

**Virilio's Parting Song:
The Administration of Fear
and the Privatisation of
Communism through the
Communism of Affect**

ATHINA KARATZOIANNI

University of Leicester, UK

ANDREW ROBINSON

Independent Scholar, UK

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Abstract

In *The Administration of Fear* (2012), Virilio returns to his old 1977 theme of speed as the driving force in politics. For Virilio, modern power involves ever-accelerating speed, but in this work he takes it further by arguing there is a 'cult of speed', which is not progress but its ideology, whereby fear is hidden by the ideology of progress. Speed's impact is mediated by affect, which produces social effects, such as loss of continuous action, ecological destruction, devitalisation, placelessness, fractal fragmentation, and group nationalisms or communalisms. This situation becomes particularly dangerous when the affective structures, which become viral are those – so common in turbo-capitalism – of fear, panic and hatred. As a result of telepresence, there is a 'synchronisation of emotion' which goes beyond the earlier standardisation of opinion. Virilio christens this regime the 'communism of affect' leading to new forms of politics: transition from a democracy of opinion to a democracy of emotion. In this article, we elaborate on this line of argumentation, and then discuss how Virilio may resonate and inspire analysis of contemporary political phenomena, such as affective polarisation in anti-immigrant fears driving the far right in Anglo-Saxon politics, securitisation in France, developmentalist acceleration and telepresence in India, and the dystopian extremes of the Chinese model.

Keywords

Virilio, communism, affect, fear, speed, turbo capitalism, acceleration

The Fast and the Furious
Here you go, way too fa-a-ast
Don't slow down, you gonna cra-a-ash
(The Primitives, 'Crash', 1988)

There is no democracy, only dromocracy
(Virilio, 1984: 69)

I. Introduction: The Need for a Political Economy of Speed

In his last published work translated into English, *The Administration of Fear* (2012, published in French in 2010), in a little semiotext(e) book of just over 90 pages, Virilio is interviewed by Bertrand Richard. Here he returns to his old 1977 theme of speed as the driving force in politics (*Speed and Politics*, 1986). For Virilio, modern power involves ever-accelerating speed, and this is a military (or “logistical”) imperative, to be faster than the adversary. While it has benefits for the fastest, the overall effects are devastating. Acceleration destroys natural and human-scale speeds and durations, reduces sensitivity (1994: 13), and causes economic and social crashes (2000: 67, 133). Virilio takes this further in this last work of his, where he suggests that speed has taken on a fetishistic position. Today there is a ‘cult of speed’, which is not progress but its ideology, whereby fear is hidden by the ideology of progress (Virilio, 2012: 43). ‘Promoting progress means that we are always behind: on a high-speed Internet, on our Facebook profile, on our email inbox. There are always updates to be made; we are the objects of daily masochism and under constant tension’. ‘We are in the illusion of being free from the space time duration.’ Illuminism, the cult of speed, is similar to sun-worship (ibid: 41, 76). It is also masochistic (ibid: 83). Illuminist ideology and the military way of seeing have suppressed important political questions, particularly about relativity and its violence (ibid: 42-3). In this article, we identify key lines of argumentation in his last work, and then discuss how they may resonate and inspire analysis of contemporary political phenomena occurring since its publication.

Virilio posits a need for a political economy of speed (ibid: 27). The cult of speed affects both time and space. We are now at the limits of human time and of the acceleration of reality (ibid: 33-35). Any passage beyond this point must also pass beyond humanity. Shared human time is ending. With it goes the possibility for capitalists to compete – a process which requires anticipation and response. Current societies have become arrhythmic or allow only one rhythm, that of acceleration.

Acceleration has replaced the fetishes of accumulation and information. For example, just-in-time production relies on flows of goods and not warehousing. It leads to 'turbo-capitalism' (ibid: 70). However, turbo-capitalism is self-defeating. Market confidence cannot be built, because it requires time (ibid: 76). There is therefore little confidence and a tendency to crashes: banks get bigger and bigger, until they can no longer be bailed out. There is a problem that speed gives advantage to the fastest, leading to an appearance of progress, but it also makes the world more and more unliveable (ibid: 69). It is hard to resist the appeal of success, even when it does immense damage.

Today, the magnitude of success is leading to ecological collapse. Shrinking time means slowly killing space. Space and being-in-the-world are also being polluted by scales beyond the human, destroying relationships to place and reality (ibid: 73-4). There is a lack of understanding of 'authentic human ecology' (ibid: 74), the conditions for a liveable life. The endpoint of this process is nihilism (ibid: 75). Time-space compression has social consequences. The earth becomes 'too small' (ibid: 10). This has some relationship to ecological crisis (ibid: 36) as well as to the stress arising from performance demands (ibid: 49). It poses threats to human existence, as a world of pure instantaneity would be unliveable (ibid: 35).

2. Speed Impact Mediated by Affect: Fear and Social Effects

The political impact of speed is mediated by the sociology, or micropolitics, of affect. For Virilio, the main affects of the present situation are fear, terror, panic, and insecurity. These are not simply individual feelings, or neuroses, but sociological effects which are, in a sense, proportionate and rational responses to the real situation. Uncontrolled acceleration and resultant instantaneity generate widespread fear (ibid: 10), even panic. Fear 'is now an environment', not localisable in space or time (ibid: 14). In this context, fear has become a socially-valued emotion (ibid: 8). It 'replaces faith' as the basis of social life (ibid: 9).

Virilio insists that the demand for security should not be dismissed as delusion. Rather, it is an effect of fear and danger (ibid: 52). However, it is politically exploited or mediated in ways which reinforce the root causes of fear. 'States are tempted to create

policies for the orchestration and management of fear' (ibid: 15). It thus becomes a powerful force of legitimation. Globalisation has destroyed the traditional basis for state legitimation: social insurance through welfare states. It has been replaced by a 'dual health and security ideology' which is a 'threat to democracy' (ibid: 15). This regime fuses security (e.g. CCTV and movement control) with health, and replaces identity with traceability (ibid: 46), where progress is replaced by individual survival (ibid: 52). However, the resultant political shifts intensify the problem. Fear leads to an experience of 'occupation', in both the military and psychological senses (ibid: 47). It involves a 'public power imposing a false and terrifying reality' (ibid: 17). Virilio likens the current situation to wartime France under Nazi occupation, where fear became a collective state: 'This occupation places us under surveillance, watching us, scanning us and evaluating us, revealing us and it is increasingly present, increasingly accepted as a fate, a destiny' (ibid: 47). There is a resultant threat of 'globalitarianism', 'the totalitarianism of totalitarianism' (ibid: 37).

Fear has become a positive value, as is shown by the spread of aesthetic practices (e.g. in architecture) which aim to produce discomfort. Fear creates 'an art which outlasts itself' (ibid: 57), which creates a lasting revulsion persisting after the situation itself, turning fear into an environment and a culture (ibid: 58). Fear has become 'cosmic'. Already cosmic in the nuclear age, it now 'covers the relationship to the universal' (ibid: 35). 'Panic has now become something mystical' (ibid: 35). The state of being suicidal – in the face of unbearable pressure – has become a sociological and not only a psychological condition (ibid: 48). Suicidal drives and aggression are both increasing, expressed respectively in risk-taking such as extreme sports, and the loss of older codes of honour among criminals (ibid: 53).

Pervasive fear often leads to drives to expel the other (ibid: 59). The inability to tolerate the presence of others (cf. Harvey, 2015) is pervasive in today's politics, whether the other is a demonised minority or outgroup – Muslims, immigrants, gay men – or takes the form of the threatening over-presence of the "microaggressions" of an ostensibly menacing ingroup, or centrist neoliberal attempts to create spaces impervious to the wrong kinds of users. This relationship to the other is often misunderstood. In mass individuality, the other is both excessively, smotheringly *close*, and always-already a competitor or even enemy – as in reality shows such as *Big Brother*, where participants

are forced into claustrophobic proximity while also being pitted in vicious competition (Terranova, 2004). This is not extimacy in the Lacanian sense, or Derridean supplementarity; it is a particular kind of socially constituted otherness-as-demonic arising from forced co-presence and forced Darwinistic competition. It is prefigured in Sartre's (2004: 132) explanation of how an other who is identical to the self can become demonic because of seriality.

According to Bird-David (1994), there are three conditions for experiences of immediacy: spatial proximity, temporal proximity and absence of representation. The current mediascape provides one of these – temporal proximity – while endlessly blocking the other two. Virilio has long been critical of what he terms “telepresence”, the style of instantaneity arising from new communications technologies. These technologies, entertainment, mass media, and science are seen as side-effects of military (or logistical) ways of seeing (e.g. 1994: 42-4). Telepresence has increased greatly in the neoliberal period. Virilio sees it tending towards the elimination of human vision and action. Virtual communication replaces material connection with connection via electromagnetic waves, until eventually, ‘programs... respond for us’ (2012: 72). There is also a close relationship between telepresence and panic. Telepresence means the same panic can be felt everywhere, simultaneously (Virilio, 2012: 29). Lacking rhythms because of instantaneity, society feels chaotic and causes panic (ibid: 89). Terror is not simply a psychological phenomenon. It is a kinetic effect of excessive acceleration (ibid: 21). There is thus a nexus of speed, telepresence, and fear within which present events unfold. Science is also part of the picture, because it is also part of the military-logistical discourse. In principle, science can be reconciled with Bergsonian approaches and the humanities, but at present is unable to achieve this because it has been ‘militarized’ (ibid: 80). There is thus an overreliance on quantitative approaches to the future – for example, risk analysis using probabilistic tools. The quantitative obsession is leading to qualitative effects, an ‘exobiological revolution’ (ibid: 62-63). Humanity is at risk of “protecting” itself out of existence. Virilio theorises a number of social effects of the matrix of ‘the administration of fear’:

- Loss of continuous action: Immediacy destroys the possibility of projects carried out through time, while the illusory omnipotence of technology destroys the imagination of the possible (ibid: 86).

- Ecological destruction: ‘The earth is too small for interindividual activity for the sake of interactivity, instantaneity and simultaneity’ (ibid: 73).
- Devitalisation: This new mediated ecology is devoid of vital power, and opposed to the ‘authentic ecology of the here and now’ (ibid: 54-5).
- Placelessness: Lacking homeplaces, people become constant nomads in permanent exodus, in flight from place to place (ibid: 64). At the same time, ubiquity and immediacy eliminate movement in time, creating immobility (ibid: 65). ‘The only solution now is to move constantly or flee definitively’ (ibid: 67).
- Fragmentation and atomisation: Globalisation has fragmenting effects. It leads to a mass individualism which is at once lonely, isolating and homogenising (ibid: 51). Virilio terms this a ‘fractal’ fragmentation (ibid: 50).
- Group nationalisms or communalisms: ‘When the world becomes uninhabitable, we turn to cliques and tribes, even if they are largely imaginary’ (ibid: 50). Much of today’s politics, from leftist identity politics to the alt-right, to political Islam, Hindu communalism, gang politics, Chinese or Japanese nationalism, and “ethnic cleansing”, are nationalist in the broad sense given by Perlman (1984).

3. Democracy of Emotion: The Privatisation of Communism through the Communism of Affect

Virilio provides a new spin on the old theme of an emerging hivemind. Authors like Kelly (1994) praised the emergence of a swarm intelligence, a networked hivemind which is more intelligent and powerful than any individual human. But what happens when a hivemind goes insane? Others have talked about the hivemind in terms of machinic enslavement, the incorporation of humans as mere components or nodes in a massive social machine (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984; Raunig, 2010; Berardi, 2016; Griziotti, 2019). Crucially, humans are plugged in at a “dividual” level of instantaneous emotional reactions and micro-choices, not as subjects or flows of desire. As a result, the hive-mind is replacing all forms of critical and compassionate distance. Like gaming NPCs (non-player characters), people increasingly feel what the system tells them to

feel. In effect, people feel and react as a hivemind, channelling collective emotions which flow through the mediascape. Off-message feelings and statements are increasingly criminalised. This situation becomes particularly dangerous when the feelings which become viral are those – so common in turbo-capitalism – of panic and hatred. This is characterised by a qualitative shift in social integration. As a result of telepresence, there is a ‘synchronisation of emotion’ which goes beyond the earlier standardisation of opinion (Virilio, 2012: 30). Virilio christens this regime the ‘communism of affect’ (ibid: 29) – communist in the sense of being-in-common. It replaces the earlier communism of interests (ibid: 30). Indeed, it is a privatisation of communism (ibid: 46), a communism of mass individuality experienced by each individual in an atomised way, even if simultaneously and coordinated with others.

The communism of affects leads to new forms of politics. Emotion rather than opinion becomes the basis for democracy: transition from a democracy of opinion to a democracy of emotion (ibid: 31). There is thus a focus on *instant* responses, without reality-checks or reflection. The immediacy and union of emotional outpourings destabilises human interaction and relationality, and also ‘time reserved for reflection’. Instead, emotional events favour ‘conditioned responses’ or reflexes, creating the ‘possibility of generalised panic’ (ibid: 31). ‘The quick-tempered, passengers of their passions, have replaced... the politically involved. This hurrying is a grave threat to democracy’ (ibid: 92). It leads to a kind of ‘information mob’ (ibid: 30), perhaps exemplified in twitterstorms and other pile-ons. Power becomes increasingly arbitrary. The law of the fastest is the law of the strongest, and emotive emergencies do not produce laws, but a kind of lawless power (ibid: 92). Yet the communism of affects also reinforces the very fear it channels. Without the ability to escape from a unified humanity, people are afflicted with claustrophobia and panic (ibid: 67). The hivemind, therefore, succumbs to a kind of delirium, driven by the sociologically prevalent affects. ‘We are facing the emergence of a real, collective madness reinforced by the synchronization of emotions... We have entered a time of generalized panic’ (ibid: 75).

In the contemporary ecstatic media event (Chouliaraki, 2006), we are witnessing a return to what is referred to in Wilhelm Reich’s (1980) work as emotional orgies – mass outpourings and satisfactions of emotions (usually those of the fight-or-flight-driven “emotional plague”) which override political life. Historically, fascism was built

on the monopolisation of sources of emotional production through the engineering of these kinds of events. There is clearly a kind of (reactive) libidinal investment involved in the emotional outpourings, intense communion, and opportunities for repressive desublimation of aggression which are provided by such events. Has the ecstatic media event now become the highest *jouissance* of the social hivemind?

Virilio is not simply recounting a sudden fall. Democracy was not healthy before. Totalitarian tendencies have been present for a while (1989: 100). The regime of nuclear terror led to military regimes overshadowing political life in the Fordist era (2012:22). Acceptance of aspects of military rule was viewed as a way to preserve democracy, but in fact it allowed democracy 'to survive in an illusory and very partial manner' (ibid: 23). Today, however, things are worse. The balance of nuclear terror has been complemented by an imbalance of asymmetrical terrorism, with similar deterrent effects (ibid: 28). This intersects with the "information bomb" to produce irrational emotional outpourings. There is a strong temptation for states to establish 'civil dissuasion' similar to nuclear deterrence, creating a state of fear which allows the 'suspension of controversial social situations' (ibid: 54). For instance, 9/11 caused 'a political panic that has lost all sense of scale', above and beyond individual panic (ibid: 28). This kind of dissuasion threatens democracy (ibid: 55). For Virilio, the world is moving towards hybrid regimes combining authoritarianism and turbo-capitalism (ibid: 90). The nation-state and the rule of law are being deconstructed, causing political disorientation (ibid: 91). This, says Virilio, happens because of a need to transfer executive power to 'automatic responses' to keep up with 'the immobile speed of instantaneity' (ibid: 33). Rulers seek to administer the condition of fear, rather than deal with its causes. The administration of fear is also administration of a nomadic, displaced population (ibid: 10).

Virilio also argues that things could get worse. Beyond the two threats of nuclear and information bombs, there is a new threat of an as yet unrealised genetic "bomb": the genetic engineering of replacement humans able to withstand ecological collapse and further acceleration (ibid: 42, 60-1). If such augmented humans are created, then 'discrimination would reach catastrophic proportions' as earlier fantasies of racial superiority are actualised (ibid: 84). Planners would likely select for traits such as obedience, and "natural" humans would be subject to discrimination, if not extinction.

The resulting beings may be automatons more than humans, and may lack the ability to perform 'the art of the possible', and hence, avert catastrophe (ibid: 88). The "genetic bomb" could complete the destruction of humanity, without solving the crisis for which it is designed.

4. Virilio's Gaze on Contemporary Political Phenomena

Three years after the publication of *The Administration of Fear*, an emotional orgy occurs in France, focused on the Bataclan attack (a massacre by ISIS supporters, probably in retaliation for military setbacks and civilian casualties in Syria). The president seeks emergency powers, and nobody in parliament or the judiciary dares oppose him. A veritable police state is brought in, "temporarily" – but the emergency powers keep being renewed for over two years. Innocent people are rounded up – including families, friends, and co-residents of suspects. Human rights groups recount thousands of Muslims terrorised through house raids and arbitrary arrests. Dissidents are put under house arrest without trial. Demonstrations are periodically banned. New thought-crime laws are used to jail people whose publicly expressed emotional reactions deviate from the official script. As with 9/11 and 7/7, it was as if the population lost their minds in an outpouring of mediatised emotion. They allowed the state to give itself the power to dismantle the remnants of the social-democratic set-up in France. The brief delirium passed quickly, and social struggle resumed – but it was too late to rescind its effects.

Migrants in Calais, seeking to reach Britain, face even more severe abuse than before. Human rights groups document beatings, arbitrary arrests, destruction of property, deliberate attempts to destroy camps and other infrastructure, and people abandoned in cold conditions in the middle of nowhere. The solidarity group, No Borders, faces intense persecution, such as activists being banned from the country. In 2017, Macron repeals the state of emergency – but passes many of its powers into permanent law. The vicious repression of the Yellow Vest movement – with dozens seriously injured and several dead – and police atrocities in Calais, the ZAD (Zone to Defend), the *banlieues*, and at a rave in 2019 where Steve Maia Caniço died after being forced into the River Loire, follow directly from this: "The senior police officer Grégoire Chassaing in charge of policing that night's Nantes edition of the "Fête de la musique" (an annual open celebration of music introduced all over France by the Socialist-Communist

coalition government in 1982) has subsequently been awarded the “*médaille de la sécurité intérieure*” by the Minister of the Interior (Home Office)’ (Matthews, 2019).

In the chilled climate, the state pushes through anti-labour laws, using police repression against the resulting protests. As an ‘antiproduction assemblage’, the state treats logics stemming from the ‘social principle’ as a repressed real, the exclusion of which underpins its own functioning. The securitisation discourse of ‘new threats’ is a statist response to the uncertainty and fear brought on by the proliferation of opposing network forms of organisation, a new form of pluralisation against which the state routinely reacts. This response is a statist form of terror attempting to fix network flows in place. The scarcity and fear resulting from state terror ensures responses to this structural violence by reactive networks, while paradoxically also exacerbating reactive tendencies within social movements (Karatzogianni and Robinson, 2017: 258; see also our book on active/reactive networks in the world system, 2009).

The international echoes of the moral panic spread across borders. Resultant representations of Europe under siege play a vital role in Trump’s 2015 election campaign. Trump is the first ‘internet meme’ president, where within the context of irony, belief and idiocy of the deep vernacular web, online actions start to have offline consequences (Tuters, 2018). The far right, driven by widely-stoked fears of foreigners and hatred of a corrupt political establishment, becomes increasingly violent. A series of massacres reveal a recurring pattern: an aggrieved, highly distressed, and socially discarded member of the “surplus population”; a libidinal investment in violence, in lieu of active desire; and a set of discourses only a shade more extreme than those circulating in the conservative media, which provide easy pseudo-explanations and scapegoats (cf. Berardi, 2015; Tiqqun, 1999; Ames, 2006). Massacres generate ecstatic media events, with compulsory emotional outpourings. Wildly falsified theories of “radicalisation” and conveyor belts are reeled-out unchanged from 2001 to explain and respond to the new trend. The perpetrator, already a social outsider, is easily framed as a Hollywood villain and subject to murder, torture (such as solitary confinement without contact), and attempts to put them in an Orwellian memory hole (for example, by suppressing their social media profiles, their writings, their trial testimonies, even their names) – all in an attempt to erase traces of a subjectivity deemed likely to contaminate others. This is a rerun of a counterinsurgency logic trialled on Muslims,

now extended to the right, and also available against the left (already Italy and Russia have used it in this way). In its stated goal, it is hopelessly ineffective (as the failure of the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the rise of ISIS show); however, it persists as a site of passive-aggressive sadistic cathexis. Nobody dares to compare these events to the much more widespread police and military killings, or the many routine causes of death which afflict millions, or even to ask whether current counterinsurgency policies *work*. The hivemind is watching; failure to register the correct emotional response in personally tailored self-expressions is taken as sympathy with the attacker, and therefore as risk. Social credit, Western style.

This time, the emotional orgy goes further. Attempts are made to shut down imageboard (chan) sites where a killer's posts were allegedly posted. Imageboards are free-for-all environments with no particular politics, much like the internet of the 1990s. 8chan is singled out as a "far-right" site – even though most of its content is apolitical and several popular boards are leftist. The failure to proactively exercise censorship in line with the hivemind's wishes is enough to fuel a pile-on. Unelected internet oligopolistic corporations (Smyrnaio, 2018), which control vital hubs of internet infrastructure, exercise their unaccountable privilege to pick and choose which users receive their services in the name of social responsibility. Ostensible radicals, counterinsurgency agencies, and corporate despots thus coalesce, Schmittian-style, in an authoritarian coalition. An article on CNN declares that companies which violate the blockade should themselves be boycotted in a cascading series of guilt-by-association (Kornbluh, 2019). People are not to be allowed "safe havens" or "silos"; they are to integrate or die. The article echoes social credit systems, with their crowdsourced repression and duty to disassociate.

Moral panics have been a major feature of Anglo-American politics since the 1970s, and have more recently been depicted as fusing into a permanent state of panic (Hall et al., 1978; Mawby and Gisby, 2009; Critcher, 2011). This latent panic fixates repeatedly on new objects, generating a recurring authoritarian-populist politics. A supposed knife crime epidemic triggers moral panic in the UK. The cause is previous crackdowns: police activities in large cities have nudged drug dealers towards smaller cities, leading to avoidable turf wars. The government responds by calling for more prison places, draconian restrictions on accused youths, and more stop-and-search,

claiming to wish to reverse the fear, making criminals rather than civilians afraid. ‘We need to reverse the balance of fear’, booms the Home Secretary, ‘I want the criminals to be afraid – not the public’ (BBC, 2019). The irony is that most searches are carried out against people who turn out to be innocent. The police are terrorising the civilian population. Perhaps all civilians are criminals now; perhaps the Home Secretary wants civilians to be afraid of the government and the police. A few days before the announcement, another emotional orgy had ensued after a police officer, carrying out a search on dubious grounds, was injured with a machete after assaulting the suspect. A rational response might conclude that this shows that searches, and resulting police violence, increase danger; people aggressively confronted and manhandled for little or no reason, often with racist and classist overtones, are more likely to react in rage or panic than those left alone. The cybernetic feedback loop, mediated by moral panics, is, instead, self-reinforcing: the harmful effects of repression fuel further repression.

Meanwhile, governments continue to peddle the same anti-immigrant fears which drive the far-right. Millions are held in concentration camps around the edges of Europe and America; thousands die because of deliberately hardened borders; unknown numbers die because of deportations to situations of danger. In the UK, the Conservative Party, whose austerity policies have killed tens of thousands, are not cut off from the internet; right-wing newspapers continue to push racist fake news uninterrupted. One can only conclude that it is the targets’ marginality, and not their dangerousness or extremity, which singles them out for persecution. It is crystal-clear that this model of repression serves the emerging quasi-totalitarian order of global trusted networks perfectly (Karatzogianni and Gak, 2015). In the 2000s, the right were seduced into embracing this model by Islamophobia and fear of crime. Today, the left is similarly seduced by the communism of affects: the privatization of communism, as a community of synchronized emotions. Very much as Virilio argues: ‘Socialism has not found its relationship to postmodern individuality’. For instance, resistance to sharing economy platforms takes form in the shape of competing ideological productions, such as the multifarious and easily cooptable ‘commons’ and ‘platform cooperativism’, who end up involuntary promoters of their own alienation and exploitation, consolidating the deterioration of the very digital labor conditions they purportedly seek to transform (Karatzogianni and Matthews, 2018).

Amidst American hegemonic decline, China may be emerging as the new hegemon, with a model highly inflected by cybernetic control. Social credit systems – in which access to social goods is mediated by a score which is affected by minor deviance, online comments, and even the actions and comments of one's friends – are already being rolled-out, along with biometric ID and facial recognition cameras. The region was long cut off from the internet. According to Freedom House (2018), China is now exporting this technology worldwide, creating a global police state. The dystopian extremes of the Chinese model are found in the restive region of Xinjiang, where CCTV, metal detectors and internet monitoring are integrated with police stops, searches of mobile phones, bag checks, and other repressive measures in an unprecedented cybernetic police state. People flagged as suspicious are disappeared into “re-education camps” which now contain over a million people – mostly youths from the region's precariat. With this apparatus of terror in place, the state is attacking aspects of Islamic and Uighur culture, reportedly demolishing mosques, banning beards and Uighur names, and enforcing pork-eating and loyalty oaths (Rajagopalan, 2017; Byler, 2018). Behind all this is a “politics of fear”: reactions to mass revolt in Xinjiang in 2009, framed in China as ethnic pogroms against Han Chinese, to various actions of armed separatists, and the government's fear of a Soviet-style collapse. With each emotional orgy, each state rescinds some of the rights and powers which separate it from the nightmare of Xinjiang. How many crises would it take, for every country to become Xinjiang?

Indeed, different variations of the totalitarianism of moralised panic are seen worldwide since the publication of *The Administration of Fear*. In lockdowns, civilian life is paralysed and civilians terrorised at gunpoint, so as to convert entire cities into sterile police-military zones. In the Philippines, Duterte launches a vicious “war on drugs” which amounts to the mass murder of poor people. Far-right presidents in Brazil and Colombia similarly encourage death squads. The intersection of the politics of fear with developmentalist acceleration and telepresence has perverse political effects. In India, the Hindu populist Modi eliminated low-denomination notes accounting for most of the country's currency. The impact has been disastrous, from a resultant economic contraction to disruption for middle-class Indians, to intense difficulties for the poor, many of whom lack bank accounts. The immediate effect was panic (Fernandez and Gomes, 2018; Rodrigues, 2017; Safi, 2018). The move was condemned

by opposition parties, pro-poor campaigners and orthodox economists alike. Yet, still today, it remains overwhelmingly popular. The pretext – disrupting crime and so-called “black money” – led to the labelling of critics as corrupt criminals. The symbolic combination of high-tech fantasies of “modernisation” with kneejerk hatred of “criminals” generates support for a suicidal and murderous economic policy. It has now been confirmed that the policy had no impact whatsoever on economic crime (Safi, 2018). Indians have thus been lured by emotive politics into sacrificing freedom, equality and welfare to a politics of fear characterised, not by real effectiveness against feared adversaries, but by tautological cybernetic signalling. In Turkey, a coup attempt was followed by a state of emergency in which vast numbers have been fired, jailed, and tortured. In Europe, autonomous spaces are under attack. Germany creates “danger zones” in resistant areas, in which extraordinary police powers apply, under the pretext of risk. Macron backs down on the issue of the ZAD – and then sends thousands of police on a destructive rampage there anyway. The Greek state threatens to destroy the countercultural hub of Exarcheia on the pretext of fighting “lawlessness”, while freeing a cop whose actions were most definitely lawless (Bejan, 2019).

5. Conclusion

The Administration of Fear is certainly a pessimistic account consistent with decades of Virilio’s dystopia-evoking scholarship. In *Speed and Politics*, Virilio writes, “The time has come, it seems, to face the facts: revolution is movement, but movement is not a revolution. Politics is only a gear shift, and revolution only its overdrive” (1984: 8). And elsewhere: “But beyond this, what should we think of this revolution that will soon be entirely reduced to a permanent Assault on Time?” (ibid: 46). Virilio, in *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, foresees that the development of high technical speeds would ‘result in the disappearance of consciousness as the direct perception of phenomena that inform our own existence’ (2009: 114).

Yet Virilio also suggests various directions for possible resistance. Virilio has previously argued for ecological movements as a counterpoint to endocolonialism (Virilio, 1990). Aspects of this position still appear. For instance, he argues that, in the 1940s, resistance focused in the countryside and communities. Smaller-scale groups could escape from the community of fear in this way (2012: 20). However, he is

sceptical of ideas such as degrowth, because he does not believe there can be local solutions (ibid: 56). Another proposal draws from earlier work resisting 'universal chronopolitics' (2000: 109) for 'chronodiversity', the valorisation of multiple durations. At present, high-speed stock markets negate other speeds (2012: 88). 'We have broken the melody that was called life in common for the sake of the communism of affects' (ibid: 89). This seems to require practices of slowing-down, so as to recreate time-space for other durations. However, his main proposals in *The Administration of Fear* involve awareness-raising and critical analysis. He calls for *revelation not revolution* (ibid: 71, added italics).

Lastly here, we may ask: Revelation of what? Perhaps following Virilio's image thought, resistance to the looming ecological disaster, brought on by turbo-capitalist acceleration, involves revealing the ineffectiveness of employing affective power and identitarian-style privatised communism to support inequality and geosocial struggle discourses.

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Athina Karatzogianni is an Associate Professor in Media and Communication at the University of Leicester and researches the use of digital technologies by emerging sociopolitical and economic formations, social movements, protest and insurgency groups.

Email: athina.k@gmail.com

Andrew Robinson is an independent scholar working on critical theory, everyday life and the politics of oppression and resistance. Recent work includes pieces on precarity, Deleuze and the social symptom, anarchism and war, a post-colonial critique of global justice theory and post-left anarchist utopianism.