, the barren moonscapes, sterile capsules, and sealed space-suits emphasized not the bounty of a green frontier but the utter aloneness of the living earth. After all was said and done, the space program's chief products were not outward but inward-looking: spy cameras to pierce the Soviet Union's veil, pictures of the Earth drifting through space, pictures of the closed world.[104]

The Virilian term for this inward exploitative drive—a movement to an interior governed by the logic of an accelerating 'space/time compression'— is **endo-colonization**, what 'happens when a political power turns against its own people.'[105] History after 1945 'is no longer exo-colonization (the age of extending world conquest),[106] but the age of intensiveness and endo-colonization. One now colonizes only one's own population. One under-develops one's own urban economy.'[107] Under Pure War there is a totalizing movement of the logistics of perception both outwards into trans-national space and downwards into domestic space; 'in political terms, this means that the geopolitics of *extensivity* and **exo-colonisation'**—the extension of Pure War into trans-national space—'is displaced by…*chronopolitics* and *endo-colonization*'[108]—that is, a re-colonizing of the closed world of the interior. Although speed-politics is about unrelenting acceleration, 'it is mostly about the fact that all societies are pyramidal in nature: the higher speeds belong to the upper reaches of society, the slower to the bottom. The wealth pyramid is the replica of the velocity pyramid.'[109] Pure War is always in perfectly inverse relation to social

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[104] Edwards, 135.
[105] Armitage, 50.
[106] Wars of aggression have been formally proscribed by the United Nations Charter, pursuant to the world-wide transition to a model of global governance premised upon risk management; 'collective security' is incompatible with de-stabilizing unilateral aggression. It is widely under-appreciated how much of a 'New Deal' instrument the Charter actually is. See below, Part V.
[107] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 95.
[108] James Der Derian, 'Introduction', in *The Virilio Reader*. Ed. James Der Derian. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998)1-15 at 10.
[109] Armitage, 35. By these means, the traditional understanding of class conflict is subsumed by speed-politics. 'Class conflict has not disappeared, but has made a prodigious, disconcerting leap since it should now be inscribed at a global level: the globalization of the economy makes it difficult to identify the dominant classes and brings an

democracy. As speed equates with class power, endo-colonization directly facilitates the growth

of anomie. Post-industrialization economically and politically marginalizes the traditional

working classes, culminating in an informal system of social and cultural apartheid.[110] Not

surprisingly, the domestic implementation of neo-liberal 'reform' is known as 'shock

doctrine',[111] the expression in economic form of the military doctrine of 'shock and awe': either

the accidental or deliberate infliction of *trauma* upon the State as a means of neutralizing

political opposition to 'decentralized state agendas'.[112] The trauma of the impact of the agenda is

strictly equivalent to the speed of its implementation. Furthermore, the accelerated

decomposition resulting from the trauma of pure war ultimately fractures the liberal consensus of

the bourgeois State; the de-localized State is now 'founded on threat, the economic rival [and]

the social adversary.' [113] In order to police the post-liberal political order, the virtual State

increasingly directs its optical apparatus inwards, transposing the spatio-temporal domain of 'the

enemy' from the exterior to the interior.[114] Paradoxically, the political 'anxiety' surrounding the

domestic threat—well evidenced by the current 'War on Terror'—is a direct result of the

panoptical transparency of trans-national space achieved through the globalization of the

logistics of perception. The Report of the 9/11 Commission released in 2004 has stated this with

remarkable clarity.

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end to their association with sectors of the subjugated classes that remain local or national. Laws no longer codify class relations except at the tactical level of local political concerns.' Joxe, 201.

[110] Paul Virilio, 'Critical Space', in Der Derian, *The Virilio Reader*, 58-72, passim.

[111] Klein, passim.

[112] Chile under Pinochet is a classic example of this phenomenon: 'For the [Neo-Liberal] experiment to work, Pinochet had to strip [Neo-Keynsian] distortions away—more cuts, more privatization, more speed.' Ibid. 80.

[113] Paul Virilio, *Lost Dimension*. Trans. Daniel Moshenberg. (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 124. See also 'The Consumption of Security', in Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*. Trans. Mark Polizotti.(Semiotext(e): New York, 1986), 119-29.

[114] Virilio, *Negative Horizon*, 176.

In the post 9/11 world *threats are defined by the fault lines within societies, than by the territorial boundaries between them.* From terrorism to global disease or environmental degradation the challenges have become trans-national rather than inter-national. That is the defining quality of word politics in the [21st century]…In this sense, 9/11 has taught us that that terrorism against American interests 'over there' should be regarded just as we regard terrorism against American interests 'over here'. *In this same sense, the American homeland is the planet.*[115]

Virilio's collaborator, the French military theorist Alain Joxe, has made a number of arguments similar to Virilio but has focused more on the radical political dimensions of Pure War.[116] Joxe, like Virilio, postulates a correlation between exo-and endo-colonization, but he prioritises the latter as the cause of the former; he interprets exo-colonization as a continuation of endo-colonization by other means—or, more precisely, that inter-state conflict in the age of Pure War mirrors domestic political struggle.

Class conflict has not disappeared, but has made a prodigious, disconcerting leap since it should now be inscribed at a global level: the globalization of the economy makes it difficult to identify the dominant classes and brings an end to their association with sectors of the subjugated classes that remain local or national. Laws no longer codify class relations except at the tactical level of local political concerns.[117]

The 'un-bounded' dimensions of risk management (Coker), combined with the 'collapse' of the geo-spatiality of the world through globalization (Virilio) yields an equally un-bounded arena for

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[115] Cited in Coker, 76-77. Emphases added.

[116] By this I mean that Virilio is less directly affiliated with the post-Marxist tradition than is Joxe. As I have already indicated in my Introduction, Virilio effectively reverses the relationship between war and economics, substituting the 'means of combat' for the 'means of production' as the primary motor of historical change; 'Bourgeois power is military even more than economic…The Marxist definition of capitalism, "consumer of human life and founder of dead labor", is quite apt for the bourgeoisie, but only insofar as it is associated with its military technical advisor, who simultaneously invents the means of producing and of destroying what he produces, a war entrepreneur who will be at the origin of the State armies and later of the military-industrial complex. Just as the *condottiere* had benefitted from this system of ruin by leaning on the city's economic orientation, so the communal bourgeoisie already carries within itself the same ambiguous association of wealth and the production of destruction.' Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 11-12.

[117] Joxe, 201.

warfare, infinite in both space and time; the 'general effect of globalization, its most general

strategic definition, could be stated as follows: *the disjunction of political, military and economic*

criteria once coordinated by the State at the geographic level of the State.'[118] Behind the

'facade' of apparently national military power lies

The abnormal contact between imperial military globality [universal deterrence/pre-emption] and the absence or dissipation of global diplomacy as trans-national politics [risk management], its disappearance, in the face of a global economy that does not 'think politics' but thinks 'repression' as a separate sphere, not a continuation but a social mirror of the economy...There is no global political power, only a global military power(the American army) and a global economic power (corporations, markets).[119]

'The new post-Cold War globality' that Joxe identifies possesses two attributes that are of special

importance to my paper.

   A.   Imperial substitutes for wars of conquest.

       (i)   *The Empire can re-create a military enemy within the economic globality* to

                   polarize itself and suspend class struggle in the wave of security with repressive

                   wars. This exterior is 'naturally' present: it includes zones of poverty that do not

                   form a 'market' and can therefore become purely *military* marches again. Internal

                   war in zones of poverty. [Endo-colonization]

       (ii)   The Empire can also *re-authorize war within the newly drawn globality of*

                   military leadership in order to re-define peace. [Exo-colonization]

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[118] Ibid, 85.

[119] Joxe, 186. For Virilio, speed-politics 'takes its rightful place but this time on the scale of a world society in which the military classes are in some ways the equivalent of what the feudal lords were in ancient society. There is no political power that can regulate the multinationals or the armed forces, which have greater and greater autonomy. There is no power superior to theirs. Therefore, either we wait for the coming of a hypothetical universal state…or else we finally understand that what is at the center is no longer a monarch by divine right, an absolute monarch but an absolute weapon. The center is no longer occupied by political power, but by the capacity for absolute destruction.' Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 51-2.

B.   Conformity established between the violent and economic means [of risk management]

through computerization (secrecy, real time, precise targeting). [120]

For Joxe

> It is now indispensable for the United States to unite, to globalise markets. In order to do so, certain strategic schools consider it *therefore* necessary to unite-globalise the violent institutions of military and police repression and peace missions, so as to *make virtual violence conform to the global economic system*. (It is 'smoothed over'] by the fluid tissue of multinational corporations in conformity with the undifferentiated space-time of world-markets). This model for the globalization of violence [seeks to imitate]...the model of the *de-localized real time* of the financial market through an a-central transformation.[121]

Endo-colonization, which can be effectively reduced to '*sub-state violence*' appears '*to be the*

result of a current global logic, and not that of a "local archaism", which does not exist, but

only to give a specific form to local violence.'[122]

  The inter-twining of exo- and endo-colonization through a globalized risk society reaches its

logical culmination in **'the doctrine of security'**, or *'the state of internal pacification'*, the

'extermination of a civil society, the complete discharge of the national state in the interests of a

trans-political and trans-national state arising both everywhere and nowhere.'[123] The anomic

doctrine of security, 'which is only a process of making peoples and nations disappear

politically',[124] signifies the successful internalisation of protection costs into the domestic

political economy that have achieved a potentially catastrophic self-sustaining profitability.[125]

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[120] Joxe, 196-8.
[121] Ibid, 198-99.
[122] Ibid, 200.
[123] Virilio, *Negative Horizon*, 173.
[124] Virilio, *Popular Defence & Ecological Struggles*. Trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1978),57.
[125] Israel is an outstanding example of this phenomenon; see Klein, 423-42, passim.

Like his contemporary Michel Foucault, Virilio insists upon a military, or 'disciplinary', logic

to the process of state formation. [126] Unlike Foucault, however, Virilio is concerned with fully

elaborating upon the implications of Pure War for political economy; for him, the kinematic

logistics of perception constitute a total social system grounded upon the centrality of a

permanent war economy, de-noted as *the Suicidal State*.[127] In Virilian analysis, 'there is no

global political power, only a global military power (the American Army) and a global economic

power (corporations, the market).'[128] Under the master-sign of Pure War, the Suicidal State[129]

undergoes a 'double movement': (i) the penetration of neo-liberal corporate governance by

military structures; and (ii) the privatization of military structures as a continuation of neo-liberal

corporate governance by other means. Such a State is 'suicidal' precisely because it internalises a

permanent state of war that leads to unending de-localization.[130]

From these circumstances we are likely to witness the surpassing of *military* war by a
catastrophic endemic of a *civil* war approaching a global scale, as was previously the case in the
twentieth century with *military* war between the great nations. Consider, by way of
confrontation, the following point made by the supreme commander of NATO, General William

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[126] 'Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; butthere was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility.' Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), 169.

[127] Virilio, *'The Suicidal State'*, in Der Derian, *The Virilio Reader*, 29-45. For a detailed exposition of the reversibility between War and Politics that underlines Virilio's notion of the Suicidal State, see Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15(1), Winter 2003, 11-46.

[128] Joxe,167.

[129] Virilio also refers to the Suicidal State as the *'Pure State'*. '"The universal State" is a State in its pure form which is the result of Pure War, that is, of the intensity of the means of destruction'—which strictly correlate with its means of detection.' Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 53. 'We are going toward the pure State because there is an infinite fragmentation of inter-state conflicts.' Idem, 42.

[130] Hence the world historical importance of the 'Truman Doctrine', that simultaneously placed war at the center of the U.S. political economy while dispersing national military power throughout trans-national space. Both movements were unified through the concept of the 'National Security State.' The Truman Administration was the first to give formal statutory and bureaucratic expression to pure war within the American national context. See Frank Kofsky, *Harry S. Truman and the War Scare of* 1948 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Michael J. Hogan, *Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

Kernan, in August 2000: 'Henceforth, NATO will fight illegal immigration, ethnic violence and international crime.'[131]

This de-localization/fragmentation is a direct product of *kinematic optics*, the 'decomposition' of formerly unified political and military spaces is the historical manifestation of the 'disappearance of reality' achieved by the editorial processes of a cinematic culture.'The cinema shows us what our consciousness is. Our consciousness is an effect of montage. There is no continuous consciousness, there are only compositions of consciousness. And these compositions are voluntary and involuntary.'[132]

V. The Suicidal State and Post-Clausewitzean War

Everything is very simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult.—Clausewitz

We are entering a period of consequences.—Winston Churchill

Operation Desert Storm may plausibly be considered to be the first 'post-Clausewitzean' war of the age of risk. Writing for the British newspaper *The Guardian* in 1997, the science-fiction novelist J.G. Ballard likened the Second Gulf War to a 'vast demolition derby'.[133]

For Ballard and so many other spectators, in this, the first war to be televised in real time, what mattered most was not that the U.S. overwhelmed the enemy but that the outcome was 'pre-programmed'. The war was scripted in advance and the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) was part of the script. So were phrases like 'full-dimensional protection', 'full spectrum dominance' and 'precision engagement'. Those were the ideological inflections of the 1990s discourse on war. Inadvertently they disclosed the military's ambition for what the RMA promised—in the words of one U.S general, the chance *'to abolish Clausewitz'*. It was a bold claim because Clausewitz is the man whose work has produced many of the axioms the military has taken for granted, including his insistence that in any war chance and friction can never be eliminated, and with them *the risk* that every conflict entails. John Warden was later to claim that 'dominant battle space awareness' had given way to *predictive* battle space awareness. One government official went even further. In planning for the future, he remarked, the U.S military

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[131] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 98.
[132] Ibid, 41.
[133] Coker, 7.

could discard *the traditional inductive approach* (i.e. learning from history and experience) in favour of a *deductive method*: it could now posit what the future would look like without reference to the past.[134]

Of central importance to the preceding text, of course, is the open announcement of the will 'to abolish Clausewitz'. We might very well see in this the culmination of both the military and the political logic of Pure War: the abolition of uncertainty—Clausewitz's famous 'the fog of war'— effectively removes the element of risk from warfare, creating a field, or 'zone', of potentially unlimited operations. As I have already shown, the historical antecedent to our 'post-Clausewitzean' landscape is the nexus among kinematic optics and computerization, as described by Virilio. The convergence of these two military-political complexes yields a revolutionary transformation in that most reified form of strategic analysis, the *war game*.

As Winston Churchill confirmed, the general tendency prevails over successive episodes. It is like the difference between the invention of cinematography and the invention of chronophotography: since armed clashes could now only be perceived through *projection*, only the photogramme of the war film could reveal their inner dynamic or general line, ground patrols being left to serve as a tactical control. The system of reviewing images and sequences in accelerated motion was then applied to military reviews and exercises, on a training ground which was no more than a screen for projection of the war of movement. Alone capable of making visible the likelihood of attack, cinema because associated with battle in the same way that telescopic sights were attached to rifles or the cine-machine-gun to aerial warfare.[135]

It is necessary to remember here that, uniquely, film can be 'run' backwards, completely disassociating the 'moving' image from real-time/space. Therefore, military planning is able to enter an idealized sphere of the 'virtual' in which the real-time encumbrances of friction can be effectively eliminated. The problem here, of course, is that friction is central to Clausewitz's entire notion of war, not merely in regards to tactical operations but to the very claim of war to

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[134] Coker, 8. Emphases added.
[135] Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 73-4.

be a politically intelligible act. At the very heart of Clausewitz's writings is a political axiom, not

a military one: the subordination of military operations to clearly delineated political objectives

is precisely what prevents war from escalating into unlimited and uncontrollable violence. On

this point, Clausewitz makes two assertions. Firstly, only those deployments of State force that

correspond to rationally expressible Statist objectives may qualify as war 'properly so-called'.

Accordingly

No War is commences, or, at least, no War *should* be commenced, if people acted wisely,
without first seeking a reply to the question, What is to be attained by and in the same?...By this
chief consideration the whole course of the War is prescribed, the extent of the means and the
measure of energy are determined; its influence manifests itself down to the smallest organ of
action.[136]

The second assertion, which follows from the first although it is not stated as explicitly, is that

the political subordination of war imposes upon it an objective degree of finitude, both in space

and in time. That is, the oversight of the State through the directives of national policy will

prevent war from following its 'natural' course of escalation. War is an inherently unstable

phenomenon precisely because it its essence is violence; 'War is an act of violence intended to

compel our opponent to fulfill our will.'[137] From this

A hostile feeling is kindled by the combat itself; for an act of violence which anyone commits
upon us by order of his superior, will excite in us a desire to retaliate and be revenged on him,

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[136] Clausewitz, 367. Emphasis added. In spite of his adherence to classical Realism, Clausewitz frequently obviates
the is/ought rule by conflating his descriptive accounts of war with his strongly normative evaluations of it.
'Clausewitz views war as a national instrument of national policy. The three words "rational", "instrument", and
"national" are the key concepts of his paradigm. In this view, the decision to wage war "ought" to be rational in the
sense that it ought to be based on estimated costs and gains of the war. Next, war "ought" to be instrumental, in the
sense that it ought to be waged in order to achieve some goal, never for its own sake; and also in the sense that
strategy and tactics ought to be directed towards just one end, namely toward victory. Finally, war "ought" to be
national, in the sense that its objective should be to advance the interests of a national state and that the entire effort
of the nation ought to be mobilized in the service of the military objective.' Rapoport, in Clausewitz, 13. For an
excellent account of both how and why the U.S. intervention in Viet Nam failed to comply with Clausewitz's
criteria of war properly so-called, see James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Techno-War in Vietnam* (Boston:
The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).
[137] Clausewitz, 101.

sooner than on the superior power at whose command the act was done. This is human, or animal if we will; still it is so.[138]

The contours of national policy, provided that they conform to rational state interest and are

effectively imposed upon the military, act as a form of 'fail-safe' mechanism that prevents war

from becoming unintelligible violence.

Thus, policy makes out of the all-overpowering element of War a mere instrument, changes the tremendous battle-sword, which should be lifted with both hands and the whole power of the body to strike once for all, into a light handy weapon, which is even sometimes nothing more than a rapier to exchange thrusts and feints and parries.[139]

Clausewitz is thus able to conclude that, 'War can never be separated from political intercourse,

and if, in the consideration of the matter, this is one in any way, all the threads of the different

relations are, to a certain extent, broken, and we have before us a senseless thing without an

object.'[140]

   Ironically, it is precisely because war is *impure*—that is, an ad-mixture of heterogenous

elements (friction, uncertainty, chance)—that it can be made to conform to the dictates of

orthodox political reason; 'We maintain…that War is nothing but a construction of political

intercourse, with a mixture of other means.'[141] The Pure War of the Suicidal State, therefore, is

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[138] Ibid, 186-7.

[139] Ibid, 403. Although I am doing some slight violence to Clausewitz, I would argue that it is possible to detect in his writings something like a positive appraisal of the 'political utility' of military defeat, in that losses on the battlefield will encourage the State to re-assert even greater control over the conduct of hostilities. 'We have said that the moral [psychological] forces, beaten to the ground in battle and in the immediately succeeding movements, recover themselves gradually, and often bear no traces of injury; this is the case with small divisions of the whole, less frequently with large divisions; it may, however, also be the case with the main Army, but seldom or never in the State or Government to which the Army belongs. These estimate the situation more impartially and from a more elevated point of view, and recognize in the number of trophies [prisoners and artillery] taken by the enemy, and their relation to the number of killed and wounded, only easily and too well, the measure of their own weakness and inefficiency.' Ibid, 311.

[140] Ibid, 402,

[141] Ibid.

wholly unintelligible within the Clausewitzean paradigm and should be condemned as an

anathema. 'Impure' war is 'real' war and is

No such consistent effort tending to an extreme [unlimited conflict], as it should be according to the abstract idea, but a half-and-half thing, a contradiction in itself; that, as such, it cannot follow its own laws, but must be looked upon as part of another whole—and this whole is policy[142]…War is, therefore, not only chameleon-like in character, because it changes color in some degree in each particular case,[143] but it is also, as a whole, in relation to predominant tendencies which are in it, a wonderful trinity, composed of the original violence of its elements, hatred, and animosity which may be looked upon as blind instinct [escalation]; of the play of probabilities and chance which makes it a free activity of the soul [friction]; and of the subordinate nature of a political instrument by which it belongs purely to the reason [finitude].[144]

Clausewitzean discourse is the antithesis of cyborg discourse; which is precisely the 'problem'

with it. The historical limitations of Clausewitz should be clear; Pure War, in its current form, is

premised upon the excision of that 'wonderful trinity' that Clausewitz asserts is indispensable to

maintaining both the normative and theoretical intelligibility of war—'by which it belongs

purely to the reason.' At a superficial level, then, Clausewitz's paradigm has been superseded by

historical developments. On a more profound level, which is where my own interests lie, the

problem of Clausewitz points to a far more serious development—the transformation of the

nature of the State itself, along with its signifying 'reason'. The Clausewitzean model constitutes

one of the orthodox expressions of both the classical and structural Realist accounts of the State

and inter-state relations. By this very fact, however, we are able to reverse the ordinary

relationship of intellectual cause and effect and logically deduce the foundational transformation

of the State as signified by the ascendancy of Pure War and the doctrine of security. If I can

empirically demonstrate that the Clausewitzean model has been repudiated by the contemporary

behavior of States, then I will be able to argue a posteriori that we collectively inhabit the epoch

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[142] Ibid, 403.

[143] 'War may be a thing which is sometimes War in a greater, sometimes in a lesser degree.' Ibid, 370.

[144] Ibid, 121.

of the Suicidal State; what, following both Virilio and Joxe, I might provisionally denote as 'post-structural Realism'. I believe that I can offer such a proof by utilizing two exceptionally important pieces of evidence. Revealingly, both pieces of evidence concern a 'disappearance'—the absence of something that we should ordinarily expect to, but in actual fact do not, see.

(i) *The disappearance of the formal 'declaration of war'*

War properly speaking…should necessarily begin with a declaration of War and end with a treaty of peace.—Clausewitz

In one of his more controversial remarks concerning Operation Desert Storm, the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard held that 'We should have been suspicious about the disappearance of the declaration [of war] , the disappearance of the symbolic passage of the act, which already presaged the disappearance of the end of hostilities…Since it never began, this war is therefore interminable.'[145] In a purely technical sense Baudrillard is mistaken; under current International Law, the unilateral declaration of war has been effectively suspended by the multi-lateralist device of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) Chapter VII 'binding resolution'. However, this legal 'pre-emption' is revealing in and of itself; under the UN Charter the UNSC is assigned the globalist task of enforcing 'international peace and cooperation', often effectively reduced in contemporary internationalist discourse to 'collective security'. In other words, the global governance paradigm that infuses the UNSC and legitimizes its actions is one that closely approximates a globalist model of risk management; the substitution of 'security' for 'war' is a dead give-away, as Coker makes clear.

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[145] Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Trans. Paul Patton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 27.

The declaration of war, of course, used to be a timeless ritual which implied that every war had a beginning and an end: that every conflict usually ended in a peace treaty or at the very least an armistice. But these days wars do not always end even when the fighting stops they have become an instrument of risk management, not order. This was borne out at one point in the weeks before the fighting began when a former U.S. ambassador to Iraq who knew the country well[146] asked a U.S.A.F. general whether he would like some political advice. He was told, 'Oh no, Mr. Ambassador, the war has no political overtones'. This would have horrified anyone brought up to take seriously Clausewitz's maxim that war is the continuation of politics by other means.[147]

Adding to Coker's obvious dismay is the fact that 'Generals attend staff colleges where the military are taught Clausewitz's maxim that a country should never get involved in any war unless it understands its nature.'[148] That a U.S Air Force general posited the Second Gulf War as a-political gives us an additional reason for agreeing with Baudrillard that, in some sense, the 'Gulf War did not take place.' Under classical Just War theory, wars are interpreted as a form of 'trial by combat', in which the 'rightness' of the dispute is settled through battle; the victor is 'in the right' precisely because he has prevailed within a contest that is inherently judicial in nature. Although a classical Realist, Clausewitz himself makes a similar point by likening warfare to a form of duelling; 'War is nothing but a duel on an extensive scale; that is, as a contest between two or more parties all of whom, presumably, possess a form of "right".'[149] What this presupposes, however, is that the contending moral status of the contestants is in doubt prior to the final resolution: either may be in the right, but we cannot know with certainty prior to the moment of decision. Likewise, in politics, 'disputes' presuppose that each party to the conflict has its own sets of interests and principles that: (i) deserve some degree of recognition by the other parties and (ii) will in fact be mediated through the dispute and its aftermath—classically a

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[146] Presumably this was an anomaly.
[147] Coker, 10.
[148] Coker, 22.
[149] Clausewitz, 101. 'The concept of "just" and "unjust" wars does not appear in Clausewitz. Implicitly, however, Clausewitz views all national wars as "just" (on both sides), since in his view nationhood is the highest form of social organization and a nation asserts its very essence through war.' Rapoport in Clausewitz, 417 fn. 21.

negotiated peace treaty that serves as the mark of the temporal limit of that dispute. The reason,

therefore, why the 'the Gulf War did not take place' for Baudrillard was that this entire regime of

legal and political practice was abolished: Iraq was unconditionally in 'the wrong' and, therefore,

quite literally 'had nothing to say'. If the Gulf War was a 'real' war along classical lines, then the

possibility exists that Iraq possessed some degree of 'right'—the very thing that absolutely

cannot be admitted if we are to de-politicise the wars of the post-Clausewitzean age of risk. If all

UNSC interventions can be convincingly re-formulated as 'security' or 'police' actions, the

foundational legitimacy of the contemporary world-system of neo-liberal global governance may

be rendered impervious to critique—or resistance. Accordingly, for Baudrillard our wars 'have

less to do with the confrontation of warriors than with the domestication of the refractory forces

on the planet...All that is singular and irreducible must be reduced and absorbed. This is the law

of democracy and the New World Order.'[150]Joxe has expressed a similar sentiment; 'We are

confronted with a global power that takes infinitely varied local forms while refusing to *think* of

local variety except in terms of temporal uniformity [Virilio's globalization of real-time]; and it

succeeds thanks to its ability to establish norms, not to conquer.'[151] The abolition of friction, or

complexity, is both the pre-condition for and the raison d'etre of the Suicidal State.

(ii)   The disappearance of the 'decisive battle'

Consistent with his notion of warfare as duelling, Clausewitz attributes the highest importance to

battle as the hinge-point of war.[152]

What is a battle?...it is a conflict waged with all of our forces for the attainment of a decisive
victory...because the essence of War is conflict, and the battle is the conflict of the main Armies,

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[150] Baudrillard, 86.
[151] Joxe, 81.
[152] See Clausewitz, Book Four, 'The Combat', 301-61, passim.

it is always to be regarded as the real centre of gravity of the War, and therefore its distinguishing character is, that unlike all other encounters, it is arranged for, and undertaken with the sole purpose of obtaining a decisive victory.[153]

For Clausewitz

There is then nothing in War which can be put in comparison with the great battle in point of importance, *and the acme of everything is displayed in the provision of means for this great event, in the skilful determination of place and time, and direction of troops, and in good use made of success*.[154]

Over the course of the modern period, however, the classical notion of the decisive battle has lost

much of its doctrinal authority. Virilio attributes to Winston Churchill the following: 'In ancient

warfare, the episodes were more important than the tendencies; in modern warfare, the

tendencies are more important than the episodes.'[155]

Wars have been increasingly won through attrition because they have been increasingly determined by economic and social factors, as much as by the performance of armies on a battlefield...The victories of the losing side though often tactically impressive, availed it little. Field Marshall von Manstein talked of Germany's 'lost victories' in 1940-1. None of the battlefield successes that Germany secured in 1940-1 (perhaps the most impressive in modern history) could be translated into a decisive strategic outcome.[156]

This Churchillian 'era of consequences'

Has led to the concept of the 'long' or 'never-ending war', an *a-strategic*, tactically driven risk management policy which locks the West [sic] into an endless process of risk management. A risk society is necessarily a safety society [a 'security society'?], one that is permanently on the defensive...In the case of war this has given rise to the doctrine of pre-emption which is rooted in the Precautionary Principle.[157]

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[153] Ibid, 330. Some of Clausewitz's most poetic passagess are reserved for combat. 'The battle may therefore be regarded as War concentrated, as the centre of effort of the whole War or campaign. As the sun's rays unite in the focus of the concave mirror in a perfect image, and in the fullness of their heat; so the forces and circumstances of War, unite in a focus in the great battle for one concentrated utmost effort.' Ibid, 343.

[154] Ibid, 347.

[155] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 138.

[156] Coker, 51.

[157] Ibid. 26.

This parallels the post-Clausewitzean shift in military doctrine away from strategy and tactics

and towards logistics, the master-sign of warfare in the age of risk.[158] Consistent with his

prioritization of the battle—'the destruction of the enemy's Army is always the preponderating

object in War'[159] and that 'this destruction can only be effected' through the decisive battle[160]—

Clausewitz subordinates his consideration of the other facets of war to his emphasis upon tactics.

> Undoubtedly there is a scientific arrangement of battles amongst themselves, even in Strategy, which is in fact nothing but the Art of thus arranging them. To deny that is not our intention, but we assert that the direct destruction of the enemy's forces is everywhere predominant; we contend here for the overarching importance of this destructive principle and nothing else[161]…Whoever reads history with a mind free from prejudice cannot fail to arrive at a conviction that of all military virtues, energy in the conduct of operations has always contributed the most to the glory and success of arms.[162]

Yet, according to Virilio, the Pentagon, sometime between 1945 and 1950, declared that

'Logistics is the procedure following which a nation's potential is transferred to its armed forces,

in the times of peace as in times of war.'[163] This, of course, completely invalidates the cardinal

Clausewitzean axiom that the military is to be, at all times, strictly subordinate to the State. The

'never-ending war', a sign of both the risk society and the triumph of logistics over strategy, is a

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[158] 'As the last two great wars have shown, victory goes to the nation most capable of mobilizing its industrial might. Wars have come to depend more on huge logistic orchestration of effort than on tactical or strategic innovations. Imposing a tight control and common grid on peacetime production is seen as the best way to prepare for wartime resource mobilization.' De Landa, 34. For De Landa's own application of chaos theory to contemporary logistics, see idem 105-25.

[159] Clausewitz, 307-8.

[160] Ibid, 343. Accordingly, strategy is defined as '*the employment of the battle as the means towards the attainment of the object of the War.*' Ibid, 241.

[161] Ibid. 305. As Rapoport points out, the quintessentially 'risk management' doctrine of *limited war* is alien to Clausewitz. See Rapoport in Clausewitz, 76 and 412. In Clausewitz's view, any 'limitation of military objectives depends entirely on the political objectives; that is, [the] war effort is to be commensurate with what is demanded from the enemy and what can be achieved. In our day the threat of a nuclear holocaust puts a limitation on what can be demanded. In other words, military capabilities place limits on political objectives not because the capabilities are insufficient but because they are excessive.' Idem, 423 fn. 59. It is interesting to speculate as to whether 'regime change' is something that can be formulated in terms of a 'demand from the enemy'. To the extent that we engage in regime change we are, prima facie, already within a post-Clausewitzean landscape; as a classical Realist, Clausewitz would not concede that a demand from the enemy to voluntarily undergo political suicide forms any part orthodox political reason.

[162] Clausewitz, 307. See also idem 192.

[163] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 23-24.

virtual metaphor for Pure War. Within the paradigm of risk management, military 'victory'—

traditionally the *sunnum bonum* of all military endeavors—is now effectively reduced to 'tactical

success', precisely because within the age of risk there is no other way to define, or even

conceptualize, it given the limits of the paradigm: the absolutely negative value of risk coupled

with our ultimate inability to eliminate completely given the ubiquity of consequences. On this

point, Coker's scathing critique of the apparent Coalition 'victory' in Iraq following 'the Surge'

of 2007, wherein he laments the presence of tactics in the absence of decision, is highly

revealing.

Even in the case of the Surge there is no such thing as risk-free victory. All it has managed to do
is to apply a series of bench marks: is the situation more or less secure, and for whom?
Clausewitz would have been horrified because the war is apparently tactically driven. Tactical
success on the ground is producing strategic outcomes that may or may not be satisfactory but it
is hard to see a strategy in the traditional sense.[164]

To which it may be replied, 'That is the exact point'—from the perspective of Pure War. More

than Coker, Virilio is acutely sensitive to the post-Clausewitzean implications of contemporary

notions of military 'victory' wherein the traditional order of relations is completely reversed. The

successful universalisation of the logistics of perception *guarantees* never-ending 'tactical

success on the ground'; a truly effective system of globalist surveillance will appropriate the

strategy formulating process through the imposition of a state of absolute deterrence (=pre-

emption) of risk. As a corollary, the paradigm of interventionist 'anticipatory self-defence' can

be extended to virtually every form of social relationship, provided that it can be translated into

the discursive terms of risk management; 'To turn the old Clausewitzean principle around, writes

Ulrich Beck, "military violence...is a continuation of the morality of human rights by other

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[164] Coker, 128.

means".'[165] This, in turn, explains the apparent contemporary paradox of events which have traditionally not been considered appropriate objects of military action—famines, contagious diseases, natural catastrophes, systemic human rights abuses—are now deemed to constitute 'breaches of or threats to international peace and co-operation' and, therefore, actionable under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter. The ultimate cause in the shift of international legal discourse and practice is the universalization of the logistics of perception, which is the necessary pre-condition for Pure War; therefore, the pre-emptive risk management interventions of the UNSC are necessarily modelled after a military paradigm—signifying the complete globalization of the doctrine of security.

VI.   Conclusion: Pure War and the Aesthetics of Disappearance

The victory in Desert Storm proved that speed has a mass of its own...Speed kills.—General Tommy Franks

The primacy of speed is the primacy of the military.—Alain Joxe

While commenting on the Revolution in Military Affairs, most commonly signified by 'Rapid Dominance' and 'shock and awe', Coker speculates that we might be observing the establishment of 'the law of diminishing military returns'.

Speed was intended to demoralize and undermine the enemy's self-belief, to win today what couldn't necessarily be won tomorrow because speed could not be sustained indefinitely. The task was to get the enemy to focus on the 'short term', not the long because *in the long term everything could change*...The problem with speed is that all energy dissipates—speed is entropic as Napoleon himself discovered in 1812 when he reached Moscow. Speed is unavailing when an army reaches what strategists call 'the culmination point of operations', the point at which it has advanced so far and so quickly that it cannot sustain itself in the field. All armies—especially the most ambitious—discover that energy diminishes the further it discharges itself. As one British strategist wrote 'The offensive carries *a priori* within itself a fatal germ; it

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[165] Ibid, 35.

weakens itself by its own success.'[166] It is foolish to preach that speed itself is a virtue, as if it was a teaching that brooks no argument. *It is foolish because it primes soldiers to take tactics more seriously than strategy. The primary virtue in war is not speed, it is intelligence.*[167]

Personally, I am sceptical of the frankly normative (and doctrinally conservative) tone adopted by Coker here. As I have already shown, in Virilian terms, *speed as the logistics of perception* in itself constitutes 'intelligence'; Coker's criticism is only compelling if we de-couple speed from perception. Furthermore, Pure War is premised upon a militaristic appropriation of risk management; therefore, it acts as a countervailing norm rather than a 'regime of error'. The *raison d'etre* of Pure War is to so perfect the logistics of perception that both speed and tactical success effectively exhaust the concept of (risk free) 'victory'. In my opinion, Coker fails to come to full intellectual terms to the Nietzchean dimensions of Virilio's notion of 'the will to universalized illumination'; it is the paradigm that governs the perception of reality, not 'reality' that serves as the passive model of the paradigm. The logistics of perception and its instrumental manifestations, primarily cyber technology, create and police the parameters of the closed world, the real-time condition of speed-politics.

Coker's critique, however, gains much greater suasive force when it is harnessed as a means of extending Virilio's more abstract analysis of the Suicidal State. For Virilio, the unbearable agony of the closed world of the Suicidal State is not the political or economic oppression that it might entail, but the phenomenological disassociation that it induces. The absolute nature of Pure War, coupled with the claustrophobic pressures of globalization, yield a traumatisation of consciousness that culminates in a collective loss of a sense of the real. 'Temporal compression is a technical term. It illustrates that real time is a determining element of power. Temporal

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[166] Cited in Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 122.
[167] Coker, 55. Emphasis added.

compression is what I also call *'dromospheric pressure'* in reference to atmospheric pressure.'[168]

The tyranny of temporal compression

Proves that we are now in a closed box. *We're in a closed world.* What people take to be the payoff of interactivity[169] is only the sign of enclosure. It is thus impossible to talk here about urbanism and globalization without evoking foreclosure, in other words, the incarceration of which we are already the unconscious victims. For a long time now, I have had the feeling that we are heading toward an unbearable way of life. I'll explain. The body proper of our habitat has become not only unhealthy due to the pollution of the substances that make it up—this is green ecology—but soon uninhabitable, or almost, due to the sudden pollution of temporal distances, these intervals that threaten the world's geophysics. The world of green ecology, and the world of *grey* ecology is becoming uninhabitable. And because after a while this interactivity becomes unbearable.[170]

Coker has admirably taken up this thread of Virilian critique and applied it to contemporary U.S.

military doctrine.

The risk age may be conceivable as the compression of time, and history may have become the story of acceleration, but we must recognize that *speed takes no account of complexity*, which is why the direction in which the U.S military is taking war has proved so counter-productive. Virilio calls speed a 'negative horizon'. It produces sensational privation because it obscures our perception of the world and blinds us to the consequences of our acts. Speed also deprives us of contact, or direct experience of the enemy, which is usually fatal when a war does not end in a formal cessation of hostilities.[171] Speed is not a phenomenon in itself; it is a relationship in this case between ourselves and war. There is no reality outside of this relativity. The reality of information about the enemy is contained entirely in the speed of its dissemination, and information is only ever the designation of the state that a phenomenon assumes at a given moment. In other words, its 'relief' which is why we talk of 'high definition' and 'high resolution' in relation to two phenomena: sound and the image.[172]

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[168] Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 73.
[169] 'Interactivity' is the Virilian term for 'connectivity', the master-sign of the age of the social network. 'Interactivity is possible because the earth is small, and the speed of light makes it so that in a few fractions of a second I can interact, inter-see, inter-hear, etc...Interactivity results from the pressure of instantaneous real time on the real space of succession. You see, we have on the one hand the pressure of real time and on the other simultaneity. Interactivity is the catching up of simultaneity with the real space of chronological and historical succession.' Ibid, 78.
[170] Ibid, 79.
[171] The dangerous supplement to the absence of the formal declaration of war.
[172] Ibid, 112. See also Virilio, *The Art of the Motor*, 140.

John Updike has expressed this dilemma beautifully: 'Computer power eliminates doubt. All doubt rises from past experience. But the past is disappearing. We used to know the past but not the future. This is changing too.'[173] In similar terms, Virilio has declared that 'History as the extensiveness of time—of time that lasts, is portioned out, organized, developed—is disappearing in favour of the instant, as if the end of history were the end of duration in favour of instantaneousness, and of course, of ubiquity.'[174]

Nowhere is the fusion of 'theory' with 'reality' greater than was evidenced by the violent integration of both Afghanistan and Iraq into the neo-liberal world-system, a violence signified by the 'virtual' disappearance[175] of the combatants. As Baudrillard has made clear in his widely under-appreciated work on the First Gulf War

The crucial stake, the decisive stake in this whole affair is the consensual reduction of Islam to the global order. Not to destroy but to domesticate it, by whatever means: modernization, even military, politicisation, nationalism, democracy, the Rights of Man, anything at all to electrocute the resistances and the symbolic challenge that Islam represents for the entire West.[176]

The trauma induced by 'shock and awe' accelerates the anomic decomposition of both the Iraqi territorial and social body.[177] Territorially, Iraq was occupied by Rapid Dominance—that is, it loses sovereign authority over its own space—and 'dis-integrates' into sectarian conflict and quasi-civil war.[178] Socially, Iraq decomposes through the de-localization of an imposed trans-national sovereignty—the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The key to Iraqi shock therapy

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[173] Cited in Coker, 8.
[174] Virilio and Lotringer, *Pure War*, 52. It is important to note that both Updike and Virilio are practicing Catholics. Virilio himself may be best described as a Christian Humanist phenomenologist.
[175] Pun intended.
[176] Baudrillard, 85.
[177] I shall omit all consideration of the traumatic decomposition of the phenomenological 'animal bodies' of the Iraqis as individuals.
[178] Virilio, *Negative Horizon*, 188.

is 'de-Baathification', the wholesale removal of all Iraqi bureaucratic and security personnel.[179]

This, of course, accords perfectly well with Klein's notion of 'the shock doctrine': 'The

fundamental mission of the neo-liberal state is to create a "good business climate" and therefore

to optimise conditions for capital accumulation no matter what the consequences for employment

or social well-being.'[180] Since what 'the US evidently seeks to impose on Iraq is a full-fledged

neo-liberal state apparatus whose fundamental mission is to facilitate conditions for profitable

capital accumulation',[181] the head of the CPA, U.S. ambassador L. Paul Bremer, promulgated

orders that included 'the full privatisation of public enterprises, full ownership rights by foreign

firms of Iraqi businesses, full repatriation of foreign profits…the opening of Iraq's banks to

foreign control, national treatment for foreign companies and…the elimination of nearly all trade

barriers.' [182]

Pure War reduces space to time; Iraq, as the site of pure war, in both the economic and military

dimensions of pure war, is reduced to an empty space. The parallels here between Iraq and a

fellow 'trauma victim', Afghanistan, are so uncanny as to be deliberate. As Marc W. Herold has

shown, Afghanistan, like Iraq, has been thoroughly 'vectorized': 'In effect, the sole value of

Afghanistan is its space, pure and simple.'[183] Consistent with neo-liberal principles, this is highly

cost-efficient in its own terms, and creates an 'empty space' for unbridled privatisation: 'Since

only an empty space is involved, the implication is that such will be policed and maintained at

least cost.'[184] As this is Pure War, the economic, the political, and the military all converge in

good non-reductive fashion. Afghanistan offers 'a space from which to project power and

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[179] Klein, chapters sixteen to eighteen, 325-82, passim.
[180] Harvey, 25.
[181] Ibid. 11.
[182] Ibid. 10.
[183] *Marc W. Herold, 'U.S. Military Strategy to Maintain Afghanistan as an "Empty Space". Afghanistan as an Empty Space, Part Four', 11 of 17.*[check source]
[184] Ibid.

influence.[185] In that sense, at a time when First World country finances are strained, the country

represents the ideal neo-colony of the twenty-first century: an empty space to be operated at least

cost.'[186]Since both trauma victims are now vectored 'empty space'—both thoroughly de-

composed and rendered wholly transparent—the 'State' in both instances has, in effect, become

'invisible'. Both Iraq and Afghanistan are, therefore, reduced to a wholly virtual State whose

'reality' is guaranteed through the optical effect of visual imagery. For Marc W. Herold, this

clearly signifies the 'truth' of Afghanistan.

Four years after the US-led attack on Afghanistan, the meaning of the US occupation is revealing
itself. *Afghanistan represents merely a space that is to be kept empty*. The only populated centres
of any real concern are a few islands of grotesque capitalist *imaginary reality*—foremost
Kabul—needed to *project the image of an existing central government*.[187]

The occupation of both Iraq and Afghanistan, then, mark the site of a double disappearance—the

first, the defeated enemies 'vectored' out of existence, the second, the victorious Suicidal State

itself.

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[185] 'The means to maintain and police such an empty space are a particular spatial distribution of military projection
by U.S. and increasingly NATO-led aerial forces: twenty-four hour high-level aerial surveillance; a three-level
presence (low, medium, high altitude); pre-positioned fast-reaction heavily-armed ground forces based at heavily
fortified key nodal points and the employ of local satrap's expendable forces.' **Marc W. Herold, 'Afghanistan as an
Empty Space: the Perfect Neo-Colonial State of the 21st Century, Part One', 2 of 24.**
[186] **Herold, 'U.S. Military Strategy', 11.**
[187] **Herold, 'Afghanistan as an Empty Space',1. See also, Marc W. Herold, 'Hat Trick: Selling Brand Karzai.
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