

The drift into parliamentary totalitarianism*

TAKIS FOTOPOULOS

The bombings in London and what followed are utterly revealing, as well as demystifying, in terms of the transnational elite's propaganda which is adopted by both the neoliberal and social-liberal ideologues of the system. To begin with, the myth that Al-Qaida is a 'transnationally organized terrorist network, a transnational superpower'^[1] has collapsed. In effect, as John Gray of the LSE has stressed, "the 'war on terror' suggests terrorism is a global phenomenon but, actually, it remains almost entirely national or regional in its scope and goals".^[2] This was confirmed by the latest London bombings of 21 July which, it is now known, were carried out by a group of local Muslim activists using 'homemade and extremely crude nail bombs, probably knocked up in the kitchen sink'^[3] and an almost nonexistent infrastructure (hideouts etc) on which no self-respecting terrorist organisation, from RAF to November 17, would have ever thought of relying!

It is, therefore, clear that, as James Harkin^[4] points out, a systematic effort has been made by the international mass media (mostly controlled by the transnational elite) to internationalise the problem of terrorism. This, in turn, has necessitated a transnational war on terrorism which only the transnational elite (headed by the US elite, that has the necessary military power) can carry out effectively. Still, apart from the Iraqis and the Afghans who directly face the transnational elite's brutal occupation, the 'terrorist' attacks in Palestine, Chechnya, Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey and elsewhere are not motivated by some almighty transnational superpower but by the need to resist local elites. Likewise, the attacks on London and Madrid were also aimed at the local elites and were carried out by local Muslims in response to the attacks against their Arab brothers and sisters by the elites—even if it were not they who paid with their lives for these criminal actions. Perhaps the only blind attacks which could clearly be characterised as pure Al-Qaida attacks were those carried out on 9/11 which, as Gore Vidal^[5], among others, has shown, were probably tolerated by the US elite—for its own reasons. Furthermore, these attacks were not followed up by other attacks against the US, confirming once more the inability of the supposedly almighty Al-Qaida to create the dynamic of a systematic struggle against the US elite. It is clear that, in contrast to the transnational elite's military power which is very much concentrated due to the US military's hegemonic role, terrorist counter violence is, as a rule, decentralised. 'Al Qaida' therefore functions much more as an ideology than as a 'transnationally organized terrorist network'.

However, the transnational elite's portrayal of Al-Qaida as the bogey enables the elite to achieve a series of critical aims:

- First, this portrayal 'legitimizes' the elite's attacks against any country's regime or

movement labeled as ‘rogue’, (a label usually assigned to a regime or movement which obstructs the full integration of a country into the New World Order, e.g. Yugoslavia^[6] Afghanistan^[7], Iraq^[8]). This is a major indication of the fact that political globalization, which is a necessary complement of capitalist neoliberal globalization,^[9] is also carried out by the transnational elite and not by nation-states.

- Second, it justifies the present descent of western representative ‘democracy’ into a kind of parliamentary totalitarianism in which two main political parties (usually one neoliberal and the other social-liberal) succeed each other in power and offer no real choice to the electorate, as they basically implement the same neoliberal policies at the economic level and almost identical totalitarian policies at the political level (USA, UK, Australia, Germany, Spain etc). This descent into parliamentary totalitarianism is supposedly part of the defense against the attack by the ‘terrorist transnational superpower’, which does not hesitate to kill innocent women and children in London or Madrid. This is, apparently, in contrast to the ‘guilty’ masses of women and children in Iraq, Afghanistan or Palestine who have been dying every day as ‘collateral damage’ or, yesterday, as victims of the embargo! Still, according to the transnational elite, the ‘terrorist’ attacks are not aimed against its own violence but against ‘democracy’ itself —something that presumably necessitates democracy’s effective demolition for the sake of its protection!
- Third, in the present climate, the elite easily passes the measures of economic violence which constitute capitalist neoliberal globalization. Today, socio-economic rights that were conquered after long struggles (e.g. the right to full employment, the right to work an eight-hour day, the right to a pension in old age etc) are being systematically undermined or even demolished for the sake of economic (neo) liberalism. At the same time, many civil liberties —which used to be the main element of political liberalism and, therefore, the necessary complement of economic liberalism, e.g. the right to strike and to demonstrate, freedom of speech etc— are being effectively infringed. Britain, the birthplace of liberalism, is rapidly creating a semi-police state in which the security services have been empowered to ‘shoot to kill’ anyone they consider to be a terror suspect, and the social-liberal party of Tony Blair has just announced plans to penalize thought that would be considered ‘to glorify or justify terrorism’, and to deport people who "visit particular bookshops and websites"!

However, what is perturbing is not the behaviour of the elite, which —as was to be expected— utilised the bombings as a golden opportunity to make its control of the population even more oppressive. What is utterly worrying —because it marks an extremely dangerous descent into totalitarianism itself— is the passive response of the British people to the strangling of their freedoms. The reformist Left playing, as it does, a hegemonic role within the Left today, crucially helps this process. It is interesting to note that this Left includes also Trotskyites of the Socialist Workers Party variety, (enthusiastic members of the World and European Social Forum and protagonists of the ‘Stop the War’ alliance) who clearly put the violence of the oppressors and that of the oppressed into the same bag, as if the socialist revolutions of the past and the one they used to preach about for the future do not involve violence! This Left did not organize a single mass demonstration after the bombings to assign the blame for it to those ultimately responsible: the local elite and its ‘wars’ —as was the case in Spain. At the same time, Non Government Organisations (NGOs), which used to be the first to condemn state terrorism when this terrorism was orchestrated by ‘rogue’ regimes like those of Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq (something fully consistent with the parallel campaigns at the time to overthrow these regimes)

suddenly lost their voice when they had to condemn the clear example of state terrorism that was involved in the case of the execution of the Brazilian worker in London. Needless to add that it never occurred to them to demand the prosecution of Bush, Blair, Sharon and company for war crimes, as they so eloquently (and, 'by coincidence', successfully) did — with the enthusiastic backing of the transnational elite— in the cases of Milosevic and Saddam!

In conclusion, three types of action are possible today for those wishing to fight the new barbarism imposed by capitalist neoliberal globalization and the New World Order:

The first is the kind of violent resistance adopted by Islamist organizations, which often takes the form of blind "terrorism" because of the huge asymmetry of power between these organisations and their opponents. However, violent resistance can only be justified against an occupational army, or against a totalitarian regime that does not allow any non-violent political struggle which would challenge the existing socio-economic system, i.e. political violence is only justifiable, as Hannah Arendt^[10] put it, in the cases of revolution and collective or individual self-defence against state violence and violence emanating from the elites. Apart from these cases, as I have stressed elsewhere,^[11] the use of political violence is not justifiable because it is fundamentally incompatible with the democratic project, morally repugnant because it shows the same disrespect for human life as the bestial violence used by the elites in order to reproduce their power, and because, finally, it is a political blind alley since, in the last instance, it plays the game of the elites in expanding their control over the population.

The second is the one adopted by the reformist Left—and indirectly is encouraged by the transnational elite because it does not challenge the system itself: passive demonstrations and protests, strikes with reformist demands, the collection of signatures to texts protesting against specific elite policies etc. However, as I have pointed out elsewhere^[12], if this kind of activity could not produce any long-term effects during statist modernity when social democracy was at its peak (because of the objective and subjective conditions prevailing at the time), it is not difficult to work out that the prospects of similar activity today are nil since any significant reforms, achieved through the use of the electoral process and the state machine, are no longer possible. Furthermore, the potential of this strategy to radicalise consciousness and bring about a liberatory society has already been shown in History when similar strategies had led to either a reformist mentality and reforms which were easily reversible, or to totalitarian regimes.

The third way which, under today's conditions, seems to be the only realistic one, is to fight for the creation of an international antisystemic front which would unite all those anti-capitalist forces which share the belief that the way out of the present multidimensional crisis is through the direct challenging of the system of the market economy and representative 'democracy' (since it is the system itself which caused this crisis in the first place) and through the replacement of this system by a society in which all citizens, and not the elites in their name, will rule both the economy and polity. In other words, an antisystemic front that will struggle for the massive realisation of today's crucial choice between Democracy (in the sense of the reintegration of society with polity, economy and Nature) and the present barbarism.

* The above text is based on an article which was first published in the fortnightly column of Takis Fotopoulos in the mass circulation Athens daily *Eleftherotypia* on 6/8/2005

- [1] See N. Kotzias, ‘The transnational Terrorism’, *Eleftherotypia* (17/7/2005).
- [2] John Gray, ‘Look out for the enemy within’, *The Observer* (10/7/2005).
- [3] James Harkin, ‘Al-Qaida isn’t behind these bombings’, *The Independent* (1/8/2005).
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Gore Vidal, ‘The Enemy Within’, *The Observer* (27/10/2002).
- [6] T. Fotopoulos, ‘[The NATO war in the Balkans: the first war of the internationalised market economy](#)’, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (July 1999).
- [7] T. Fotopoulos, ‘[The global 'war' of the transnational elite](#)’, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (July 2002).
- [8] See Takis Fotopoulos, ‘[Iraq: the new criminal 'war' of the transnational elite](#)’, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (July 2003).
- [9] See T. Fotopoulos, ‘[Globalisation, the reformist Left and the Anti-Globalisation 'Movement'](#)’, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (July 2001).
- [10] H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1990).
- [11] See T. Fotopoulos, ‘The global 'war' of the transnational elite’
- [12] See T. Fotopoulos, ‘[Transitional strategies and the Inclusive Democracy project](#)’, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 2002).