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Carl Schmitt and the Global Age

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1.

Schmitt's thought is the deconstruction of modern political theory. This is true both in internal politics, for the exception/decision theory and for the theory of the "political" (Schmitt, 1972d), which is a genealogy of the Hobbesian rational state theory, and in international politics, for the theory of *nomos* and the theory of the partisan (which are genealogical complications of geopolitics and state-based international right). Thus, the conflictual element in Schmitt's political thought—the enemy has an ineradicable role in the creation of order, both in the theory of the "political," in the theory of decision of the secularized theologico-political matrix, as well as in the theory of constituent power—is not an apologia for absolute conflict, but serves the orientation of order and the political unity inherent in modern political theory, not to mention Schmittian thought. In Schmitt, this functionality is never completely instrumental to the conflict of order, nor completely subordinate to it. Rather, it is the perpetual disturbance of that order by originary,

internal conflict, as well as the perpetual indeterminateness of order through the conflict that originally determines it.

If we consider the “political” from the viewpoint of internal politics, we see that it is the permanent presence of conflict at the origin of order and, through decision, at order’s interior. It is thus a radical and determinate conflict that always exists in relation to order, inasmuch as it is a deficiency that demands and provokes a regulating political resolution. In short, the “political” is a function of deconstruction, but at the same time, performs a structuring function. It is crisis, but also order. Thus, modern political form’s use of the “political” makes it architectural nihilism.

The spatial difference between internal and external—which corresponds to the distinction between enemy and criminal, war and peace, police and military—that constitutes modern politics is welcomed by Schmitt as strategic. Nonetheless, confining disorder to the exterior while keeping peace in the interior requires the state to recognize, preserve, and manage the originary disorder. For the state to be closed, capable of setting boundaries and separating order from disorder, it must be open to the “political.” It must, in other words, know how to initiate both coercion to form and the complication of order and disorder when deciding in the case of exception.

The thesis that proposes a dialectic of Modernity is central to Schmitt’s thought. Political, ideological, and material forces—a social interlacing of individualism, liberalism, liberal democracy, normativism, moralism, technology, and capitalist and communist economies—deform the state, robbing it of its sovereign governing capabilities, substituting indeterminate universality for concreteness, and requiring that the “political” take the place of economics, law, and technology (and this has been the case since the Hobbesian origin of the state). Logics of modernity run from concrete to abstract, from determinate to universal, and from political to social.

The evolution of modernity requires that decision be supplanted by reason as the origin of order. For Schmitt, reason is as much liberal discussion as it is every attempt to eliminate completely conflict and political actions and to trust instead in rational hypotheses of automatic reconciliation. Society—most of all the political organizations born within society, the political parties and advocacy groups that are the essence of democracy—invades the

state, and ends up transforming its own pretext of stability and form into mobilization and formlessness. The result is the “total-through-weakness state” posited by Schmitt in 1931–32, to which he opposes the total state, then the empire and the greater space. Schmitt’s objective, already evident in his early work, is to oppose this drift toward modern nihilism and this abstraction of the concrete, to delay it and to combat it from the interior, to renew the capacity of modernity for concreteness by using its highest moments of crisis as points of departure, and to be able to see the *katechon*—the slowing, formative force of immanence processes that deal with the opening into transcendence and the irruption of the eternal, but not the “foundation” of politics on religion—where there is danger. The various strategies that Schmitt employed over the course of his life to interpret the state as a case determined by modern political form serve this objective, and Schmitt thinks beyond the state to conceive of possible modalities of concrete political form.

2.

Schmittian analyses and diagnoses of external politics also have a backdrop of state crisis caused by the powers and contradictions that operate in modern society. In other words, these analyses move from the crisis of state sovereignty, no longer able to produce an adequate concrete political form, to new historical developments, all oriented toward the discovery of a new, modern *katechon*.

2.1

The target of Schmitt’s first polemic, identified in 1926 (Schmitt 2005a),¹ was Genevan universalism, which he saw as the political/juridical projection of individualism, liberalism, normativism, and their pretext of eliminating the “political” from internal and external politics. It was, for Schmitt, a manifestation of the irreversible crisis of modern sovereignty’s spatial essence, the distinction between internal and external. The crisis of this distinction has the effect of producing confusion between war and crime: with the treaty of Versailles—which brought the League of Nations into being in Geneva—war ceased to be a right of state sovereignty and became a crime against

international law, a crime punishable by “just war” and discriminatory penal measures taken against the defeated parties. Universalism, then, is the representation of the international scene as a smooth and homogenous space that is morally and legally malleable, and for Schmitt, this space is actually functional for those in power (the Anglo-Saxons and their economic potential) who act politically through the moral disqualification of their enemies. The League of Nations is, in short, an “indirect” political instrument that protects the victors and their spoils and punishes the defeated, whereas its universalism is really imperialism, a weapon masquerading as an instrument of peace.

Beginning with his work “The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes” (1986), and further articulated in *Völkerrechtliche Grossraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte: Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff im Völkerrecht* (1941), *Land and Sea* (2002), *The Nomos of the Earth* (1991), and the *Theory of the Partisan* (2005c), not to mention several other texts, among which *Die Einheit der Welt* (2003d), “*Die geschichtliche Struktur des heutigen Welt-Gegensatzes von Ost und West*” (2004a), and “*Die Ordnung der Welt nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg*” (2003f)—Schmitt advances a second interpretation of modernity, of the state, and of international politics.² If the first interpretation is focused on decision, exception, sovereignty, political theology, the “political,” constituent power, and concrete order, the second analyzes the spatial dimension of politics, the opposition between land and sea, the concept of *nomos*, and the *jus publicum europaeum*.

In this second phase, Schmitt models his thought in an openly post-decisionist way and consequently attempts to think the origins of politics using categories uncompromised by nihilism, to conceive of an order that doesn’t originate in a “nothingness-of-order,” but rather in a “measure.” Still, like the first interpretation, this second interpretation of the origins and drift of modernity and statuality has at its center the idea that political order is made possible through disorder and conflict, and that it is effective and concrete only when it consciously incorporates and expresses this conflict. However, this leitmotiv is articulated differently and (for example, in *Land and Sea*) gives life to an interpretation of the modern that discerns its origin not only in the secularization of the conceptual framework of theology, but

also in the spatial revolution that took place after the discovery of America opened up new land to Europe, throwing the spatial features of traditional politics (the *res publica christiana*) off balance, compelling it to reorganize global political space along amity lines while simultaneously projecting it on the vastness of the oceans (Schmitt 1991, 79–103).

For Schmitt, the European state derives its origin and political centrality from the decision for politics in the closed, territorial sense. To be precise, this is the decision for state sovereignty and the subsequent ability to build relationships with other territorial states, even through war as a form of reciprocal recognition. In this way, a structural and functional limitation of war is realized, evolving from *bellum iustum*—as it had to be in a theological context, either traditional or relatively modernized³—into regular armed conflict, *bellum utrimque iustum*, between regular armies of sovereign states who are both *justi hostes* precisely for this reason (Schmitt 1991, 179–206). In its historical concreteness, however, the European state exists solely within the state system (the *jus publicum europaeum*) that includes the English naval state as a necessary element alongside the continental state. The English decision for sea, already visible in the Elizabethan era, created a new political form that was not politico-territorial (with the home as symbol) but individualist and at the same time techno-artificial (with the ship as symbol). This political form carries an enmity that is not limited, but limitless. Indeed, naval warfare is so different from conventional warfare, so much more oriented toward absolutes and nonrecognition of the enemy, that it is embodied in the figure of the pirate: irregular, criminalized, and painted as the enemy of humanity. It was not by chance that Schmitt, in 1937 (2007b), intuited that the pirate was not an obsolete subject, but rather that the new attention paid him by Anglo-Saxon powers (which actually politicized him) had a historico-political meaning that signaled a tendency of Anglo-Saxon powers toward limitless struggle against the German ‘total war’.

Schmitt proposes that during the phase—that of the *jus publicum europaeum*, circa 1650–1900—when it was capable of effective politics, modernity was constructed of the balance between the continent and England, between the territorial state and the naval state (2002). But this originary balance is, at the same time, imbalance. To be more precise, even the external political

order is not neutral, but oriented, and the political existence of the European states and their state system is made possible through the difference imposed between Europe and the rest of the world, the lines of amity and enmity that distinguish the Old World from the New. European civilization exists because it is capable of appropriating, occupying, and dividing the New World, and because it is able to confine absolute enmity there, in the space of the nonstate. The limitation of war to the states of Europe, who recognize one another as *hostes aequaliter justi*, is made possible by the limitless wars carried out against the indigenous populations in America (and in Asia and Africa) and among European powers outside of the continent (Schmitt 1991, 161–266).

This nexus of balance (between land and sea, individual and state, politics and technology, all of which make up Europe) and imbalance (between Europe and the rest of the world) is the *nomos* of the earth (its concrete and oriented order) in the era of the *jus publicum europaeum*. Therefore, the concept of *nomos* as orientation and organization has nothing to do with an originary rootedness somehow dissociated from nihilism. Rather, it indicates measure born of lack of proportion, political form born of originary violence, concrete order oriented not by harmony but by a “cut” that creates political space, instituting normality derived not from law (*nomos* is not law) but from a concrete act of differentiation. Originary opening closes political form without pacifying it, but remains present in order to identify it (Schmitt 1991, 58–59).⁴

From this perspective, the crisis factors of the *jus publicum europaeum* reside in the fact that political form is overwhelmed by very different entities, functions, and powers, such as rationalism, individualism, technological power, moralism, and normativism. These all share an indeterminateness, or better, they share actions that cause all regulating differences to lose themselves in smooth and basically unified space. Universalism is therefore discriminatory in and of itself, as it tends to read exception as error, injustice, immorality, or as the disturbance of unity that has no right to existence and must, therefore, be removed. Schmitt regards Kant’s *iniustus hostis* theory as responsible for offering the most powerful justification of the discriminatory dimension of philosophico-moral universalism—for having, in other words,

relaunched theological just wars, thereby supplying the discriminatory wars of the twentieth century with a highly effective and legitimate model (1991, 201–6).⁵

In *The Nomos of the Earth*, as Schmitt reconstructs the crisis of the *jus publicum europaeum*—which is certainly endogenous, inasmuch as it is the triumph of the regulating-abstract side of modernity, with a consequent loss of political “concreteness”—he emphasizes that “the first long shadow that fell came from the West,” that is, from the United States (1991, 288). Analyzing both the Monroe Doctrine’s politico-juridical essence as a tool for the self-justification of the American Empire’s sovereign powers, and the conceptual constructions that it integrated and substituted (economic intervention, movement of the Western Hemisphere line), Schmitt shows that the passage from isolationism to interventionism is a variant of United States exceptionalism and the discriminatory moralism that accompanies it (2007a; 2003b).⁶ Furthermore, in “*Über das Verhältnis der Begriffe Krieg und Feind*” (1972c), Schmitt had already interpreted discriminatory war as resulting from the confusion of war and peace, or better, from that “intermediate situation” (*Zwischenlage*) into which modern power had fallen, undoing its ability (through state decision) to distinguish clearly war from peace. He accepts this intermediate situation but does not want to leave it in the hands of Anglo-Saxon powers and their universalistic moralism (2007a).

Schmitt’s reaction to the spatial modality that sprang from a refusal of the “political,” to essentially despatialized and indirect politics, and to the absolute and moralistic war, was an acceptance of the conditions presented by the challenge of post-statuility. In *Völkerrechtliche Grossraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff im Völkerrecht* he introduces the concepts of *Reich* and *Grossraum*. The latter identifies a space given form by a hegemonic political command carrying the state’s organizing principle and, more importantly, able to give life to a concrete political order and aware of the necessity of governing a plurality of national organisms at its interior—which are then hierarchized by the empire into a “greater space” that excludes foreign powers (1941, 71–92). Schmitt responds to these issues—whether indirect imperialism or naval, technological, and liberal democratic universalism—with the empire, i.e. with the

reterritorialization of politics (which is also direct territorialization), and with the open affirmation of the logics of political unity in an explicit statual derivation, even if it is articulated in post-statual form as “totality” (80). Along these lines, Schmitt contrasts total discriminatory war (the contemporary modality of *potestas indirecta*) with total concrete war, conducted at first by the total state (2007c)—Nazi Germany, which is newly able to distinguish internal from external, peace from war (*totaler Feind, totaler Krieg, totaler Staat*)—and then by the Empires, which, in the total hostility of which they are capable (simultaneously political, ideological, social, economic, cultural, and technological), recognize and accept the “political” without disguising it as something moral or legal (2003e). The equalization of just war and discriminatory war is clearly functional to the “positive” (in that it is “concrete”) definition of the Third Reich’s total war, and to the postwar laments about the just war fought against Germany by the Allies and the dehumanization of the enemy carried out in the name of humanity.⁷

It is symptomatic that Schmitt sees no *nomos*, no spatialized political order, in the postwar confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, between East and West (2001, 251). For Schmitt, the late-modern, post-statual principle *cuius regio eius industria* (2005c, 199), which founded the postwar world, does not have the organizational value of the modern principle *cuius regio eius religio*; for him, the superpowers are unable to fill the role once held by the states, and their confrontation in the Cold War exists outside any harmony or order (2003b). Schmitt holds that the worldwide dualism of the postwar era is the intrinsically contradictory and polemical historico-real development of a precise structural element of modernity: the English decision for a naval, and therefore technological, existence (to which war added an aerial dimension, emphasizing the political loss of land) gives rise to the two “superstructures” of the political bourgeois economy and proletarian Bolshevik Marxism (2004a). Each of these superstructures (as Schmitt observed in *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form*) is hostile to the other only insofar as each—armed with a progressive philosophy of history that legitimates its claim of superiority—declares itself the most suitable option for developing all the potentialities of human liberation and dominance over nature contained in technology and economics. For Schmitt,

capitalists and communists, though they have been made enemies by the contradictions of political economy, are actually closely related: certainly, they are two forms of universalism caught up in a war for world domination, but they are both children of the “naval” modality of modernity, civil society, faith in progress, and limitless technology (Schmitt 2003d, 203).

It is within this uneasy union, within the shared horizon of technology and of the theory of Progress, that the East-West opposition emerges, and is described by Schmitt as “a war in which the dualism of two fronts manifests itself as a clear distinction between friend and enemy” (2003d, 200).⁸ We should interpret this as Schmitt’s assertion that the period following World War II was affected by this conflict, even in its absolute and irreconcilable form, but that this conflict could not truly be defined as “political,” as it became clear that this “political,” despite the clear distinction between friend and enemy, was incomplete, confused, and stripped of its formative factors. Consequently, this “war” is not war in the classical, modern sense (besides, no war of the twentieth century has been): if anything, it is a “global civil war” (Schmitt 1972b, 25). The conflict between East and West is still an “intermediate situation,” as its intensity does not produce a regulating configuration. On the contrary, it becomes evident that the rise of extreme forms of conflict is more likely.

It is thus that Schmitt’s internationalistic view of the period following World War II implies a plurality of greater spaces—of “third powers” and more: the British commonwealth, the Arab world, India, Europe, China—to which Schmitt, in *Die Einheit der Welt*, endows with the possibility of establishing a “new law of nations” (2003d, 201). This plurality of greater spaces is the new *nomos* of the earth following the era of the *jus publicum europaeum*. A new *nomos*, certainly, but one founded on a declared principle of balance explicitly analogous to the principle at the center of the statist, Eurocentric *nomos* of Modernity. Even in “Die Ordnung der Welt nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg,” Schmitt’s strategy is evident in his suggestion that, because the “dualistic” phase of the post-war period is incapable of giving the world spatial order, it would be better to substitute a “pluralistic” phase in which a new *nomos* is given to the “division of land in industrially developed or less-developed regions, along with the question of who supplies help to whom,

and also who accepts help from whom” (2003f, 221). It’s as though Schmitt (influenced by the analyses of François Perroux) had foreseen the evolution of the *cuius regio eius œconomia* principle, on which the politics of the Cold War were founded—dividing the world into the space of market economy and command economy—and had perceived a trend of reorganization and redistribution of a world space that was not dualistic but pluralistic. This world would be reorganized into greater spaces (with an interior, we should remember, organized hierarchically between rich and poor) determined by *nomos* understood as *Weiden*, to produce, and *Teilen*, to divide (the third semantic root and logic of *nomos* for Schmitt is *Nehmen*, to take). Schmitt seems to have in mind the U.S.-U.S.S.R. competition to establish economic and political areas of influence in developing countries on one hand, and on the other, the establishment of the Third World, the result of anti-European anticolonization, as the powers that could potentially break the symmetry of the East-West opposition (2003f, 218).

2.2

Another modality of shaping international political space is displayed in *Theory of the Partisan*, where Schmitt sketches this last figure of effective political subjectivity. The partisan is a figure composed of equal parts enmity and order. Some of the salient characteristics of the partisan are as follows: the partisan possesses an intense political character; this is not a private individual (as is, or was, the pirate), but is instead connected to a wide front of combatants; this is an irregular, a bearer of specific spatiality and mobility different from that of the state or the military. In short, he is “telluric,” or bound to the land. Clausewitz saw the partisan as revolutionary, certainly, but also oriented to the defense of concrete territory and spatialized institutions (Schmitt 2005c, 26–35, 59–69). These salient traits define the partisan, “land’s last sentinel” (99), as a bearer of authentic, real, historical, and determined enmity, which is intense but limited, as a true political hostility that exists within the concept of the “political.” The partisan is therefore a figure of the danger and mortal risk inherent in political action, but he also possesses a more relevant knowledge of the political in his awareness of his concrete, real enemy and of the concrete political space in which he acts.

To be precise, the partisan cannot be mistaken for the pirate because his irregularity is terrestrial, not techno-naval; the partisan maintains a point of reference in regularity (42–46, 99–100, 127).

This also means that the partisan is determined by real political enmity and by the real political spatiality of his historical circumstances. Thus, the Maoist partisan, although more dynamic and aggressive than his Stalinist counterpart, is much more spatially determined, and therefore far more political, than the Leninist partisan has the potential to be (Schmitt 2005d, 82–86). The Leninist partisan is a “revolutionary activist” who is much more abstract and indeterminate in that his ties to the land are weaker (47, 72–75, 103–5). Indeed, Schmitt holds that it was Lenin—who was well aware of his own concrete historical enemy, the bourgeoisie—who initiated the figure of the “professional revolutionary” whose ties to a totalitarian revolutionary party and involvement in a global civil war (a war not limited to national territory) transform the real enemy into the absolute enemy, the object of limitless hostility.

This potential development is the first radical transformation of the figure of the partisan, and changes his concrete hostility into a mere passive execution of unchecked ideological and nihilistic logic. For Schmitt, another limitless and nihilistic transformation of the partisan comes about through technology. If the political combatant becomes a partisan in the industrial age, he finds himself among weapons rendered so destructive by technological developments that legitimizing their use requires that the enemy at which they are aimed be completely evil and inhuman (Schmitt 2005c, 108–11). Technology, therefore, promotes the adoption of the valorial and nihilistic types of logic described by Schmitt in *Die Tyrannei der Werte*, bringing about an inordinate increase of enmity (Schmitt 1987).

Schmitt denies that this absolute and limitless hostility, this nihilism unconnected to concreteness or orientation in the form of real enmity, has a connection to the “political.” For him, “the essence of the political is not pure and simple enmity, but the distinction between friend and enemy, and it presupposes the friend as much as the enemy” (2005c, 127). This partisan is no longer defensive and telluric, but aggressive on a global scale, expressing the absolute instability of technology, susceptible to every conflict and

every violence. Nonetheless, Schmittian theory regards this partisan (who cannot be a *katechon*) as an extreme: Schmitt prefers to hypothesize about the partisan's adaptability to worldwide technological and industrial civilization in a subordinate role to the superpowers and their absolute war. Schmitt imagines that cosmonauts and astronauts could be partisan fighters in the future battles for outer space (111–12).

Apart from their ideologicity, Schmitt's analyses have two limits, which reveal themselves to be both obvious and characteristic. In the first place, they are analyses of his present and not of ours: Schmitt, we should recall, died in 1985, in the era of the Cold War and East-West opposition. Furthermore, we see that his analyses rely on many of the categories and problems specific to his time. In his interpretation of the Cold War's international organization as ideological (and therefore his criticism of the concept of the West as American, and not European), as well as intrinsically unstable and conflictual, it becomes clear that he still sees danger in the universalistic ideologies and horizons opened during the technological age by the triumph of the "sea." His objective, then, is to rebalance this dimension with "land" politics and with a respatialization of politics in general. Secondly, his perspective on international relations—though he does look beyond the state, toward the empire, the greater space, and the partisan—is consistently oriented toward an interpretation of every irregularity and exception through another regularity or normality that complements it in some way. We can note this interpretative tendency in several ideas: that the "intermediate situation" is a specific modality of the relation between states that can be addressed and resolved with a specific response (i.e., the greater spaces); that discriminatory war serves the interests of a specific "naval" political power (the United States); that the partisan is backed by the regularity of an army and the law of the land. In short, Schmitt's thought is always determined concretely, oriented toward thinking conflict as a moment of order, and ultimately always seeking a *katechon*—even though the ageing Schmitt betrays a suspicion that the respatialization of politics might be unproductive and unworkable. Schmitt, however, does not investigate this suspicion any further, leaving us the task of interpreting that mass of phenomena and dynamics that we now call "globalization."

3.

In the interest of brevity,⁹ we will say that the global age presents itself discontinuously when compared with the modern age, in that the latter viewed the world as a vast but definite space, whereas today the world has gotten smaller, but simultaneously has become more infinite or indefinite, infinitely complex and uncontrollable. The essence of globalization is “global mobilization,” an intense and chaotic set of processes that open up and break through all defined spaces. However, the global age is not only characterized by a paradoxical spatiality that is at once multiform and poly-dimensional. It is also distinguished by a new relation to the dimension of time: in the global age, events connect not consecutively, but simultaneously, and thus chronological succession is, in and of itself, random succession. The present is not determined by history; on the contrary, it has no historical structure in the proper sense of the term, nor does it contain a progressive or plan-based orientation.

The political phenomena of the global age are thus different from those of the Cold War. The sun has set on the modern era of the state’s monopoly on politics, as well as the late-modern era defined by two superpowers. The world unity that many (among them we may count Schmitt, in his own way) had observed behind the political duality of the period following World War II has now openly manifested itself.

However, we maintain that today’s globalization as world unity does not imply political world unity, and it is not designated as much by the smooth space of technology or the single-minded goals of industrial enterprise as it is by the disappearance, or the obscuring, of the connection between politics and space. Violence is not fixed to territory or confined to the exterior by the state or the superpower, and it now enjoys a free and random circulation. September 11th can be interpreted as the event that brought to light the logics and violent tendencies originally inherent in global dynamics, which had previously been concealed by liberal and progressive ideologies. As it is, September 11th is emblematic of the fact that it is no longer possible to distinguish internal from external. Thus, today we are not only facing the disappearance of the external (or better, the space of classical war) as a result of universalistic tendencies (e.g., the United Nations and its ideology) seeking to

reduce the world to one interior devoid of political conflict (and, if anything, transforming conflict into crime suppressible through police action). Today we are also witnessing the *disappearance of the interior*. For terrorists, every part of the planet is, potentially, immediately exposed to absolute hostility and is, therefore, in some way *external to itself* and always exposed to war. Conversely, for the United States, every part of the planet is a possible theater of war and terrorism. This evident inability to distinguish interior from exterior (and to distinguish civilians from military personnel, private from state), and the consequent disappearance of one within the other plunges politics in the global age into twilight, causing confusion between war and peace, conflict and politics, exception and rule, causing everything to appear on the same indistinct continuum. Today, the “intermediate situation” between war and peace or between rule and exception is the norm, which means that any concrete reference to regularity, order, or neutrality is no longer possible. There is no longer any concreteness or regularity from which irregularity may derive its strategic value of destruction and reconstruction.

“Global war” is the term we use to describe this condition in which violence in the world manifests itself at a pace that cannot be represented on a map as a traditional bellic front, but only according to logics of instantaneousness and “punctuality:” every part of the planet is immediately exposed to the global flux of violence. This flux of violence supplants political or territorial state mediation, which is by now unable to distinguish internal from external. Global mobilization, from a political point of view, means that anything can happen, anywhere, at any moment. Global war does not occur in the striated space of political powers or in the smooth space of technology. Rather, it occurs without any causative relationship to space, as the only possible relationship to space is now *immediate*. To be precise, global war is the fact that space, today paradoxical and non-Euclidean, is not crossed by boundaries but by fractures that put different times and spaces into immediate communication with one another: the caves in Afghanistan reach the Twin Towers in New York, rural society reaches advanced hypermodernity. This paradoxical spatiality is not determined by the imbalance between land and sea, and can be much more aptly defined as an age in which the relevance

of these two primordial spaces is lost. It would not be enough to attribute this loss to the newfound importance of air space, a phenomenon that had already reached its potential for novelty in the terminal phase of modernity. More precisely, this loss occurs as a result of the formation of a hypercomplex global space in which land, like sea, is crossed not only by currents, but also by terrorists who behave like a new breed of pirates.

Multiple spaces and multiple times share global space in a state of immediate connection and permanent short-circuit, and of infinite poly-dimensional wars that are, in their totality, global war. We should note that the absolute hostility that emerges from the permanent twilight of global war is not exactly “political.” The terrorist cannot be described using terms that refer to the *hostis*, to the partisan, to the worldwide revolutionary, and perhaps not even to the technological partisan. The terrorist’s case is entirely new: this is true subjectively (he has no friends, only enemies, and is in the most extreme cases his own enemy, giving up his own body and life in an act of suicide) and objectively (terrorism has no other strategy but terror, and its hostility prefigures no order other than the imaginary). The religious motivation the terrorist gives for his hostility cannot be called political theology, not even in the accepted, nonsecularized meaning. In other words, the terrorist has no regulating function. Instead, he has an “immediate” or “extreme” theology, a paranoid identification with God that has the sole aim of drawing conflict on into infinity. Holy War is also an element of global war, if not in its essence or its cause, then in its indefiniteness and elusiveness. Indeed, Holy War too turns itself into its own opposite: diabolical war. This destiny is one it shares with the just war, the war of Western antiterrorist “values,” the war that transforms itself into an infinite counterterrorist measure. Furthermore, global war has no central sphere, no *Zentralgebiet*, because its violence is not generated from a single point but from across the entire surface of the globe. In short, global war is globality as violence; it is a possession of global space; it is the chaotic whole of all relations (primarily economic and technological); it is blind process that is, in reality, controlled by no one. This is what we mean when we say that conflict today is “automatic.” Global war is postmodern nihilism.

3.1

Several types of concrete political responses have arisen in the face of this global disorder, these contradictions of globalization, and these politics that reveal themselves to be increasingly less political and devoid, now more than ever, of a strategic relationship with space in the form of a deconstitutive conflict and a global uprooting of permanent exceptionality. The responses to this situation are many, and are often combined with one another.

The principal characteristic of these responses consists in their depiction of terrorism as being at the heart of global war and at the origin of its novelty, making the terrorist the enemy and the conflict against him the “political” and the *Zentralgebiet* of our time. More precisely, the terrorist is painted as not only the origin of the current crisis, but also of a new political order built around the exclusion of the relation between terrorist and avenger.

These responses shed light on the tendency, at the level of internal politics, to bypass the formal and defensive elements of modern law in favor of security, whether in single cases or in the case of the state itself, which attempts to restore the spatial differentiation between internal and external by carrying out the identification, imprisonment, and expulsion of the enemy. The resulting politics of security travels along a two-way street: on one side, stabilizing rootedness (oriented to the production of legitimating discourses at various levels, through which “we” discover our ethnic, religious, cultural, and ethical “roots”), and on the other, conflict that is first internal and then external (in which “we” oppose ourselves to “them” in a perennial short-circuit between identity and threat, violence and law).¹⁰ This constituent use of exception in internal political space seems, at first glance, not to be far from a Schmittian conceptual universe, or at least decipherable through it.

Another strategy—only partly analogous—is applied to international politics. Here too, terrorism is painted as a form of evil that also contains statual determinations (Iraq, North Korea, Iran), and here too, it serves to construct an identity. This identity is one of “civilization” opposed to “barbarianism.” Thus, civilization’s permanent line of action becomes the just war—even in its preventive form—against an unjust threat and terroristic barbarianism. But there are no borders here: given that, in principle, civilization (i.e., the

United States) coincides with humanity, martial police action in the name of humanity—which, as Schmitt has pointed out, is particularly intense and discriminatory—is not concerned with putting up borders or generating spatial order, but rather with ridding the world of humankind’s enemies, specifically the terrorists, in a moralistic and discriminatory universalism that has “regime change” on a global scale as its theoretical objective. According to this neoconservative thought, which goes far beyond classical realism, only a democratic world is safe and peaceful, only a democratic world is useful in and of itself for the interests of the United States.¹¹

In reality, there is a legible intent woven into this neoconservative ideology (which cannot have been influenced by Schmitt¹²) that is much closer to traditional political realism. The United States sees itself as the political subject acting as the nucleus of society, no longer generically “human,” but “Western”—and this is a West guided by America, but one that includes Europe and other allied non-Western countries—and its intent is to reterritorialize politics and globalized war, beginning with the unilateral definition of “terrorism” and the unilateral singling out of enemy terrorists against whom it is permitted to wage absolute and discriminatory war. This war, despite all its aggressive aspects, is waged with the intent of constructing a *limes* toward foreign barbarians and thereby stabilizing internal space by taking and controlling portions of space in the Middle East and in central Asia (unstable areas in need, therefore, of stabilization) for the purpose of impeding Chinese projects—an intent very much in keeping with the implicit logic of greater spaces. In short, at stake is the transformation of the informal empire that emerged in the first days of globalization into a direct and territorial Empire, one that is, in many respects, “traditional.”¹³

4.

The congruity of the political categories around which Schmitt structures his thought should, in its application to global war, be measured both in the analysis of phenomena and in the proposed solutions to the problems at hand.

4.1

As far as analytic effectiveness is concerned, the most typical categorial apparatuses in Schmitt's thought are not fully adaptable to the phenomenology of global war, as Schmitt himself implies during his last phase of production (particularly in *Theory of the Partisan*). In fact, Schmitt himself explains that absolute enmity is not "political," and that consequently it is absolute disorder, because it refers instead to a concrete situation that contains a possibility of order, to an immediate polemical and identitary use of religion that does not follow the *cuius regio eius religio* principle or any other regulating or stabilizing principle. There are other instances in which the phenomena of global war exist outside of Schmittian historical and intellectual horizons: here we do not find "political theology" but "extreme theology"; the differences in power across the planet do not define the greater spaces; the terrorist is not a partisan because he is neither telluric, spatial, nor defensive; further incompatibility between partisan and terrorist can be seen in the latter's absolute and systematic irregularity, his nihilism toward himself, and his exception devoid of rule. The modern era was born of the opening of oceans, whereas the global era was born of the opening of land, an opening that occurred at the close of the opposition between East and West. Global mobilization is not imbalance (in favor of the techno-naval) between land and sea, but rather the confusion of the two within a different type of space. Global war is not "total war" because it presents a more complex spatiality with regard to the interchange between military and nonmilitary levels, and above all, because, contrary to what Schmitt thinks, it is not the political act of a unified political entity (be it state or Empire) that knowingly takes it on, thereby giving it meaning through that entity's own political existence. Global war is, rather, the uncontrolled violence of a plurality of subjects whose motivations and strategies are, at last analysis, undetermined. The global age does not display a *Zentralgebiet* from which some power may neutralize conflicts—it has no such territory precisely because power does not know the "political," which, when deployed in a sovereign and decisionist manner, can generate order. Global war is a struggle that cannot be oriented to a *katechon*.

Thus, global war cannot be totally understood through Schmittian

categories. It is subtly but decisively something “other,” something postmodern. If we look closely, we see that Schmitt is talking about something else. His thought runs counter to this conflictual universalism with its technological, ideological, juridical, and moralistic origins that serve a unified political power: Schmitt instead thinks of ideological terrorism in the service of the communist Empire, of the League of Nations, and of the ‘just wars’ of England and the United States. He had certainly foreseen phenomena of madness in these universalisms, and he feared them from the conception of his thought, which is centered on a determinate political conflict existing within spatial politics and oriented to concreteness and political unity (again, even when poststatual).

The complexity of today’s world is necessarily lost on Schmitt, given that he was able to observe it only at the beginning of the crisis of modern sovereignty’s conceptual architecture, and given that he ignored the more advanced challenges (biopolitical power) as well as the spaces of action opened by globalization, such as the dialectic between worldwide society (the cosmopolitan universe of social forces) and international society (the macropolitical functions of states and empires). He could have known nothing of multilevel governance, neomedievalism, nor of the complex spaces and political forms that are not hierarchical and Westphalian, but multilateral and characterized by widespread political power: hypotheses no more risky than those offered by the neoimperialists.¹⁴

4.2

If we leave aside the analytical perspective of Schmittian political thought, and move on to the organizational perspective, the problem becomes one of understanding if the attempts to respatialize war, to reduce the complexity of the global age, to interrupt the short-circuit that exists between local and global—if these attempts, conducted with realistic presuppositions (or with the conceit of power’s continuing morphogenetic function) stemming from a direct, meaningful knowledge of Schmitt’s texts¹⁵ (or, as is more likely, from a direct relationship with the pragmatist juridical tradition and realistic political science) have any possibility of being effective and forming political order. To put it another way, can global war be a constituent conflict? Can the

confusion between war and peace, law and violence, be the origin of a new political form? Or, philosophically, is an image of the World still possible?

With regard to the constitution, formal or informal, of a territorial Western Empire headed by the United States, it is important to note that it is precisely this morphogenetic use of internal and external force that is being radically called into question today. Organizing formally sovereign states in hierarchical, imperial relationships is as difficult as preventing the enemy “barbarians” from breaching the empire’s borders. Furthermore, the essential element of globalization is a worldwide economic development that, with the reciprocal interconnection it has developed, does not lend itself to the control and confinement that the imperial hypothesis implies.

Even in the state’s internal sphere, the relation between exception and normality (always absent, yet always already present as an ideal around which to organize) does not institute a concrete order, and only manages to conjure up a trick of the eye: enemies and friends are actually ghosts and projections, who feed on *desiderata* and aggressive nostalgia. This internal mobilization is the only stability that the state is currently able to supply, evidently because it is incapable of giving form to its own internal space, incapable of making internal space distinct from the external and from its own contradictions.

In this way, the probable organizational responses coming out of Schmittian categories are not productive. It seems that attempts to form order based on resolution, exception, restoration of space, and the creation of borders are diluted and even liquefied in globalization. It seems, therefore, that new stabilizing responses are necessary, but that above all we must begin asking new questions about political categories oriented toward different horizons than those offered by Schmitt.

It is certainly true that Schmitt’s thought can be used today to demystify the universalistic ideologies of the just war or the war for democracy, or to demonstrate the indirect political value of such wars to the United States. Similarly, we can clearly see that the juridical universalism on which the United Nations were founded is an attempt to legalize and reconcile international politics, but ends up being little more than a manifestation of the desire for humanistic rationalization in the global age, a desire to believe in

the theory of human rights and the equality of sovereign states (which maintain their phantasmal existence only within the United Nations). Thus, this juridical universalism does not depart from the modern nexus—completely ineffective today—between individualism, statism, and universalism.

In conclusion, Schmitt's thought is partially effective today, in its *pars destruens*, as a possible (but not unique) antiuniversalist strategy. But in the *pars construens*—in the combination of decision and concreteness at the interior, and of war and spatiality at the exterior—it seems confused and inapplicable. It is not enough for Schmitt to think radical conflict and spatialized political order (of the Empire) for us to understand effectively the conflicts and demands of today's order through his thought. In the global age the challenge of *planetarische Industrie-Nahme*, of unchecked technological enterprise on a world scale, has extended and intensified qualitatively, to the point that the very terms of the problem and its possible solutions have changed. One of these possible outcomes is a radical disorientation of the world by a capitalism unwilling to tolerate its own submission to the constraints imposed by the spatial and territorial logic of the imperial greater spaces.

Therefore, we must recognize that, despite its appearance, politics today does not allow itself to be interpreted or organized: not in a modern individualist or statist manner, and not within Schmittian coordinates. Schmitt's thought is concerned with an end and with the genealogical deconstruction and reconstruction of an era. What we need today is a beginning—a beginning that, in this era of absolute enmity and paradoxical spatiality, would not consist in identifying an enemy, or in entrusting the constituent role of order to war, or in imagining that the *katechon* is the sovereign monopoly of resolution at the interior and the balance of greater spaces at the exterior. In short, it is not with ideological “pacifism” but rather with “realism” that we maintain that global war will not turn back into modern war. As Schmitt himself said, historical truths are such only once.

If we truly wish to be faithful to the lessons of Carl Schmitt, we must accept that we have a duty now to imagine possible interpretations and solutions to the problem's of today's politics—interpretations and solutions that begin where Schmitt's thought left off.



NOTES

1. This collection, along with Schmitt 1995, contains many essays dealing with internationalism.
2. Schmitt, 1986, 61–143; Schmitt, 1941; Schmitt, 1991; Schmitt, 2003d; Schmitt, 2004a; Schmitt, 2003f; Schmitt, 2005c; Schmitt, 2005b. For perspectives on Schmitt as an internationalist see Galli (1996, 864–89), Colombo (1999), Resta (1999), Maschke (2000), Casanova (2001), Volpi (2002), Campi (2003), Müller (2003, 87–103), Kervégan (2004), Zarmanian (2006).
3. See, for example, Vitoria (2005) or Schmitt (1991, 104–40).
4. In Schmitt (1991, 58–59), we see Schmitt opposing the Jewish concept of *Gesetz* (law) to the Greco-Germanic concept of *Nomos* (orientation and order). Schmitt sharply criticizes right-wing authors of the Weimar period like Wilhelm Stapel and Hans Bogner because they have mixed the term *Nomos* (which they introduced into political debate) with *Gesetz*, giving it a biological declination that Schmitt rejects. Gross (2000, 98) insists upon Schmitt's debt to these Protestant, right-wing circles.
5. See also Vander (2004).
6. This is an important text, in which the definition of *nomos* is already present in the analysis of the passage from Eurocentric to America-centric international law. The theme of the Western hemisphere is developed in Schmitt (2003c, 171–76), where the *katechon* has a negative value, as it delays the passage from modern spatiality to the imperial spatiality of the greater spaces.
7. See Zolo (2000, 111–17).
8. The German text is as follows: "ein Krieg, bei dem der Dualismus zweier Fronten als klare Unterscheidung von Freund und Feind hervortritt" (Schmitt *Die Einheit der Welt*, in Carl Schmitt, *Frieden oder Pazifismus? Arbeiten zum Völkerrecht und zur internationalen Politik, 1924-1978* (Ed. Günther Maschke), Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 841–71). Schmitt uses the friend/enemy distinction as a mere description of conflict, even when it assumes the characteristics of pure chaos. This is true even in Schmitt (1972b, 21–26).
9. The following treatment is based on the arguments laid out in Galli (2001, 2002, 2003) and 2004). See also Colombo (2006).
10. See, for example, Gamberini and Orlandi (2007) on the so-called "criminal law of the enemy." See also Re (2006), though the work is not strictly limited to the question of terrorism.
11. See Lobe and Olivieri (2003), Del Pero (2009), and Nardini (2007, 233–78).
12. By contrast, see Drury (1999, 94–95, 178), whose argument is that neoconservatives derive from Strauss, and that Schmittian elements (such as hate of pluralism, nationalism, the friend-enemy logic, and a religious foundation of politics) would thus be present in neoconservatives as a result of the influence of Schmitt's critique of liberalism.

This argument seems much more ideological than structural, and more analogical than conceptual.

13. For a simple example among the rich literature dealing with the United State's imperial dimension, see some of these texts: Parsi (2002, 83–113), Münkler (2005, 213–54), and Colàs (2007, 158–91).
14. For more information on two (of the many possible) circles of the recent internationalist debates, see Clark (2007) and Zielonka (2006).
15. For historical accounts of the exchange between Schmitt and H. J. Morgenthau, one of the fathers of political realism, see Scheuerman (1999, 225–51) and Campi (2005). See also the critical and restrictive considerations of Bendersky (2002).

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