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**Global Urbanisation, War And The Securitisation Of The 21st
Century City**

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Abstract

Global urbanisation will be one of the defining features of the 21st century. Indeed, as UN-HABITAT has noted, the 21st century will be an urban century. Certain violences and insecurities are attendant to such global urbanity. This paper examines the particular nexus of the city and war in the 21st century in order to outline the possible implications such a relationship has for urban life. At the centre of this analysis is the manner in which historically specific forms of warfare aimed at, or constituted through, operations within the city are giving rise to new securitisations which lead to distinctive inflections of urban life. The paper commences with an examination of the nature of global urbanisation. The variety of urban forms will be noted from the network of global cities to the sprawling slums of the global south. The paper then turns to examine two distinct forms of war: transnational terrorism and military operations in urban terrain. The relation of these two forms of war to the distinctive features of 21st century global urbanity will be drawn out. The paper will then look at the way in which these forms of war have given rise to everyday securitisations in cities around the world. I will conclude by noting that global urbanisation requires us to note the complex ecology of subjectivity constituted in the built environment. Such a recognition will distinctively inflect our discussions of global order and political violence. This fact often escapes notice insofar as securitisation suspends contestation of received horizons of understanding. Opening the questions raised by the contemporary war-city nexus to political discussion is thus vital if we are to understand the challenges that the nexus of global urbanisation and war poses in the 21st century.

Sometimes it takes just one human being to tip the scales and change the course of history. In the year 2007, that human being will either move to a city or be born in one. Demographers watching urban trends will mark it as the moment when the world entered a new urban millennium, a period in which, for the first time in history, the majority of the world’s people will live in cities.

(UN-HABITAT 2006, viii)

Engaging With Global Urbanisation

The announcement by UN-HABITAT of the arrival of the urban millennium masks the complex processes of migration and growth that have contributed to crossing the threshold beyond which the majority of the global population can be said to be urbanised. Moreover, it glosses over the heterogeneity of forms considered under the category of ‘urban’. From slums to world cities via so-called ‘second cities’, urbanity is manifest in a multiplicity of spatial, political and economic forms. What is clear, however, is that the city and urbanity are the predominant modes of existence in the twenty-first century. This predominance of urban ways of life is understood to comprise a transformation of epochal significance.

If it has epochal significance, global urbanisation cannot be treated as a mere background, epiphenomenal fact. Like climate change, urbanisation is a process that gives rise to novel political assemblages: complex imbrications of subjectivity and materiality. In other words, global urbanisation gives rise to distinctive modes of existence. Such modes of existence will demand the evolution of distinctive analytic

categories. Indeed, ‘urbanisation’ represents a transformation of both existence and the analytic frameworks through which that existence is interpreted and understood. This is the proper meaning of epochal significance: this transformation is, to borrow from Satre, the ‘horizon of our time’.

The ‘urbanisation’ that defines this new millennium will thus inflect a host of modes of existence and analytic frameworks in novel ways. For example, if urbanisation has the epochal significance attributed to it, it will become the fulcrum around which global order will be constituted (if it is not already). As such then the agenda of international relations will become urbanised. Whilst the role of the world city has been recognised within International Political Economy for some time, thinking about global order has remained strangely impervious to the importance of urbanisation. World cities have been seen as a circuit of mobility (for capital, labour, goods, and information) within the wider system of states that characterises traditional thinking regarding the international. However, the advent of the urban millennium will demand reconsideration of the ways in which urbanisation transforms the traditional morphology and dynamics of global life and the analytic schemas attendant to it.

Simultaneously, the urban age will witness an urbanisation of security. That this is the case has been noted by observers who have indicated the multiple ways in which the intensification of urbanisation has given rise to novel forms of violence. In the slums that house a sixth of the global population (and comprise a significant proportion of the urbanisation that has led to the realisation of the urban millennium) gang and paramilitary violence are endemic. Partly in response to such violence, and partly as a consequence of evolving forms of war, police and military forces have developed

novel doctrines of urban warfare. Additionally, transnational terrorism has made the city into a target for distinctive forms of violence. That said, whilst violence and conflict are thus ever present themes in contemporary urbanisation, thinking about the manner in which the latter inflects global security is at an embryonic stage.

At present these themes are represented by distinct bodies of literature which, whilst recognising the possible interrelationships, have not managed to fully illuminate the interrelationship of these two urbanisations in a satisfactory manner. This is perhaps understandable insofar as the urbanisations of global order and security are broad process with many possible interrelationships. In order to narrow the scope of enquiry, therefore, I want to focus on the specific relationship between the contemporary city and war. This nexus is of particular interest insofar as it has been recognised by a number of writers as an emergent issue on the agenda of both urban studies and security studies. On the one hand the city has become both target of and theatre for novel forms of warfare that are shaping its spatial, political and economic forms. On the other, war has increasingly become urbanised, insofar as it has adapted to the urban theatre or to striking at urban targets. It should be noted, therefore, that this nexus is one in which a mutual constitution is underway: contemporary war is (re)constituted by urbanisation and the city is (re)constituted by contemporary warfare.

This enquiry into the relationship of war and the city will proceed in a fourfold movement. Firstly, I will examine the various ways in which the importance of the urban agenda has been noted in studies of conflict. This is a two-fold enquiry insofar as it requires sketching out both the nature of global urbanisation (to demonstrate its

distinctive contours) and the impact of such urbanisation has upon security in general and conflict in particular. I will demonstrate that the question of the significance and nature of urbanisation is a pressing matter for scholars of warfare and conflict.

The second and third section comprise a detailed examination of two axes of the mutually constitutive relationship between contemporary forms of war and global urbanisation. The sections thus examine the various ways in which warfare could be said to have become specifically urbanised and, by a reverse process, how urbanity could be said to have become securitised. That is to say, how have the patterns of global urbanisation led to the evolution of distinctive forms of war and how have the latter led to new inflections of urbanity. In order to address these issues, I will focus on two forms of war that could be said to have particular significance in the contemporary era: terrorism in the second section and the urban operations associated with militarised pacification of urban spaces in the third section.

In the final section of the argument, I will conclude by extending the argument to offer some reflections on the significance of urbanisation for scholars of international relations. I will comment on what the nexus of urbanisation and war reveals with respect to the wider issues of the urbanisation of security and global order. Following my earlier work on the concept of urbicide, I will argue that urbanisation transforms the morphology and subjectivity of traditional international relations. Insofar as urbanisation requires us to acknowledge a complex ecology of subjectivity in which identity is constituted in and through the built environment, it recasts our studies of politics and political violence. These studies can, it is my contention no longer be thought on the basis of sovereignty, but must rather acknowledge the complex,

heterogeneous nature of global order. It is worth noting, I will conclude, that these important questions are being put beyond political discourse through the securitisation of urbanity and urban conflict. However, recognising the implications of global urbanisation requires that we contest such securitisation and open received wisdoms to renewed scrutiny.

Global Urbanity And The Emergent War-City Nexus

The global significance of the city is, of course, not novel. Urbanisation played a key role in industrialisation and imperialism and, as such, decisively inflected the historical development of global order. More recently, global cities have been shown to constitute a distinctive constituent of global order. Networked by communications and transport, these loci of the global economic system have been argued to have become abstracted from their nominal territorial milieu. As such the network of global cities could be said to comprise a form of order in and of itself, separate from, though related to, the state-centric order that forms the traditional terrain of international relations.

Global urbanisation represents a transformation of these trends. Like all transformations it entails both continuity and change. The contention is that the role of the city as motor of, and distinctive entity within, global order has developed in qualitatively novel directions. Such a contention should be treated with all the scepticism that has attended the similar arguments issuing from discussions of globalisation. That said, however, it is worth addressing the transformations that global urbanisation is supposed to entail in order to understand the ways in which it is

contended that the urban lens is becoming that through which we must view the contemporary period.

The first feature of urbanisation that I would point to could be referred to as the ‘metropolitanisation’ (Sellers and Hoffmann-Martinot 2005) of global order. The demographics of global urbanisation indicate that urban growth is largely occurring in middle sized cities in the developing world. Urbanisation is thus not restricted to the expansion of already existing world cities, but is rather a process through which so called ‘second cities’ are gaining in importance. This demographic trend leads to the multiplication of the number of cities articulated into the global metropolitan circuits noted by studies of world cities. Whereas the world city was an element in a larger global assemblage, the articulation of second cities into the global urban landscape is giving the city primacy within global order. This order is thus becoming metropolitanised. Cities represent the agglomeration of densities of critical infrastructure, labour, capital and information. The networking of such densities is becoming the principle morphological characteristic of global order. The networked metropolis is thus supplanting the territorial state as the principal discursive trope according to which global order is organised. The metropolitanisation of global order has thus reversed the priority between the city and territoriality.

The second significant feature of global urbanisation is the (re)emergence of slums and sprawl as defining urban characteristics. Demographic indicators demonstrate that the principal driver of future urbanisation will not be indigenous metropolitan population growth, but rather the migration of non-urban dwellers to cities. Many of these migrants will contribute to the swelling of slums. These ‘shadow cities’

(Neuwirth, 2006) comprise marginal zones that are defined by lack of basic infrastructure, services and for the most part, security. The slum is a para-urban domain, nominally an element of the metropolis but lacking the critical infrastructures that are taken to characterise cities. The slum is part of the sprawl of the city that is increasingly leading to the generation of giant multiple-metropolis conurbations. Originally a tactic of Cold war, nuclear era, planning, sprawl has (after being seen as undesirable) again become a primary feature of global urbanisation. Such urbanisation is not, therefore, so much a process of the countryside coming to the city, but the city urbanising its hinterlands.

The emergence of the city as a principal characteristic of the morphology of global order, the networking of dense loci of critical infrastructure, the generation of chronically insecure para-urban zones, and the creation of sprawling conurbations thus characterise global urbanisation. It is hardly surprising that scholars of political violence in general, and war in particular, regard such urbanisation as a significant factor in the evolution of both their subject of enquiry and the frameworks within which such enquiry is conducted. The characteristics of global urbanisation both transform war and, at the same time demand new critical tools for understanding such violence. Three distinct trends have been identified by this literature.

Firstly, a part of the literature addresses the ways in which the city is becoming a target of, and arena for, military operations. The notion of the city as a dense loci of critical infrastructure in a global network resonates with notions of network centric warfare. Thus it is not surprising that a doctrine of war designed to strike loci of control rather than pacify territorial expanses leads to the targeting of the city as the

most obvious of all loci of control. Simultaneously, sprawl and conurbation have led to the urbanisation of increasing fractions of the earth’s surfaces thus further increasing the chance that military action will either target, or take as its theatre, the city. The twin dynamic of critical commentary on the perils of targeting the city and the need for developing doctrines to guide urban operations shapes this strand of literature.

Both the second and third strands of the literature on the emergent war-city nexus draw upon trends identified in this first strand. The second notes the emergence of a war against the critical infrastructures of the city in the form of the terrorism attributed to groups such as al Qaeda. This terrorism has turned the infrastructures of the contemporary period against the most dense loci of such technology. Whilst this destruction is still at heart symbolic (and thus strikes the city as a symbol), it also represents a war against infrastructure as that which supports a way of life. Responses to terror have noted a general infrastructural insecurity that extends from supermarket supply chains to utilities such as water and electricity. At the heart of the fears expressed for such infrastructures is the notion that this form of terror represents a war on a way of life that finds its condition of possibility in particular critical infrastructures. As such infrastructures are at their most dense in cities, this war is also a war against the nodes in the global metropolitan circuit.

The third strand of literature addresses the militarization of policing in the city. Partly, as a response to the endemic insecurity of the para-urban slum, and partly a consequence of terrorist attacks upon the metropolis, the contemporary city is shaped by an increasing number of militarised structures, spaces and forces. From the SWAT

teams deployed by American police forces, to the surveillance and intelligence infrastructures of cities such as London, via the military policing of slums in Sao Paulo and the street fighting in Parisian Banlieues, the dynamics of war are permeating the everyday experience of an expanding proportion of the urban population. Global urbanisation is thus, it has been argued, accompanied by securitisation and militarization.

The recognition of the war-city nexus as a phenomenon with novel significance in the contemporary period (despite its historical depth), resonates with the wider transformation of the security agenda in the post-Cold War era. The perception that the post-Cold War era entailed a surpassing of the state-centric bipolar order and the restrictive security agenda it entailed has led to a re-evaluation of the latter. This re-evaluation has indicated that the subject of security needs re-imagining to address the various emergent forms of (in)security in the contemporary era. The investigation of the insecurities of the urban environment, and the war-city nexus in particular is thus in keeping with this broadening of the security agenda. In particular the consideration of this nexus raises the question of the subject of security in the urban environment and the manner in which this subject and its security are problematise by urbanisation.

War And The City: Two Cases

In order to begin to illuminate these questions, I will address 2 instances of the war-city nexus in the contemporary period: terrorism and militarised urban operations. I am interested in delineating the mutual constitution of violence and urbanity at work in each of these cases. This entails determining how the city has shaped war and how war has shaped the city. This mutual interplay could be referred to as the urbanisation of war insofar as it refers to the way in which war is transformed in taking the city as target or theatre and it refers to the way in which the city is transformed so that the structures and technologies of war become endemic to its fabric. In both cases war is urbanised. Examining such urbanisation has the potential to identify the principle lessons of urbanisation for scholars of global order. In other words, if we can identify what the urbanisation of war entails, we can abstract certain general characteristics of urbanisation in order to speculate on what urbanisation of the global order might entail.

Terrorism

Al-Qaeda’s attacks in America, Spain, and Britain have been directed at symbolic buildings, critical infrastructure, and urban populations. On the one hand al-Qaeda have struck at those buildings that are iconic of a distinctive property of the city: its role as a locus of power. On the other hand, in striking at the critical infrastructure of the city al-Qaeda has attempted to disrupt a particular urban form of life: a secular multiculturalism associated with (although now disseminated well beyond) ‘the west’.

Of course, the city has a long historical relationship with terrorism. As the metropolis has been the home of (imperial) government, it has been the natural theatre for, and target of, those seeking to force changes in policy by violent means. Indeed, some instances of terror have foreshadowed the urbanisation of war evidenced in al-Qaeda’s attacks. The IRA’s destruction of the Baltic Exchange in London, for example, was an attack upon an iconic building that represents the way in which a city such as London is a locus in which the power of the British state is concentrated. The urban terror waged against the French in Algiers represents the exploitation of the morphology and infrastructure of the city to wage war on a particular, colonial way of life. However, despite such foreshadowing of contemporary terror trends, historically terror has had more limited ambitions: namely to force concessions from a regime. As such although terror campaigns may have at times targeted specifically urban characteristics, overall the city, or its distinctive ways of life, were not the principal target of terror. Attacks on the city were merely a means to a greater end.

In contrast, al-Qaeda has urbanised war by making the city and its ways of life its principal target. Attacking the city is thus an end in itself. Put differently, whilst historically terror has represented a limited form of war that has often been played out within the city, al-Qaeda’s terror comprises an unlimited war against the city. Three facets of this terrorism are worth highlighting in order to demonstrate the urbanisation of this form of war. Firstly, the attack on critical infrastructure is an attack on a particular way of life. Critical infrastructure is not a neutral tool, but rather is constitutive of a distinctive mode of existence. Technological, networked, predicated on flows of information, goods, people and capital, this mode of existence is the target of infrastructural attacks such as 9/11, 11-M and 7/7. This war has thus been

urbanised insofar as it has adapted to take the city as its target rather than simply an arena.

Secondly, we should note the symbolism of the targets chosen. Usually when we discuss the symbolism of political violence against elements of the city we do so in relation to the targeting of religious institutions or monuments, buildings who are primarily defined by their symbolic value. However the twin towers, Madrid Metro, and London Buses are symbolic in other ways. Of course, in one sense, the world Trade Center and the London Bus could be said to be a metonymic expression of national identity, and thus the attack a symbolic strike against the nation. But, this is a very weak symbolism. The London bus is more resonant of a specific metropolitan identity, whilst the World Trade Center represents a specific aspect of American identity. In contrast, we could say that these trains, buses and skyscrapers are symbolic of a particular way of life. This is a way of life that is secularised, beholden to capital, and reliant on technological infrastructure. It is a modernity that is specific to the (post)imperial west, but that is disseminated globally through processes such as the Washington Consensus. This modernity is ideally represented by the ‘orthogonal’ forms of skyscrapers, or the modern icon par excellence: the train.

Finally, the adaptation of this form of war to strike at this urbanised way of life has taken the form of the urbanisation of the means of such terror. The use of suicide car bombs, rucksacks (the commuter’s everyday accessory) and mobile phones represent the deployment of common urban technologies in order to target that urbanity itself. Alongside the use of the everyday technologies of urban living, it is also important to note that it is the ‘urbane’ exterior of those involved in perpetrating attacks that has

allowed them to move, unhindered, in cities such as London and New York. In the wake of these attacks, much was made of the impossibility of recognising these ‘clean skins’ who, with their university education and metropolitan mannerisms, slipped unnoticed onto planes, trains and buses. Such observations reveal the manner in which a false dichotomy between war and the city remains, positing the one as exterior to the other. The assumption is that the treat to the city stems from non-urbanised sources, a principle of violence exterior, and thus opposed, to the city. Terrorism, however, has been urbanised precisely insofar as this dichotomy has broken down. This is not a war waged on the city from beyond its boundaries. Rather this is a war on the city waged from within the city. It is a form of violence endemic to the city in the era of global urbanisation.

The response to such an urbanisation of war is a securitisation of the spaces and ways of life of global cities. This comprises a proliferation of what might be called ‘technologies of interdiction’. Principle among these technologies are the use of physical infrastructures to control or prevent mobility and the deployment of human and machine surveillance and policing agents. As Flusty has noted, the effect of such measures is to generate particular dysfunctions of access and mobility that create and normalise (banalise) interdiction, thus creating spaces controlled by particular power and authorities. If the city is, to follow Isin, a ‘difference machine’ the response of the city to terror has been to develop new ways of specifying, segregating and managing such difference. These ways of managing difference have essentially been designed to interdict specific forms of otherness. War has thus been woven deeper into the fabric of the city. In this sense we can say that the urbanisation of terror is not just a transformation of terrorism, but also the weaving of the stakes of terror into the built

fabric. This form of war is thus endemic to urbanisation: both a repeated series of attacks internal to, and an ever present principle of urban planning and development for, the city.

Urban Operations

The city has, historically, posed a distinct problem for military forces. The city has variously been an entity to be captured through siege, a trap in which war was reduced to brutal street fighting, and a civilian domain afforded considerable protection by the laws of war (especially protection from wanton destruction disproportionate to the military objectives sought). However, for the reasons detailed above the metropolitanisation of the global order has led to a renewed focus upon the question of urban operations. The evolution of urban operations doctrines has been a matter of importance for the militaries of advanced industrial states at least since the US marine Corps fought in the built environment of Vietnam, but perhaps since the streetfighting of the second world war. The urgency of developing urban operations doctrines has been renewed, however, by the metropolitanisation of global order. Israeli operations against Palestinian militants in Gaza and The West Bank and American attempts to pacify the urban environment of Iraq have been at the forefront of developing such doctrines.

Such war has been urbanised insofar as it has adapted to the city being both target and theatre for urban operations. Precision weaponry is an urbanised form of weaponry, adapted to the task of decomposing the built environment one building at a time. Since ‘Shock and Awe’ such weaponry has been publicly presented as a mechanism

for solving the problem of striking opponents without levelling the urban environment. In this sense it represents a resolution of the problem presented to the Russians in Grozny. Whilst the Russians avoided resolving the problem presented by Grozny by deploying saturation bombing in contravention of their moral and legal obligations, precision weaponry has allowed the fiction of a balance between such obligations and military action in the city to emerge.

Other tactics for the decomposition of the urban environment have also emerged in order to enable military forces to make the city their theatre of operations. From Israeli tactics of ‘walking through walls’, to American notions of the ‘dimensions of urban battlespace’, the city is rendered into specific semiotic regimes in which it can be separated out into constituent parts and thus disaggregated in order to find a suitable way through what might otherwise appear impenetrable. Such tactics of urban space have been accompanied by new technologies designed to exploit that space: portable unmanned aerial vehicles, tools for demolition, surveillance and scanning devices and so on. In its understanding of both its target and theatre the western way of war is being urbanised. This urbanisation resonates, as I have noted with the development of network centric ways of warfighting that have been influential in military doctrine in the post-Cold War period.

Simultaneously, urban operations are shaping the city not only insofar as they destroy or rearrange its fabric, but also insofar as they are being fed into policing techniques. The policing of violent city neighbourhoods is increasingly militarised. Recent policing in Brazil, for example, has effectively comprised a pitched battle between police and slum gangs no less brutal in its outcome than American operations in Iraq.

There is a clear circuit of knowledge that ensures the transmission of skills and tactics learnt in combat (or preparation for combat) by US and Israeli forces. These skills pass to police forces around the world through a number of routes and result in the creation of urbanised armed forces such as the SWAT team. The urban experience of policing similarly feeds into military doctrines of urban operations. This urbanisation of war is leading to a blurring of the lines between urban police forces and armed forces traditionally thought to belong to an extra urban domain. In the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell Tube Station in London, for example, the army (in the form of the Special Reconnaissance Regiment) played an active roll alongside (or perhaps as part of) the police surveillance team ultimately responsible for shooting the Brazilian. This shooting was also attributed to Operation Kratos, a shoot-to-kill policy adopted from Israeli tactics designed to neutralise (through force) the threat posed by suicide bombers in crowded metropolitan areas. Militarised notions of force are thus being woven into the urban fabric by such operations. War, in the form of urban operations, is thus becoming endogenous to the city. This comprises a re-enchantment of war as a possible response to urbanised threats and puts the metropolis in an era of global urbanisation at considerable peril whilst also weaving military violence into its very fabric.

The Urban Lens: Complex Ecologies of Political Subjectivity

What are the lessons of such urbanisations of war for scholars of global politics in general and political violence in particular? One lesson might be gleaned from the importance of both metropolitanisation and critical infrastructure to the accounts I have given of the urbanisation of war. At the heart of this urbanisation are the extension of the built environment and the intensification of critical infrastructures. One lesson that might thus be drawn from these forms of war is that these two elements form the conditions of possibility of an urbanisation of war. Urbanisation is thus the constitution of a mode of existence in and through these conditions of possibility. This, in turn, means that we must abandon the notion that modes of existence and the things in and through which such ways of life are constituted comprise separate ontological domains. There is, to follow Heidegger, a tradition of treating humanity as separate from the things it uses to achieve or sustain various ways of life: these things are ‘enframed’ as ‘standing reserve’. Or, put another way, buildings and critical infrastructures are treated as mere things with instrumental value for human subjects.

Urbanisation, as a phenomenon, analytic framework, or horizon of thought, demands the recognition of a complex ecology of political subjectivity in which modes of existence are constituted in and through particular material environments. The subject at stake in militarised policing or urban terror is thus a complex assemblage of relationships of identity and difference predicated on a relationship with buildings and critical infrastructure. Such a contention resonates with notions of post-humanity, cybernetics and complexity posed by thinkers such as Donna Haraway. This subject is

decentred – as poststructuralists have consistently argued. And as such any discussion of this subjectivity must similarly be decentred from the traditional discussion of citizens and territories. Terrorism impacts the complex webs of identity and difference constituted by the buildings and critical infrastructures that are constitutive of the metropolitan loci of an urbanised global order. It is not directed at national citizens *per se*, but at the city-zens that are the political subjects of a particular, metropolitanised, global order.

This complex ecology requires a decentring of the traditional anthropocentrism that have ensured the maintenance of sovereignty as the primary analytic category in scholarship concerning global order. Sovereignty is a figure of autonomy in which the subject is conceived of as free and unhindered. Its principle figures are the person and the state – conceived of as being analogous according to the fiction of legal personhood. However, the complex ecology of subjectivity that is revealed by urbanisation shows both how the personhood of a particular order is constituted by things such as buildings and critical infrastructures and how the autonomous container of the territorial state is complexified and even surpassed by the networked conurbation of global urbanisation. Such figures must, therefore, be questioned.

I should add that anthropocentrism might even be said to extend to current preoccupations with the Foucauldian concept of Biopower. These understandings have understood the bios at stake to be the biological functioning of the person (as part of a population). The complex ecology of political subjectivity revealed by global urbanisation must lead us to question the nature of the bios of biopolitics. What is the

‘life’ that is at stake in the technologies of the self characteristic of the era of global urbanity?

The Securitisation Of Global Urbanisation

I would conclude by noting that addressing these questions has been rendered difficult by the securitisation of the city in the contemporary era. As we know, securitisation as a process figures a particular issue agenda as a matter of existential threat and, in so doing, elevates it to a matter of national security. This elevation removes the issue agenda from political discussion, figuring it as a matter for executive decision. This issue goes from being a matter of disagreement to a matter of sovereign decision; from an agonistic play of voices to being that case in which a single authority decides on the exception, the specific threat.

Such a process is profoundly depoliticising insofar as it forecloses questioning. When the specification of the problem is reserved for the executive power of the sovereign, it is meaningless or impossible to enquire into such fundamental questions as the nature of urbanisation. Such securitisation also forecloses questioning the traditionally anthropocentric agendas through which these problems have hitherto been resolved. Given that war is endemic to the everyday structures of the contemporary city such questions are vital. In this sense contesting the securitisation of such an agenda is vital. In other words, this is not an agenda to be addressed through executive means but one that requires us to ask a number of fundamental questions about our shared urban fate in the contemporary era.

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