

Europe, Knowledge, Politics: engaging with the limits

The c.a.s.e. collective responds

C.a.s.e. collective*

Introduction

Having one's work closely read and critically debated is a rare pleasure. It was thus with great joy that we saw that our collective article 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto' provoked several thoughtful responses to the theoretical premises of the manifesto and its intellectual and political ramifications. The replies to the manifesto created a new space of self-interrogation in which the c.a.s.e. collective grappled with some of the limits that our critics addressed. Before we address some of these more directly, it may be useful to restate the original objective of the collective manifesto. First, the authors that were part of the collective had a desire to push critical innovations in security studies beyond the framing of critical security studies in terms of schools. The aim of working and writing as a collective, as a network of scholars who do not agree on everything yet share a common perspective, was based on a desire to break with the competitive dynamics of individualist research agendas. Alluding to the emancipatory connotations of the word manifesto,¹ the aim of the article was to carve out

¹ Contrary to Andreas Behnke's definition of manifesto as stating the manifest, the obvious, there is a tradition of manifesto as a public intervention for the future, an intervention that challenges and displaces what is taken for granted – from *The Communist Manifesto* to avant-garde manifestoes (surrealism, dadaism), from Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* to the contemporary manifesto of anti-capitalist

and open up an intellectual space for critical thinking – both in the disciplinary sense of formulating an alternative space to mainstream security studies and in the political sense of thinking through the ethico-political implications of security and securitisation.

If, in this sense, the article can be read as a manifesto (with, we should note, the important prefix ‘networked’), we did not assert, as Andreas Behnke (2007: 105-06) and Christine Sylvester (2007) argue, an authoritative definition of critical security studies. Nor did we assert the discipline’s common sense understanding of what it means to be critical. While it is true that some perspectives (particularly feminism and postcolonialism) are only marginally present in the manifesto, its objective was not to provide an exhaustive list and categorisation of critical approaches. Rather, the aim was to open up new avenues for critical thinking around themes that are not just central for the schools in critical security studies to which we refer but also for other, related approaches such as postcolonialism and feminism.

The collective takes seriously the concerns that have been raised with exclusion, borders, boundaries and limits, which are present in all the replies. Indeed, Behnke’s formulation that a critical agenda entails thinking the limits of its scholarship eloquently captures what is at stake here (Behnke, 2007: 108). How do we think about the limits that we attempt to criticise, render unfamiliar and shift and how does our own work relate to its own limits? In our response, we would like to reflect on this and positively engage with the comments that have been made on the various limits said to be present in the

resistance, *A Hacker's Manifesto*. Manifestoes have been seen as interventions in the concrete conditions of their time.

manifesto. The way the replies to the collective article have pointed out *aporias* of limits and raised questions of limitations has fostered reflection within the collective about its role and its future. Roughly, the limits pointed out can be said to be threefold: the limits of Europe, the limits of knowledge and the limits of politics.

Unsurprisingly, the deployment of the spatial term ‘Europe’ has triggered reactions about the geographical borders and boundaries of c.a.s.e. and the c.a.s.e. collective.² However, the question of ‘where is Europe?’ and ‘who is Europe?’ also raises questions of intellectual inclusion/exclusion insofar as the manifesto has been criticised for wrongly reducing critical security studies to the geographical locations of Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris. As for the limits of knowledge, all the replies raise the problem of intellectuals, knowledge and power within the discipline. The main issue is whether the authorisation of a collective voice automatically also leads to authoritative definitions of what it means to be critical and what kind of questions can be legitimately asked. Rob Walker, in particular, has raised the question of novelty and how the ‘new’ has been thought within the c.a.s.e. collective (Walker, 2007). These issues of authority and novelty can also be linked to the political question of what it means to oppose hegemony: does a counter-hegemonic struggle necessarily construct its own hegemony and tradition? Finally, all the replies confirm the importance of thinking through the relation between security and the political, and point at the limited vision of politics

² While the manifesto made a distinction between CASE and c.a.s.e., for the purposes of simplification and clarity we refer here to c.a.s.e. as an intellectual space for collective thinking that comprises different authors and approaches and to the c.a.s.e. collective as the group of scholars who are writing collectively and contributing to the constitution of such a space.

present in the c.a.s.e. manifesto. These limits are articulated around the politics of presence and the politics of exceptionalism.

The Limits of Europe

The use of the term 'Europe' and its location within a critical project have been the most recurrent points of criticism raised in response to the collective article. Indeed, 'Europe' appears as a particularly contentious site as it raises complex issues related to the question of borders and limits. Mark Salter argues that these issues have not been dealt with sufficiently and explicitly enough in the collective article, as 'the c.a.s.e. collective has neglected the importance of borders' (Salter, 2007: 117). This alleged lack of a thorough reflection on borders in relation to Europe has also led Behnke to question what he saw as the exclusive and hence exclusionary localization of critical security studies in Europe (Behnke, 2007: 106). Walker's response resonates with the others in drawing attention to the resolutely Eurocentric orientation of the analysis (Walker, 2007: 101). All these reactions warn about the potential for parochialism and exclusion inherent in the reference to 'Europe'.

It might be true that the collective did not insist sufficiently on the idea that, in its title, the focus was perhaps to be put more on 'networked' than on 'Europe'. To a certain extent, the latter term served indeed to identify a space where a network of senior and junior researchers were interacting through debates, conferences and common research projects. Europe was, in this sense, the material space in which critical approaches to security were funded primarily by E(U) institutions. However, beyond the very European

materiality that was part of the c.a.s.e. development, it must also be explained for itself and in itself. In the wake of the replies to the collective article, the c.a.s.e. collective has embarked upon a sustained reflection about what the ‘e’ in c.a.s.e. stands for.

What is at stake with the ‘e’ in c.a.s.e.?

Any self-conscious search for alternative figures of intellectual engagement first implies recognising the limits of any such search. These limits can be attributed, amongst others, to the limits of our knowledge, our experiences, our individual and collective trajectories and our conditions. It is partly out of a reflexive need to highlight the limits of our thinking – thus departing from the positivistic call for ‘academic discourses’ to make sovereign, a-historical, a-geographical and universal claims – that we acknowledge our relation to a yet unspecified ‘Europe’. Hence, ‘Europe’ is the limit from which and within which we think. Adding the ‘e’ to c.a.s.e. is precisely a way to say we cannot possibly be exhaustive in the presentation of critical approaches. Locating very provisionally our thinking ‘in Europe’ as a highly imprecise and contested locale both in time and in space will be a way to make clear that we do not claim to speak in the name, for or in the place of people speaking from (or silenced in) other locations. This is not to say that we want to shield ourselves from alternative views behind a European relativism, or even worse hide an underlying Eurocentric universalism, nor do we want to exclude critical perspectives arising from elsewhere.

On the contrary, the term ‘Europe’ should be seen as an invitation for others to help us push back our limits by participating in the debate from other locales. ‘Europe’ is

used here as a *via media* between a relativist and a universalist stance: we recognise our thinking to be highly contingent upon the context from which it has emerged, but at the same time this context – here epitomised by the term ‘Europe’ – is recognised to be pluralistic, fluid and highly indeterminate, and in need of other perspectives and inputs in order to become, not universal or universalised, but at least (hopefully) less bordered. ‘Europe’ is thus mobilised because of the necessity to clearly state from where (geographically, culturally, institutionally) the vast majority of the initial members of the collective spoke. But what can ‘Europe’ be in this context, once any objectivist or naturalised definition of Europe has been rejected?

Europe as a metaphor

‘Europe’ as a political site is a particularly intriguing one. It is different from any other political site in the contemporary world – be it nation states, the reified and abstract notion of international community, or international institutions such as the UN – construed self-consciously as an open-ended process whose end-result is largely unknown. Europe, in our view, denotes not a geographical space but rather a dispersed and varied range of historical and cultural relations; histories and cultures, however, which are not unique to Europe *per se*, though they may be reproduced within the histories and cultures that circulate in Europe. Europe functioning as ‘a superposition of borderlines’ (Balibar, 2002a) is more networked than it is boundary ridden. Europe, in other words, stands as a borderland rather than as a bordered entity, with the corollary experience in terms of translation and mediation that come with such characteristics. This

specific quality is encapsulated in Étienne Balibar's proposal to consider Europe and its contribution in world politics as a 'vanishing mediator':

Europe can contribute in a decisive manner, if not to the 'transformation of the world' [...] at least to the modulation of announced evolutions, but on condition that it 'vanishes' as its mediation and intervention will become more determinant: that is, on condition that it dissociates itself from the images and myths of an 'identity' enclosed in imaginary borders, and penetrates more and more deeply into the logic of the conflicts that tear today's 'common' world apart and for which it bears itself historical responsibility (Balibar, 2003: 58).³

The 'vanishing mediator' is Balibar's proposal for a practice of engagement with the world, which he deems an 'anti-strategy' (as opposed to a counter-strategy), that would constitute an alternative to the practices of power politics. Europe would draw not only on the tradition of linguistic and cultural translation but also on its tradition of conflictual democracy in terms that condition its continual transformation.⁴ This is not to say that there are no exclusionary or discriminating practices in Europe or that the tradition of conflictual democracy is not at risk; however, it is possible to draw out of Europe's contradictory traditions new modes of practising and thinking politics.

³ Translation by the c.a.s.e. collective.

⁴ Balibar understands the European tradition as one of institutionalising conflicts rather than criminalising them, providing spaces for their symbolisation and creating instances of social regulation of conflicts. For a discussion of Schmitt's position, see the section on 'Limits of politics'.

The metaphor of Europe as a 'vanishing mediator' can be used here to illustrate what we hope Europe to be(come) for the c.a.s.e. collective: an open-ended process to which nobody can lay claims and whose final outcome cannot be foreseen, as a site of political and intellectual experimentation that might at some point vanish to the benefit of a broader and even more pluralistic one.

Therefore, saying that critical security studies thrive beyond Europe is more than noting that the passports of the c.a.s.e. members do indeed stretch beyond the geographical boundaries of Europe. It is also more than saying that problems of critical concern occur, as they obviously do, outside Europe. Finally, it is more than saying that people in Europe do not, in fact, possess some superior vantage point from which to understand and respond to critical problems in security studies, which is a spurious claim at best and an imperialist one at worst. Rather, it suggests that the limits of Europe are negotiable in more ways than one. It is a move away from presuming the autonomy of the subject and to privilege agency over identity. As Walker has rightly pointed out, 'Europe works in places other than within its obvious geographical limits of Europe; many other places are at work within the geographical limits of Europe' (Walker, 2007: 102). Europe's internal heterogeneity, moreover, leaves it differing from itself as much as it differs from others. This means that many different meanings can be attached to it depending on how one conceives of its future. Indeed as a process ('Europeanisation'), the question of temporality and of becoming is inevitably raised. The 'e' in c.a.s.e. denotes, perhaps, certain sources of inspiration, a particular time-space of the collective's earliest formation, a desire to highlight what it is that the case collective seeks to undo or problematise. It is necessarily a loose and not a steadfast 'e'.

Europe as a locus of engagement

By (re)claiming 'Europe', we also seek to a certain extent to respond both to those professionals of politics who claim to speak in our name for 'Europe' and to critics of 'Europe' who paradoxically tend to enclose us within the hegemonic figure of the 'rich white man'. In other words, since the 'European' is the identity that has been assigned to most of us, and since this assignation entails a number of representations of what we should be and not be, it is to a certain extent by reclaiming another 'Europe' that we can make ourselves heard and be more relevant. Hence, we use 'Europe' (in a reinvested sense of the word) to manifest our disagreement with some of the hegemonic practices in academia and politics with which 'Europe' (but not only 'Europe') has often been assimilated: the disciplinarisation of knowledge, the exacerbated individualisation of scholarly production, the permanent attempt to operationalise knowledge in order to institutionalise demarcations.

In this regard, the c.a.s.e. collective is hopefully transversal in focus and connected with the concerns of critically-minded academics in all sorts of institutional and geographical locations. What we are engaging with is politics as we think it should be dealt with: through openness (and not closure), collectively and not individually. We do not, therefore, engage in any kind of naïve celebration of Europe as a locus of wisdom for the rest of the world. It is rather the contrary. Working collectively as a broad and open-ended network is thought to allow engagement with three main spaces: (1) the one from which we speak (the academic world); (2) the one we hope to deal with more

systematically: bureaucracies and professionals of politics; (3) the ones we call upon to debate with us when we say ‘Europe as a limit’: the ‘others’ both inside and outside we want to engage with.

Engaging with the academic world would mean to contest its traditional lines of demarcation in terms of disciplines and status, its traditional hierarchies of knowledge, the distinctions between theory and practice. For us, it would imply refusing its temporality summoning scholars to write as much as they can. Most importantly, it would imply breaking up with individualist research agendas and moving towards collective thinking and action.

Engaging with bureaucracies and the professionals of politics is a ‘two-way track’. As academics, we need to learn from the latter the limits and constraints entailed by the commitment to legitimise practises through clearly delimited expert knowledge. It simultaneously implies refusing the necessity of acting under the constraints of emergency as well as the limits imposed on thinking by the ‘operationalisation’ of academic knowledge. Interfaces between the academic world on the one hand and the professionals of politics and bureaucracies on the other might help the academic world not only to talk to itself but also interact with its ‘outside’ without being subjected to the latter. This interaction might allow for a contextualising and ‘problematizing’ of bureaucratic decision-making in order to expose its underlying assumptions.

Finally, engaging with all these other spaces presupposes listening more than speaking. Dialogue would not mean to let ‘them’ know, but to let ‘us’ know what ‘they’ think. We would also need to take account of the fact that the people we are writing to are not just ourselves, not just the academic world, not just western politicians, but also the

people whose voices we might have to listen to more often. These modes of engagement that the collective suggests are similar to the anti-strategy of the ‘vanishing mediator’. The collective itself can become a ‘superposition of borderlines’ (Balibar, 2002a) and contribute to the conditions of possibility of renewed academic and political practice in the interstices of disciplines and egotistical individual strategies.

We therefore consider that the idea of Europe has its place, at least for now, in c.a.s.e. We highlight Europe to call attention to the identity that has been assigned, in one respect or another, to most of the c.a.s.e. collective members. Yet, its use also highlights the extent to which the very positing of this identity of Europe, like identity politics generally, is always to some extent a misnomer. Speaking in the name of Europe, further, serves as a response to those who speak in our name through Europe when there is so much more to say, contest and render difficult about Europe. Finally, we highlight the presence of Europe as an honest move towards calling for its dissolution. ‘Europe’ in this open-ended, networked, endeavour is an invitation to push the limits of Europe.

The Limits of Knowledge

Moving from ‘geographical’ limits to the limits of knowledge, we do not claim to be all encompassing in dealing thoroughly with all academic texts of critical security. The manifesto of the c.a.s.e. collective is neither a literature review nor a comprehensive review of all ‘camps’ – in Sylvester’s terminology. This never has been the aim of our collective endeavour. Texts cannot *but* be partial and limited in all the possible intertextual relations they could entertain. What is important to stress is that the c.a.s.e.

collective is neither exclusive nor self-contained; as such, it represents an innovative intellectual endeavour on the scene of critical research because of its ‘networked’ quality.⁵ Its collective networked nature as well as its critical orientation raise a question about how the collective conceives of and handles the question of voices it speaks with and for. To push further this point, we would like to reflect on Walker’s injunction that ‘it is perhaps unfortunate that there is not a more extensive discussion of what it means to authorize a collective voice in this way’ (Walker 2007: 96). Discussing the question of authority and authorisation, we briefly reflect upon the question of critical thinking from the margins and the question of tradition and novelty.

Voices from the margins, marginal voices

For Sylvester, the European focus of the c.a.s.e. collective is gender biased, as well as geographically biased, with three locations – Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris – representing the castles of sovereign security kings and their disciples. What her intervention suggests is that the various contributors to the c.a.s.e. collective have marginalised, excluded and even silenced feminist security theorists. We accept as fair the suggestion that the case collective does not explicitly cover feminist (or, for that matter, postcolonial) security theories, and that the networked-manifesto therefore lacks an exhaustivity that might have been welcomed. However, we do not accept Sylvester’s claim that c.a.s.e. relegates other participants to the margins. Rather, we think that the

⁵ It is also important to note that this response has not been written by all the people involved in writing the manifesto and some new people are engaged in this project.

collective opens the possibility to engage with feminism, while distancing itself from a mode of feminist scholarship that Vivienne Jabri has called the ‘feminism of cooptation’ (Jabri, 2004: 265).

What Sylvester does not seem to appreciate is that the networked manifesto did not engage with a number of the feminist writings primarily because they focus attention on gendering war (e.g., Enloe, 2000). The c.a.s.e. collective is concerned with drawing attention to the way in which security functions beyond ‘war’. In addition, it is concerned with challenging a critical feminist literature that invokes a non-gendered concept of security. Thus, the collective problematises the normalising role of a conception of security that is manifest in the claim that ‘we can no longer afford to celebrate the potential death of hundreds of thousands of our enemies; the preservation of life, not its destruction, must be valued’ (Tickner, 1992: 138). Unlike the tradition of feminism that criticises current practices of security only to embrace a transformed and non-gendered concept, the c.a.s.e. collective thinks that the dynamics that the very invocation of security give rise to need to be more carefully unpacked. Despite these criticisms of certain modes of feminist scholarship, it would be a mistake to suggest that the c.a.s.e. collective refuses to engage with feminism. A feminist approach is not automatically in contrast with the c.a.s.e. collective manifesto. For example Lene Hansen, who Sylvester presents only as a critic of the gender blind c.a.s.e., has constructively combined Copenhagen school, post-modern approaches and feminist thinking in her framework for analyzing security as practice (Hansen, 2006).⁶

⁶ See also van Munster (2007) for some of the on-going debates in critical security studies, which include Hansen’s work.

We also think that it is important to question the assumption that all feminism(s) or all voices from the margin are automatically critical. For instance, the feminist concern with human security may well be driven by a real concern with the oppressed and the disempowered (and in this sense they are not far removed from the Aberystwyth School of security). But this does not necessarily mean that broad security doctrines that include gender are a blueprint for emancipation and empowerment (Abrahamsen, 2005; Aradau, 2004; Elbe, 2006). For instance, some feminist positions are compatible with military intervention and occupation by the world's most powerful states and with military alliances against the very weakest and poorest of states (Elshtain, 2002).

The c.a.s.e. collective finds such a position highly problematic. Indeed, many scholars in c.a.s.e. find the rehabilitation of theoretical concepts such as 'just war' problematic and instead are concerned to challenge contemporary international security policy doctrines, such as 'the responsibility to protect' (ICISS, 2001).⁷ The contemporary international context is one in which major international institutions and major powers are framing their security policies in terms of a rejection of instrumental interests and supposedly in the voices of the weakest and most powerless citizens.⁸ In the human security discourse, the 'Poverty Reduction Strategies' of the World Bank, and more generally the 'merging' of security and development (Duffied and Waddell, 2004) in the policies of the IMF, DFID, and other major international NGOs, gender inequality is elevated into a major component of security policy. Far from being a marginal concern,

⁷ Sjoberg (2006) has recently reclaimed the concept of just war from a feminist perspective.

⁸ The infamous alliance of abolitionist feminism with the conservative lobby in the US to protect victims of trafficking has been the focus of acrimonious debates within feminism (Soderlund, 2005).

sometimes it seems as if the 'feminism of cooptation' has become a major part in the ideology of development and the mechanisms of power deployed upon much of the world.

In an international context where major powers and major international institutions are asserting a moral right to act on behalf of the weak and disempowered, there would seem to be a danger that some feminist security theorists are overlooking the most pertinent and critical questions. Feminism, we would suggest, can most productively contribute to the critical security studies literature through undertaking a careful examination of the uneasy relation that various feminists have had with the concept of security. Indeed, we hope to contribute to this task while engaging with feminism in our further collective work on resistance. It is important to stress, however, that the c.a.s.e. collective does not aim to define what it means to be critical or to establish a specific genealogy of critique. Nor does the collective hold up one critical ancestor as the 'true' critic. In contrast to Sylvester, we do not presume that a scholar is not engaging critically if one is not 'doing' feminist security. This would seem to be a disciplinary move that fixes the meaning of critical analysis and fails to engage adequately with contemporary security discourses and practices. Rather, we would suggest that what is needed in today's complex international situation is a more open approach that is critically alert to the processes of marginalisation and domination to which academic research can so easily succumb.

It is here that Gayatri Spivak's essay entitled 'Can the subaltern speak' (1988) may be useful in drawing attention to some of the problems that any body of critical scholarship faces. Spivak's essay can be read as the expression of discontent within the

Subaltern Studies project, a collective endeavour of Indian historians to replace the Gramscian 'subaltern' at the centre of Indian history. Spivak denounces the critical discourse of post-colonialism as originating from male middle-class subject position, and draws attention to the way in which this critical project risks reproducing existing structures of power. She problematises the essentialism inherent to the Subaltern Studies project by questioning the possibility of retrieving an 'autonomous' consciousness. The risk, she suggests, is that the (postcolonial) intellectual becomes 'transparent'. Similarly, in her critique of Julia Kristeva's *Des Chinoises*, Spivak draws attention to the problem of recreating a (critical) totalizing narrative through invoking the subaltern (woman) figure as the academic romanticised expression of otherness. Far from developing an account of critical discourse as excluding or footnoting women or feminist literature, Spivak is concerned that, in robbing the subaltern of her voice, the intellectual consolidates existing patterns of domination and marginalisation. She warns that, in wanting to retrieve the 'original' voice of the subaltern, the intellectual only finds her/his own.⁹ For Spivak (1988: 310), the subaltern cannot speak because she is always embedded in different hegemonic layers.

Spivak's work raises questions for feminists who focus on the woman as a marginalised figure. Rather than bringing women to the centre, the c.a.s.e. collective is concerned with engaging feminism and postcolonialism through problematising masculinist and colonial discourses and practices. This fits in with Spivak's general

⁹ In order to illustrate this point, Spivak develops the example of political activism inevitably depicted as traditional widow immolation. She concludes on the inability to restore the subaltern voice: 'Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri's suicide is an unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of sati-suicide as much as the hegemonic account of the blazing, fighting, familial Durga' (Spivak, 1988: 310).

tactical approach. For her, ‘there is always a dead angle of the struggle, a subaltern of the subaltern [...] be it the excised Sudanese student which keeps silent among the campus feminists, or women (gendered subaltern) within postcolonial movements’ (Cusset, 2003: 214). Critical, but supportive of the collective Subaltern Studies project, Spivak was primarily concerned with the *articulation*, not exclusion or primacy of certain struggles – feminist, class and postcolonial. It is absolutely in this direction that the c.a.s.e. collective would like to further engage feminism and postcolonialism, while distancing itself from the feminism that has become coopted within institutional locales and is used to further security projects.

Novelty and tradition

In cautioning the c.a.s.e. collective against overstating its claim of novelty, Walker opens an interesting question. What is at stake in claiming novelty in relation to past knowledge? Part of a sociological answer is that social sciences require originality of knowledge. They inscribe on students a disposition for claiming novelty from the moment they enter a lecture hall. Even if not claiming novelty, there is always a good chance someone will ask: ‘What is new about your knowledge?’ The more interesting issue however is what stakes are at play in demanding and claiming novelty, in inserting a gap, and thus also a relation, between past and present knowledge. It may be useful to distinguish explicitly between at least three stakes that also identify different aspects of the critical nature of knowledge producing practice.

Firstly, demanding or claiming novelty opens up the question of how identity is constituted by drawing relations to older bodies of knowledge. Identification is here not simply a matter of differentiation and exclusion, as most of the critics imply. It also concerns more generally how past knowledge is productively brought into play within a collective dynamic. If the c.a.s.e. collective continues working in a pluralist way, it has a capacity to be very open in what past knowledges are circulating in its knowledge producing endeavours simply because of the sheer variety of backgrounds and research interests that people bring and have brought to bear on the collective. One of the important issues that is opened up to question here is whether this necessarily implies that the c.a.s.e. collective positions itself within and against traditions. In other words, will the novelty claim of the collective necessarily have to identify traditions of thought? Or, is it possible to produce knowledge that meets requirements of originality by bringing into play various knowledges in relation to the issues that one wishes to discuss, without necessarily giving authority to the past knowledge as a tradition?

The c.a.s.e. collective, indeed, is but an instantiation of a dialogue between individuals and the various knowledges they come to bear. Its originality precisely lies in a process of knowledge production that, by its collective nature, cannot but be an instantiation rather than a tradition in becoming or a crystallisation of past knowledges. Maybe critical knowledge production is critical not primarily because it is self-reflexive about its own practice of tradition constitution but because it tries to avoid being dragged into transferring authority from the past to the present by claiming certain knowledges as tradition. In terms of authority and authorization, our idea is similar to what Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida would understand as the promise of a signature (Arendt,

1963; Derrida, 1986; Honig, 1991). The legitimacy of our signature, so to speak, is retroactively achieved by the processual dynamics we hope to instil. The manifesto is thus never present and stable but is always ongoing and is therefore necessarily an uncertain intervention.

Secondly, claiming or questioning novelty can also open a heuristic stake. ‘What is new?’ can be a demand for more intellectual and analytical rigour. Exploring in detail similarity and difference in relation to past knowledge is a productive method for developing and fine-tuning conceptual apparatuses and understanding political developments. Being critical means here a pre-disposition to detailed enquiries into what has been changing, if anything at all, in both social science and world politics, instead of claiming general novelty against a generalised past. Some of this may indeed be lacking in an article of 20000 words but should be easy to insert within intensive collective *practices* of knowledge exchange that take place in the *process* of collective writing. If, indeed, one written article might not be an adequate format to reflect these multiple processes of knowledge production, it remains that its networked quality, its open-endedness in terms of its process of production retains, on the contrary, a quality of aperture that enables, rather than disables, conversations and dialogues among individuals and knowledges.

Thirdly, claiming or questioning novelty has its political stakes. Novelty claims are not only produced in academic knowledge. Symbolic politics often involves careful constructions of ‘new eras’, exceptional times, and fundamental changes in world politics. The reproduction of the Cold War as forty years of stable, predictable and secure international relations since the 1990s is an excellent example of contemporary myth

creation through an academically and politically sustained creation of a radical gap between old and new. This opens a double question for critical knowledge: (a) To what extent do knowledge claims reproduce political claims that sustain a ‘forgetting of (the complexity) of a past’?; and (b) What are symbolic political claims of novelty effecting? Critical knowledge claiming novelty has to be able to evaluate the symbolic political effects it seeks to sustain and produce.

The Limits of Politics

This final point about the symbolic political effects of knowledge takes us directly to the question of politics. The criticism that we would like to address here is Behnke’s claim that the c.a.s.e collective manifesto is based on a ‘dismissal of Carl Schmitt’s work on the political and the exception’ and a foreclosure of ‘the processes of depoliticisation that are rightly at the heart of the CASE agenda’ (Behnke, 2007: 108). Behnke suggests that, in focusing ‘exclusively on the transgressive element of the exception, the c.a.s.e collective obscures the foundational moment that makes order possible in the first place’ (Behnke, 2007: 109). We agree that a reflection on the limits of politics is a critical task for the c.a.s.e. collective. Indeed, this task is critical precisely because it goes to the heart of the question as to how a political order that is constituted through a securitised limit can be resisted, challenged, or unmade. The c.a.s.e. collective does not accept the closure of the political on the horizon of the Schmittian exception, and this applies as much to problems of contemporary ‘emergency’ as to the problem of foundations. This does not mean that the exception as the excess of power (the constitutive outside) is confused with the

exercise of excessive power, as Behnke suggests (Behnke, 2007: 109). Rather, it suggests that the collective can critically re-engage the political through problematising the constitution of an order in which the limit is drawn in excessive terms.

Tracing the connection between securitisation theory and Schmittian exceptionalism is thus different from using Carl Schmitt as the privileged voice from (and against) which to think the political. What we find problematic is the privileging of a Schmittian reading of the political, which treats the limit as always-already-securitized. This is evident in Behnke's reading, where he claims that: 'The normality of any order is *always* a product of dramatic decisions about its limits and borders, defined by a sovereign decision on the enemy ... Security and the exception therefore *always* define the horizon and set the limits within which politics can operate normally' (Behnke, 2007: 110 emphasis added). While Schmitt's definition of the political and his critique of liberal democracy have resonated with a number of thinkers both on the right and left, we think that it is more productive to explore theoretical interventions that have attempted to rethink the political, the exception, and the role of problems of limit. Besides the fact that a privileging of Schmitt risks turning the Schmittian exception into the eternal metaphysical horizon of political struggles, it significantly limits our understanding of exceptionalism and our imagination of the political.

The question of the exception and that of the political need not be coterminous in the way Schmitt proposes. The exception as the inescapable horizon of political order has offered a valuable conceptual tool of criticism against the constitution and normalisation of order. In its transgressive understanding, the exception can be found in other philosophical engagements with politics and the political: Jacques Rancière's distinction

between police and politics, Alain Badiou's event, Derrida's undecidability, Slavoj Žižek's act, or Balibar's emancipation. In its formal understanding, the exception that is constitutive of order is also its contingency and instability. When Sergei Prozorov argues for a theoretical *rapprochement* between Schmitt's concept of the exception and Foucault's discussion of the plebs, he argues for an understanding of sovereign exception as a 'negative operation of transgression, the capacity to suspend the normal functioning of order' (Prozorov, 2005: 86). His formal reading of Schmitt aims at tracing a potential for critique in Schmitt's work that is in tune with other critical thinkers' insistence on the fact that any diagram of order is always inherently unstable. This formalistic reading of Schmitt – indeed one may ask how much is left of Schmitt after Prozorov's thorough deconstruction – is in turn not far removed from attempts to think through the question of the limit in critical theory (e.g., the Frankfurt School, post-structuralism, post-Marxism).

However, emphasising the formal aspect of the exception cannot erase the way in which Schmitt closes off the political. Even if the political itself is given no substantive content and is only defined through 'intensification' (Ojakangas, 2005), Schmitt limits the formal element of politics. As Carlo Galli has noted, the concept of the political is not just indeterminate, but it is also the principle of collective identity and community (Galli, 1996). This closure of politics is effected through Schmitt's construction of both an *ethic* and the *necessity* of unitary political community (*Einheit*, as both unit and unity) at the extreme point or 'limit' of politics. This appears at both the 'high points of politics' when 'the enemy is, in concrete clarity, recognised as the enemy' (Schmitt, 1996: 20), and at the limits of positive knowledge and law at which (declared) conditions of exceptional contingency necessitate sovereign exceptionalism (Schmitt, 2006). Thus the reduction of

pluralism that needs both to be contained internally by the state and restricted internationally to the form of the nation-state. Jan Müller has argued that Schmitt's political theory has been open to a selection of 'substance' (national, racial or otherwise) to ensure state homogeneity (Müller, 1997: 20). Schmitt has been critical of British pluralists such as Harold Laski, who have demoted the state as the 'supreme comprehensive unity' (Schmitt, 1999: 196). According to Schmitt, the state needs to remain the container of difference, the overarching unity that limits the sphere of difference.

Yet, in the debates about Weimar and its open-ended constitution, Schmitt does not necessarily appear as the only historical authoritative source on exceptionalism. Within the context of left-right struggles on the nature of dictatorship (commissarial dictatorship, proletarian dictatorship), some of Schmitt's contemporaries provided diverging and more critical accounts of exceptionalism. Contrary to some current scholarship in security studies (Huysmans, 1998; Williams, 2003), these authors did not so much want to curb exceptionalism as to debate its function (Huysmans, 2004). Left-wing intellectuals such as Franz L. Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer questioned the conservative deployment of the state of exception and their attempts to maintain the status quo through extra-legal arrangements (Kirchheimer, 1969; Neumann, 1986). Neumann regarded exceptionalism not as the decision on friend/enemy but rather as a tool for extending equality and justice throughout society. Moreover, unlike Schmitt, Neumann and Kirchheimer did not see politics from the perspective of political theology, but from that of political economy. In their optic, therefore, exceptionalism did not bear witness to the always already securitised limits of political order. Instead, the state of

exception figured as a tool which could be radicalised and by means of which, depending on concrete circumstances, the working class could be emancipated: '[T]he socialist constitutional position must weigh all constitutional institutions, those of democracy as well as those of dictatorship, in regard to the concrete question of how these institutions will change the position of the working class' (Kirchheimer, 1969: 43).¹⁰ Thus while Behnke is right to argue that exceptionalism is both foundational and transgressive, there is nothing transcendental about the state of exception as such. It depends upon the concrete, contextual circumstances whether any suspension of order takes place in defence of that order through a decision on the friend/enemy.

To keep open both the question of the exception and that of the political, we would suggest to focus on what resistance can mean. Among other things, this involves thinking about limits in different ways.¹¹ Reproducing the Schmittian logic of friend/enemy defies and forecloses all attempts of imagining the question of resistance and the political, leading, in the extreme case, to political passivity and impasse or worse. However, as Balibar (2002b: 35) has argued, the fact that no single concept of politics is complete or can be deployed as a model that guarantees progressive outcomes and

¹⁰ For a sceptical view that exceptionalism may lead to progressive results, see Agamben (2005).

¹¹ It is worth reflecting on, however, if critical thinking always necessarily needs to think resistance from the limit. While this is the route taken by poststructuralist and post-Marxist authors such as Derrida, Žižek, Badiou and Rancière, there are also more subaltern conceptualisations of power/resistance and transformation such as in the work of James Scott, Michel Foucault or Judith Butler. See also Balibar's (2002b: 1-39) illuminating discussion on three conceptions of politics (emancipation, transformation and civility).

transformation constitutes a genuine *aporia* for our thinking about the political. For although these *aporias* remind us that there are no formal models for emancipation, they also illustrate that concrete, contextual emancipative and transformative injunctions and strategies need not necessarily surrender to the Schmittian predicament of friend and enemy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to get back to an interesting question raised by Sylvester: What is a footnote? Is it a form of closure, of hegemony, of academic politics, worse, is it a crime? Or, is it a sign of aperture, of egalitarianism, of recognition? More fundamentally, the question that this raises is whether the c.a.s.e. collective functions as a monologue or as a dialogue. As noted, the novelty of the collective does not lie in substance *per se* but in its open-ended and ever-going dialogue between individuals of diverse backgrounds that are and are not formally part of the collective as such. C.a.s.e. is not built to function as a monologue; it is not ‘finalized and deaf to the other’s response, [or] does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force’ (Bakhtin, 1984: 292-93). Other knowledge practices are not, to paraphrase Mikhail Bakhtin, the objects of the collective’s own consciousness, they are, quite the contrary, other consciousnesses the c.a.s.e. collective is dialoguing with.

C.a.s.e. is a form of aperture rather than closure, precisely because the collective spends plenty of energy on discussing footnotes, including the question: what is a footnote? Historians consider the footnote to be something as important, if not more, than

the main text. Knowledge practices in many fields consider that the main text is where recognition lies. But that misses an important quality of footnotes. A footnote is a recognition of a dialogue. As Anthony Grafton concludes from his history of the footnote: 'Only the use of the footnotes enables historians to make their texts not monologues but conversations, in which modern scholars, their predecessors, and their subjects all take part' (Grafton, 1999: 234). C.a.s.e. is precisely modelled as a collective on a dialogic vision of knowledge production. Nevertheless, we recognise that every attempt to open up a critical space for critical thinking risks closing off for other ways of engaging with security. The responses to the c.a.s.e. manifesto are therefore important reminders to keep that space open and are in that sense thus very much in line with the aims of the manifesto. For this reason, a second collective article, which is currently being prepared, will do away with the 'school' taxonomy, as the relationship between security and the political is being explored through notions of emancipation, resistance and transformation. Exploring in which ways the political can be imagined against, beyond or outside security, the c.a.s.e. collective will explore at least some of the limits pointed out in the various replies to our manifesto.

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