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Maximiliano E. Korstanje
University of Palermo

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Book Review | *A diez años del 11 de Septiembre: Como cambió el mundo (9/11 Ten years ago: how the World changed)*

Maximiliano E. Korstanje

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A diez años del 11 de Septiembre: Como cambió el mundo (9/11 Ten years ago: how the World changed); Buenos Aires: Le Monde Diplomatique, Capital Intelectual, 2011.

Some left intellectuals have certainly fallen in a dilemma from many years back. In order to enhance their personal ego rather than expand the current understanding of politics life, their approaches often ignore the history of modernity and its own connection with terrorism. From the World Trade Center's attack onwards, these studies have focused on the role of U.S. in the formation of preventive war. Ten years ago, *Le Monde Diplomatique* printed a new edition based on the compilation of different authors in response to 9/11. With the exception of S. Zizek, N. Chomsky, I. Ramonet and E. Hobsbawm, who present a convincingly examination of terrorism issues, the book is wholly structured in a poor analysis more intended in justifying some ideological ideas that may lead readers to serious errors. In addition, the forewords authored by G. Tokatlian evidenced some concerns about the advance of right governments in Europe. This assumption precludes that the dichotomy between right and left still remains in our times. Secondly, this book emphasizes the importance of human rights and democracy as key factors to eradicate terrorism. Taking advantage from this situation, United States would try to expand its hegemony across the world. The problem of terrorism seems to be, from this perspective, linked to religion (in both corners of the problem).

To be honest, unfortunately this work aspired to be more than it really is. The majority of these chapters are short journal columns, republished, with a poor methodological basis and diverse conceptual contradictories. More interested in communicating what should be correct than understanding this slippery matter, this compilation should come under the lens of scrutiny. In what follows, we will discuss in depth all issues involves modern terrorism

Corresponding Author: Maximiliano E. Korstanje
University of Palermo, Argentina
email – maxikorstanje@hotmail.com

today.

First and foremost, the modern gaze has serious limitations to understand democracy. In ancient Greece, democracy was not an institution but a right, the right of citizens to derogate an unfair law. Democracy in these times was not associated to a political organization or a process of territorialisation. Since the life of Plato or Aristotle was characterized by a set of material asymmetries (between slavery and citizenship), the authority of king was not defied by democracy. The pluralism of thought and voices played a pivotal role for concreting the democracy in Greece. To some extent, the ideals of Greek democracy ended after the Peloponnesus war. If all citizens gain the privilege to access to all also everybody has access to nothing. Of course, Socratic philosophers believed not only in aristocracies but also in the concentration of power in few hands.

With the passing of centuries, the Cromwell and industrial revolutions (in England) changed the adscription of lineage and roles, considering that human beings may be evaluated not only by their productivity at work but also their liberty for consuming. From this point of view, industrial revolution needed liberty from its expansion by re-orienting workers according to certain awards (salaries). The old institutions based on catholic charity started to be broken into pieces to the extent to generate a continuous social fragmentation. The capital subverts all human needs, creating a new way of behavior. As mediators, money and financial powers blurred the boundaries between humans and their institutions triggering a larger gap between represented citizens and their representatives. This resulted in the advance of uncertainty and distrust. In three stages, the city-state set the pace to nation-states and today to a global net that introduced in politics the dictatorship of corporations. The current globalized forms of productions need risk and mobilities to be reproduced by means of the tergiversation of time and space. There is no way to understand democracy than by approaching modernity and capitalism. The modern nation-state is being managed by corporations and economic powers that facilitate their expansion based on the emission of currency and financial interest. Metaphorically speaking, the Republic remains in crisis because the representation of citizens has been substituted by a mediated sense of reality. We have to think twice about this at a time of confirming that democracy may deter the negative effects of terrorism.

As the previous argument gives, modernity which is a-ideological comes across with some problems in cultures such as the Middle East, based on a theological legacy. Although it is important to note that some aspects of life in this region may be secularized, religion plays a pivotal role in configuring not only human relationships but also the institutions of Muslim world. At a first glance, the theories that encouraged the view that tourism should be defined as a clash of civilization should be re-visited. Many intellectuals or members of

aristocracies in the Middle East educated their sons in Western universities. Basically, Bin Laden's tactics were strongly linked to a manual of modern managements. After the war between Arabic countries and Israel, the sources of energies of the West suffered a resounding decline. Many industrialized nations were obliged to substitute their styles of production re-segmenting the consumers in a more individualistic manner. The old fordist scale of production was radically altered in a more flexible, and changing dynamic based on individual consumption. This reality paved the pathways for the advent of a concept based on sustainability and ecology protection. From this view, the encounter between the Muslim world and the West is explained by a competition for the non-removable resources.

In parallel with this, it is important to remind ourselves that the Koran is formed by a legacy of many fragmented texts which were never compiled in an all-encompassed way. Unlike the catholic Bible which was codified by one-sided gaze, the Islamic legacy is circumscribed to various and open interpretations. Whenever the *umma* (community) is in danger by any external attack, all Muslims should commit to defend the city. This message can be interpreted from diverse forms, depending on the social and economic context. For example, USSR military intervention in Afghanistan not only provoked the support of all Muslim tribes but also enlisted many volunteers to fight against this external power. Similar applications were done since the American empire arrived in the region to exploit by means of its corporations the existent oil reserves.

What seems to be important for debate here is why left intellectuals present tergiversated explanations of facts. Terrorism does not depend on religion or fundamentalism. On the contrary, terrorism is the dialectical relationship between a state unable to keep order and the unsatisfied claims of separatists gone underground. After all, we strongly believe terrorism keeps a politic nature. Truthfully, torture, and violation of human rights replicated elsewhere in times of terrorism. This happens in part because the State is blind to see how and where the next attack will be perpetrated. Secondly, in order to stop the pain, the tortured souls (many of them innocents) confess overtly false details that lead investigators to catch another innocent. The concept of torture shows its inefficacy to prevent the next bombings.

Whether the concept of hegemony, widely discussed in the sociological literature, works in covering values or messages which are naturalized by recipients, its strength is never questioned. Unlike discourse that disseminates explicit mandates, the efficiency of hegemony is related to what remains unsaid. Following this, the problem of terrorism evokes a solution linked to preventive war; this opens the doors for future settings, which can be real or not. The creation of pseudo-events or mediated wars is functional to capitalism. To put this in brutally, United States and Anglo-democracy adjust their forms of

productions according to the needs of new markets. The concept of exceptionality that proclaims the preventive war is fairer than others, leads us to two fallacies. The first refers to the assumption that wars should be naturalized as prolonged periods where some policies are univocally adopted and accepted by citizenry, and secondly, the exceptionality poses a power beyond the law. Terrorism, in this discussion, is not a clash of cultures, civilizations or religions, but an old dialectic between Empires and their peripheries. Once again, left scholars throughout this book ignore how to resolve two controversies. Capitalism represents the ends of all ideologies, and second, democracy is not part of the solution but the problem. Who can question democracy?