I appreciate Hornborg’s two-pronged goal: not only does he demonstrate how technology operates as a mechanism of Western hegemony but he challenges us as social scientists to be wary of the role that we play in analyzing such inequities—to not reify the machine is to call global exchange by its real name: deliberate uneven development.

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Is there a coherent alternative to the dominance of American global power and neo-liberal hegemony? Alain Joxe in Empire of Disorder claims he has indeed found it in what some would consider the unlikeliest of places: the strong-state republican tradition of European political theory originating with Thomas Hobbes. This project of reclamation for the radical counter-hegemonic side of the most recalcitrant anti-democratic European thinker—save for Edmund Burke—of classical political thought is the most interesting and innovative part of the book. The rest is unfortunately uneven and unsystematic, full of standard anti-American left wing rhetoric with little in the way of the full analysis of international conflict and its relationship to globalization promised in the introduction (the first 75 pages of the book consists of a “dialogue” with Sylvère Lotringer). We do get a lot of empty functionalist talk about how the “balkanization” and “lebanonization” of the south, in the form of permanently stalled states of conflict referred to by Joxe as frozen peace (p. 92), serve to secure American power and to mask the true sources of global class conflict in a shroud of ethnic and religious hatred and violence.

The basic analytical strand running through the Empire of Disorder can be reconstructed as follows: the global American Empire, in its free-market, neo-liberal guise is the “acentral” manager of the post cold-war global (dis)order. This macro-chaos is characterized by the emergence of geographical zones of anarchy and brutal violence which the U.S. refuses to completely take control of, choosing instead a strategy of regulation and indirect management mediated through quick, targeted military strikes and a decentralized web of NGO’s that pick up the governance slack in the absence of a clear commitment to reconstruct the basis of political authority. While the current system limps along in this less than optimal state of affairs, the 9/11 attacks and the end of “new economy” finance bubble point to more ominous possibilities brewing within its interstices: a concentration of military might on a single territory and the digitalization and computerization of violent conflict which lead to war becoming pure technocratic management rather than the Clausewitzian “continuation of politics by other means”.

This is a key component of Joxe’s indictment of the current U.S. order. America refuses to truly take command of the global system, in other words it refuses to engage in truly global politics, instead taking the cowardly route of regulation of disorder, like a technician standing in front of complicated machine and simply turning knobs and switching levers. But this is anathema to Joxe, who is in many ways a 19th century romantic cloaked in neo-realist garb. In his view, the essence of war resides in its dose of passion (p. 7): technocratic management of war comes too close to the antiseptic management of death engineered during the Nazi holocaust (p. 10). This banality of American evil, to put it in Hannah Arendt’s terms, can only be challenged through a revitalization of the political form most beleaguered by the triumph of global markets and transnational corporations: the nation state. But as Joxe surveys the current global scene, all he sees are nations in crisis. Penetrated and neutralized by mobile capital, the traditional nation state has in this sense forsaken its original compact with its citizen-subjects. This is where Joxe deftly connects his critique of globalization and the decline of the nation-state, which are nothing new, with his radical reading of Hobbes and Clausewitz (chapter 3): he argues that they offer the guidelines to interpret the spate of “dirty little wars” currently littering the international scene as a return to a quasi-state of nature, where the political sovereignty that citizen-subjects bestowed on the nation during the last 200 years of nationalism’s classic phase is being taken back, and gradually devolving into micropolitical individual attempts at re-establishing some semblance of self-protection. This is the Behemoth to Hobbes’ Leviathan: the reverse of the process of subjugation to a central authority. But Joxe (to his credit) does not celebrate this development as some sort of crypto-subversive event. Here his realism triumphs over his romanticism: he views the future well-being of mankind as inexorably tied to politics. And the problem with these new forms of amorphous conflicts that make them even worse than the major European wars of the 19th and 20th centuries is that they are in essence “non-Clausewitzian” or not the continuation of politics by other means, but simply the expression of pure disorder and as such not a bridge between two states but a hellish interlude with no seeming end in sight.

What then is Joxe’s solution to this dire state of affairs? Nothing less than the revitalization of the republican form of governance, as exemplified by a
United States of Europe, a true moral and political alternative to U.S.–led global neo-liberalism. Joxe is aware that it is also a possibility that Europe can remain isolated and weak, a second rate core power. In this case, “Europe and its historic citizenship would resemble the Greek city-states under the Roman Empire” (p. 83). This is not an acceptable possibility. Europeans “...now have the new task to choose the form of chaos they prefer and try to achieve by steering away from the form of disorder proposed by American [sic] leaders.” (p. 109). Joxe imagines here a true historical paradox: Europe united in a confederacy very much like the United States, but in essence fulfilling what he implicitly perceives as the failed historical role of the latter. A United States of Europe would thus be a true global example of responsible democratic government that would be able to live up to article 10 of the 1793 declaration of human rights as drafted by Robespierre and quoted on page 113: “Society is obliged to guarantee the subsistence of all its members, either by procuring them work or by ensuring that those who are unable to work have the means to exist.” The continental tradition of an active, strong state is transformed in Joxe’s view to a truly subversive and counter-hegemonic possibility against the U.S.–led global (dis)order.

In the end, this is the weakest (because it is the most ideological) part of Joxe’s argument. He wants to pour the new wine of hyper-globalization into the old cask of French social democracy, this time blown up to (sometimes blindly Europhilic) continental size. This is fine as a utopian possibility, but it stands about the same chance of happening as the United States falling under the throes of techno-military fascism. The connection to Hobbes and Clausewitz, while theoretically intriguing, does not in any way remedy the weakness of the original contention. Chapter 7, “Violence and Globalism”, in which he tries to add some current theoretical strands to his arguments by differentiating between “logistical” (economically intensive) and “predatory” (militarily intensive) empires, owes a lot to Arrighi’s (1994) classification of the two logics of accumulation (MCM’ and CMC’) but in classic French intellectual fashion, citations to other contemporary authors in sociology and political science are absent, and the discussion does not connect with the other parts of the book.

In the end, the book suffers from one even more basic conceptual flaw: the United States is invariably seen as an all powerful evil, able to orchestrate and twist all events and occurrences in the international arena in its favor. But global conflict and disorder may be as much a consequence of U.S. hegemonic decline (Bergesen and Lizardo, 2003) as they are an aid to American global dominance. In fact, the perception of unbridled empire may be all that is left after hegemony. But in Joxe’s Eurocentric imaginary American weakness is unthinkable: the evil empire across the Atlantic is now stronger and more menacing than ever.

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Compiling the diverse works of 16 authors into one edited volume, *Varieties of Capitalism* makes a valuable contribution to the growing literature on comparative political economy. In the introductory chapter, Hall and Soskice advance the volume’s primary theoretical framework, namely that two distinct forms of capitalism operate across the advanced capitalist countries. At the center of their analysis lies a core question in macroeconomics: how does a complex economy successfully coordinate the diverse activities of myriad firms and other economic actors? A country’s answer to this question, the authors contend, identifies its prevailing form of capitalism. In the “liberal market economies” (LMEs) of the Anglo-dominated countries, free-market competition, producing equilibrium between supply and demand, coordinates most economic activity. Generally this arrangement creates an economy characterized by flexible labor markets, heavily capitalized stock markets, high levels of income inequality, and minimal state involvement in the economy. Conversely, in the “coordinated market economies” (CMEs) of eastern Asia and northern Europe, prominent non-market institutions resolve many important coordination problems. Under this economic system, what the authors call “deliberative institutions” provide regular opportunities for major economic actors—such as corporations, labor unions, banks, and the state—to collectively negotiate agreements on many core