

The Terrorist Threat

World Risk Society Revisited

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DOES 11TH September stand for something new in history? There is one central aspect for which this is true: 11th September stands for the complete collapse of language. Ever since that moment, we've been living and thinking and acting using concepts that are incapable of grasping what happened then. The terrorist attack was not a war, not a crime, and not even terrorism in the familiar sense. It was not a little bit of each of them and it was not all of them at the same time. No one has yet offered a satisfying answer to the simple question of what really happened. The implosion of the Twin Towers has been followed by an explosion of silence. If we don't have the right concepts it might seem that silence is appropriate. But it isn't. Because silence won't stop the self-fulfilling prophecies of false ideas and concepts, for example, war. This is my thesis: the collapse of language that occurred on September 11th expresses our fundamental situation in the 21st century, of living in what I call 'world risk society'.

There are three questions I discuss in this article:

First, what does 'world risk society' mean?

Second, what about the *politics* of world risk society, especially linked to the terrorist threat?

Third, what are the methodological consequences of world risk society for the social sciences?

What Does World Risk Society Mean?

What do events as different as Chernobyl, global warming, mad cow disease, the debate about the human genome, the Asian financial crisis and the September 11th terrorist attacks have in common? They signify different dimensions and dynamics of world risk society. Few things explain what I

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mean by global risk society more convincingly than something that took place in the USA just a few years ago (Benford, 2000). The US Congress appointed a commission with the assignment of developing a system of symbols that could properly express the dangers posed by American nuclear waste-disposal sites. The problem to be solved was: how can we communicate with the future about the dangers we have created? What concepts can we form, and what symbols can we invent to convey a message to people living 10,000 years from now?

The commission was composed of nuclear physicists, anthropologists, linguists, brain researchers, psychologists, molecular biologists, sociologists, artists and others. The immediate question, the unavoidable question was: will there still be a United States of America in 10,000 years time? As far as the government commission was concerned, the answer to that question was obvious: USA forever! But the key problem of how to conduct a conversation with the future turned out to be well nigh insoluble. The commission looked for precedents in the most ancient symbols of humankind. They studied Stonehenge and the pyramids; they studied the history of the diffusion of Homer's epics and the Bible. They had specialists explain to them the life-cycle of documents. But at most these only went back 2000 or 3000 years, never 10,000.

Anthropologists recommended using the symbol of the skull and crossbones. But then a historian remembered that, for alchemists, the skull and bones stood for resurrection. So a psychologist conducted experiments with 3-year-olds to study their reactions. It turns out that if you stick a skull and crossbones on a bottle, children see it and immediately say 'Poison' in a fearful voice. But if you put it on a poster on a wall, they scream 'Pirates!' And they want to go exploring.

Other scientists suggested plastering the disposal sites with plaques made out of ceramic, metal and stone containing many different warnings in a great variety of languages. But the verdict of the linguists was uniformly the same: at best, the longest any of these languages would be understood was 2000 years.

What is remarkable about this commission is not only its research question, that is, how to communicate across 10,000 years, but the scientific precision with which it answered it: it is not possible. This is exactly what world risk society is all about. The speeding up of modernization has produced a gulf between the world of quantifiable risk in which we think and act, and the world of non-quantifiable insecurities that we are creating. Past decisions about nuclear energy and present decisions about the use of gene technology, human genetics, nanotechnology, etc. are unleashing unpredictable, uncontrollable and ultimately incommunicable consequences that might ultimately endanger all life on earth (Adam, 1998, 2002).

'Risk' inherently contains the concept of control. Pre-modern dangers were attributed to nature, gods and demons. Risk is a modern concept. It presumes decision-making. As soon as we speak in terms of 'risk', we are talking about calculating the incalculable, colonizing the future.

In this sense, calculating risks is part of the master narrative of first modernity. In Europe, this victorious march culminates in the development and organization of the welfare state, which bases its legitimacy on its capacity to protect its citizens against dangers of all sorts. But what happens in world risk society is that we enter a world of *uncontrollable risk* and we don't even have a language to describe what we are facing. 'Uncontrollable risk' is a contradiction in terms. And yet it is the only apt description for the second-order, *unnatural*, human-made, manufactured uncertainties and hazards beyond boundaries we are confronted with.

It is easy to misconstrue the theory of world risk society as Neo-Spenglerism, a new theory about the decline of the western world, or as an expression of typically German *Angst*. Instead I want to emphasize that world risk society does not arise from the fact that everyday life has generally become more dangerous. It is not a matter of the *increase*, but rather of the *de-bounding* of uncontrollable risks. This de-bounding is three-dimensional: spatial, temporal and social. In the spatial dimension we see ourselves confronted with risks that do not take nation-state boundaries, or any other boundaries for that matter, into account: climate change, air pollution and the ozone hole affect everyone (if not all in the same way). Similarly, in the temporal dimension, the long latency period of dangers, such as, for example, in the elimination of nuclear waste or the consequences of genetically manipulated food, escapes the prevailing procedures used when dealing with industrial dangers. Finally, in the social dimension, the incorporation of both jeopardizing potentials and the related liability question lead to a problem, namely that it is difficult to determine, in a legally relevant manner, who 'causes' environmental pollution or a financial crisis and who is responsible, since these are mainly due to the combined effects of the actions of many individuals. 'Uncontrollable risks' must be understood as not being linked to place, that is they are difficult to impute to a particular agent and can hardly be controlled on the level of the nation state. This then also means that the boundaries of private insurability dissolve, since such insurance is based on the fundamental potential for compensation of damages and on the possibility of estimating their probability by means of quantitative risk calculation. So the hidden central issue in world risk society is *how to feign control over the uncontrollable* – in politics, law, science, technology, economy and everyday life (Adam, 2002; Beck, 1992, 1999; Featherstone, 2000; Giddens, 1994; Latour, 2002; van Loon, 2000).

We can differentiate between at least three different axes of conflict in world risk society. The first axis is that of *ecological* conflicts, which are by their very essence global. The second is *global financial* crises, which, in a first stage, can be individualized and nationalized. And the third, which suddenly broke upon us on September 11th, is the threat of global terror networks, which empower governments and states.

When we say these risks are global, this should not be equated with a homogenization of the world, that is, that all regions and cultures are now equally affected by a uniform set of non-quantifiable, uncontrollable risks

in the areas of ecology, economy and power. On the contrary, global risks are per se unequally distributed. They unfold in different ways in every concrete formation, mediated by different historical backgrounds, cultural and political patterns. In the so-called periphery, world risk society appears *not* as an *endogenous* process, which can be fought by means of autonomous national decision-making, but rather as an *exogenous* process that is propelled by decisions made in other countries, especially in the so-called centre. People feel like the helpless hostages of this process insofar as corrections are virtually impossible at the national level. One area in which the difference is especially marked is in the experience of global financial crises, whereby entire regions on the periphery can be plunged into depressions that citizens of the centre do not even register as crises. Moreover, ecological and terrorist-network threats also flourish with particular virulence under the weak states that define the periphery.

There is a dialectical relation between the unequal experience of being victimized by global risks and the transborder nature of the problems. But it is the transnational aspect, which makes cooperation indispensable to their solution, that truly gives them their global nature. The collapse of global financial markets or climatic change affect regions quite differently. But that doesn't change the principle that everyone is affected, and everyone can potentially be affected in a much worse manner. Thus, in a way, these problems endow each country with a common global interest, which means that, to a certain extent, we can already talk about the basis of a global community of fate. Furthermore, it is also intellectually obvious that global problems only have global solutions, and demand global cooperation. So in that sense, we can say the principle of 'globality' (Albrow, 1996; Robertson, 1992), which is a growing consciousness of global interconnections, is gaining ground. But between the potential of global cooperation and its realization lie a host of risk conflicts.

Some of these conflicts arise precisely because of the uneven way in which global risks are experienced. For example, global warming is certainly something that encourages a perception of the earth's inhabitants, both of this and future generations, as a community of fate (Held et al., 1999). But the path to its solution also creates conflicts, as when industrial countries seek to protect the rainforest in developing countries, while at the same time appropriating the lion's share of the world's energy resources for themselves. And yet these conflicts still serve an *integrative* function, because they make it increasingly clear that global solutions must be found, and that these cannot be found through war, but only through negotiation and contract. In the 1970s the slogan was: 'Make love, not war'. What then is the slogan at the beginning of the new century? It certainly sounds more like 'Make *law*, not war' (Mary Kaldor).

The quest for global solutions will in all probability lead to further global institutions and regulations. And it will no doubt achieve its aims through a host of conflicts. The long-term anticipations of unknown, transnational risks call transnational risk communities into existence. But in the

whirlpool of their formation, as in the whirlpool of modernity, they will also transform local cultures into new forms, destroying many central institutions that currently exist. But transformation and destruction are two inescapable sides of the necessary political process of experimentation with new solutions.

Ecological threats are only one axis of global risk conflict. Another lies in the risks of globalized financial markets. Crisis fluctuations in the securities and finance markets are as old as the markets themselves. And it was already clear during the world crisis of 1929 that financial upheavals can have catastrophic consequences – and that they can have huge political effects. The post-Second World War institutions of Bretton Woods were global political solutions to global economic problems, and their efficient functioning was an indispensable key to the rise of the Western welfare state. But since the 1970s, those institutions have been largely dismantled and replaced by a series of ad hoc solutions. So we now have the paradoxical situation where global markets are more liberalized and globalized than ever, but the global institutions set up to control them have seen their power drastically reduced. In this context, the possibility of a 1929-size catastrophe certainly cannot be excluded.

Both ecological and financial risks incorporate several of the characteristics we have enumerated that make risks politically explosive. They go beyond rational calculation into the realm of unpredictable turbulence. Moreover, they embody the struggle over the distribution of ‘goods’ and ‘bads’, of positive and negative consequences of risky decisions. But above all, what they have in common is that their effects are deterritorialized. That is what makes them *global* risks. And that is what sets in motion the formation of global risk communities – and world risk society.

But while they show similarities, there are also important differences between the various kinds of global risk that significantly influence the resultant conflict. One is that environmental and technological risks come from the ‘outside’. They have physical manifestations that then become socially relevant. Financial risks, on the other hand, originate in the heart of the social structure, in its central medium. This then leads to several other differences. Financial risks are more immediately apparent than ecological risks. A consciousness leap is not required to recognize them. By the same token, they are more individualized than ecological risks. A person and her/his next-door neighbour can be affected in very different ways. But, this aspect does not make financial threats potentially less risky. On the contrary, it increases their potential speed and reach. The economy is the central subsystem of modern society. And because all other subsystems depend on it, a failure of this type could be truly disastrous. So there are very compelling reasons to consider the world economy as another central axis of world risk society.

A further distinction can be made, however, between ecological and financial threats on the one hand, and the threat of global terrorist networks on the other. Ecological and financial conflicts fit the model of modernity’s

self-endangerment. They both clearly result from the accumulation and distribution of 'bads' that are tied up with the production of goods. They result from society's central decisions, but as unintentional side-effects of those decisions. Terrorist activity, on the other hand, is intentionally bad. It aims to produce the effects that the other crises produce unintentionally. Thus the principle of *intention* replaces the principle of *accident*, especially in the field of economics. Much of the literature on risk in economics treats risk as a positive element within investment decisions, and risk-taking as a dynamic aspect linked to the essence of markets. But investing in the face of risk presupposes trust. Trust, in turn, is about the binding of time and space, because trust implies committing to a person, group or institution over time.

This prerequisite of active trust, in the field of economics as well as in everyday life and democracy, is dissolving. The perception of terrorist threats replaces *active trust* with *active mistrust*. It therefore undermines the trust in fellow citizens, foreigners and governments all over the world. Since the dissolution of trust multiplies risks, the terrorist threat triggers a self-multiplication of risks by the de-bounding of risk perceptions and fantasies.

This, of course, has many implications. For example, it contradicts the images of the *homo economicus* as an autarkic human being and of the individual as a decider and risk taker. One of the consequences thereof is that the principle of *private* insurance is partly being replaced by the principle of *state* insurance. In other words, in the terrorist risk society the world of *individual* risk is being challenged by a world of *systemic* risk, which contradicts the logic of economic risk calculation. Simultaneously, this opens up new questions and potential conflicts, namely how to negotiate and distribute the *costs* of terrorist threats and catastrophes between businesses, insurance companies and states.

Therefore, it becomes crucial to distinguish clearly between, on the one hand, the conventional enemy image between conflicting states and, on the other, the 'transnational terrorist enemy', which consists of individuals or groups but not states. It is the very transnational and hybrid character of the latter representation that ultimately reinforces the hegemony of already powerful states.

The main question is: who defines the identity of a 'transnational terrorist'? Neither judges, nor international courts, but powerful governments and states. They empower themselves by defining who is *their* terrorist enemy, *their* bin Laden. The fundamental distinctions between war and peace, attack and self-defence collapse. Terrorist enemy images are *deteritorialized, de-nationalized and flexible state constructions that legitimize the global intervention of military powers as 'self-defence'*. President George W. Bush painted a frightening picture of 'tens of thousands' of al-Qaida-trained terrorists 'in at least a dozen countries'. Bush uses the most expansive interpretation: 'They are to be destroyed.' Bush's alarmism has a paradoxical effect: it gives Islamic terrorists what they want most – a

recognition of their power. Bush has encouraged the terrorists to believe that the United States really can be badly hurt by terrorist actions like these. So there is a hidden mutual enforcement between Bush's empowerment and the empowerment of the terrorists.

US intelligence agencies are increasingly concerned that future attempts by terrorists to attack the United States may involve Asian or African al-Qaida members, a tactic intended to elude the racial profiles developed by US security personnel. Thus the internal law enforcement and the external counter-threat of US intervention not only focus on Arab faces, but possibly on Indonesian, Filipino, Malaysian or African faces. In order to broaden terrorist enemy images, which, to a large extent, are a one-sided construction of the powerful US state, expanded parameters are being developed so as to include networks and individuals who may be connected to Asian and African terrorist organizations. This way, Washington constructs the threat as immense. Bush insists that permanent mobilization of the American nation is required, that the military budget be vastly increased, that civil liberties be restricted and that critics be chided as unpatriotic.

So there is another difference: the *pluralization* of experts and expert rationalities, which characterizes ecological and financial risks, is then replaced by the gross *simplification* of enemy images, constructed by governments and intelligence agencies without and beyond public discourse and democratic participation.

So there are huge differences between the external risks of ecological conflicts, the internal risks of financial conflicts and the intentional terrorist threat. Another big difference is the speed of acknowledgement. Global environmental and financial risks are still not truly recognized. But with the horrific images of New York and Washington, terrorist groups *instantly* established themselves as new global players competing with nations, the economy and civil society in the eyes of the world. The terrorist threat, of course, is reproduced by the global media.

To summarize the specific characteristics of terrorist threat: (bad) intention replaces accident, active trust becomes active mistrust, the context of individual risk is replaced by the context of systemic risks, private insurance is (partly) replaced by state insurance, the power of definition of experts has been replaced by that of states and intelligence agencies; and the pluralization of expert rationalities has turned into the simplification of enemy images.¹

Having outlined their differences, it should be no surprise that the three kinds of global risk, that is ecological, financial and terrorist threat, also interact. And terrorism again is the focal point. On the one hand, the dangers from terrorism increase exponentially with technical progress. Advances in financial and communication technology are what made global terrorism possible in the first place. And the same innovations that have individualized financial risks have also *individualized war*.

But the most horrifying connection is that all the risk conflicts that are stored away as potential could now be intentionally unleashed. Every

advance from gene technology to nanotechnology opens a 'Pandora's box' that could be used as a terrorist's toolkit. Thus the terrorist threat has made everyone into a disaster movie scriptwriter, now condemned to imagine the effects of a home-made atomic bomb assembled with the help of gene or nanotechnology; or the collapse of global computer networks by the introduction of squads of viruses and so on.

Politics of World Risk Society

There is a sinister perspective for the world after September 11th. It is that uncontrollable risk is now irredeemable and deeply engineered into all the processes that sustain life in advanced societies. Pessimism then seems to be the only rational stance. But this is a one-sided and therefore truly misguided view. It ignores the new terrain. It is dwarfed by the sheer scale of the new opportunities opened up by today's threats, that is the axis of conflicts in world risk society.

People have often asked: 'What could unite the world?' And the answer sometimes given is: 'An attack from Mars.' In a sense, that was just what happened on September 11th: an attack from our 'inner Mars'. It worked as predicted. For some time, at least, the warring camps and nations of the world united against the common foe of global terrorism. I would like to suggest six lessons that can be drawn from this event.

The first lesson: in an age where trust and faith in God, class, nation and progress have largely disappeared, humanity's common fear has proved the last – ambivalent – resource for making new bonds. In his book *The Public and Its Problems* (1954), John Dewey argues that it is not a decision, but its consequences and risk that create a public in the post-traditional world. So the theory of world risk society is *not* just another kind of 'end-of-history' idea; this time world history does not end with the resolution of political and social tensions, as Marx and Fukuyama believed, but with the end of the world itself. Nevertheless, what the global public discourse on global risks creates is a reason for hope, since the political explosiveness of world risk society displays a potential enlightenment function. The perceived risk of global terrorism has had exactly the opposite effect than that which was intended by the terrorists. It has pushed us into a new phase of globalization, the globalization of politics, the moulding of states into transnational cooperative networks. Once more, the rule has been confirmed that resistance to globalization only accelerates it. Anti-globalization activists operate on the basis of global rights, markets and networks. They both think and act in global terms, and use them to awaken global awareness and a global public. The term 'anti-globalization movement' is misleading. Many fight for an alternative globalization – global justice – rather than anti-globalization.²

The second big lesson of the terrorist attack is: national security is no longer national security. Alliances are nothing new, but the decisive difference about this global alliance is that its purpose is to preserve *internal* and not external security. All the distinctions that make up our standard picture

of the modern state – the borders that divide domestic from international, the police from the military, crime from war and war from peace – have been overthrown. It was precisely those distinctions that defined the nation state. Without them, it is a zombie idea. It still looks alive, but it is dead.³

Foreign and domestic policy, national security and international cooperation are now all interlocked. The only way to deal with global terror is also the only way to deal with global warming, immigration, poison in the food chain, financial risks and organized crime. In all these cases, national security *is* transnational cooperation. Since September 11th, ‘terrorist sleepers’ have been identified in Hamburg, Germany, and many other places. Thus, German domestic policy is now an important part of US domestic and foreign policy. So are the domestic as well as foreign, security and defence policies of France, Pakistan, Great Britain, Russia and so on.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack, the state is back, and for the old Hobbesian reason – the provision of security. Around the world we see governments becoming more powerful, and supranational institutions like NATO becoming less powerful. But at the same time, the two most dominant ideas about the state – the idea of the *national* state, and the idea of the *neoliberal* state – have both lost their reality and their necessity. When asked whether the \$40 billion that the US government requested from Congress for the war against terrorism didn’t contradict the neoliberal creed to which the Bush administration subscribes, its spokesman replied laconically: ‘Security comes first.’

Here is the third lesson: September 11th exposed neoliberalism’s shortcomings as a solution to the world’s conflicts. The terrorist attacks on America were the Chernobyl of globalization. Just as the Russian disaster undermined our faith in nuclear energy, so September 11th exposed the false promise of neoliberalism.

The suicide bombers not only exposed the vulnerability of western civilization but also gave a foretaste of the conflicts that globalization can bring about. Suddenly, the seemingly irrefutable tenets of neoliberalism – that economics will supersede politics, that the role of the state will diminish – lose their force in a world of global risks.

The privatization of aviation security in the US provides just one example, albeit a highly symbolic one. America’s vulnerability is indeed very much related to its political philosophy. It was long suspected that the US could be a possible target for terrorist attacks. But, unlike in Europe, aviation security was privatized and entrusted to highly flexible part-time workers who were paid even less than employees in fast-food restaurants.

It is America’s political philosophy and self-image that creates its vulnerability. The horrible pictures of New York contain a message: a state can neoliberalize itself to death. Surprisingly, this has been recognized by the US itself: aviation has been transformed into a federal state service.

Neoliberalism has always been a fair-weather philosophy, one that works only when there are no serious conflicts and crises. It asserts that only globalized markets, freed from regulation and bureaucracy, can remedy

the world's ills – unemployment, poverty, economic breakdown and the rest. Today, the capitalist fundamentalists' unswerving faith in the redeeming power of the market has proved to be a dangerous illusion.

This demonstrates that, in times of crises, neoliberalism has no solutions to offer. Fundamental truths that were pushed aside return to the fore. Without taxation, there can be no state. Without a public sphere, democracy and civil society, there can be no legitimacy. And without legitimacy, no security. From these premises, it follows that, without legitimate forums for settling national and global conflicts, there will be no world economy in any form whatsoever.

Neoliberalism insisted that economics should break free from national models and instead impose transnational rules of business conduct. But, at the same time, it assumed that governments would stick to national boundaries and the old way of doing things. Since September 11th, governments have rediscovered the possibilities and power of international cooperation – for example, in maintaining internal security. Suddenly, the necessity of statehood, the counter-principle of neoliberalism, is omnipresent. A European arrest warrant that supersedes national sovereignty in judicial and legal enforcement – unthinkable until recently – has suddenly become a possibility. We may soon see a similar convergence towards shared rules and frameworks in economics.

We need to combine economic integration with cosmopolitan politics. Human dignity, cultural identity and otherness must be taken more seriously in the future (Beck, 2002a, 2002b). Since September 11th, the gulf between the world of those who profit from globalization and the world of those who feel threatened by it has been closed. Helping those who have been excluded is no longer a humanitarian task. It is in the West's own interest: the key to its security. The West can no longer ignore the black holes of collapsed states and situations of despair.

To draw the fourth lesson I pick up my statement again that no nation, not even the most powerful, can ensure its national security by itself. World risk society is forcing the nation-state to admit that it cannot live up to its constitutional promise to protect its citizens' most precious asset, their security. The only solution to the problem of global terror – but also to the problems of financial risk, climate catastrophe and organized crime – is transnational cooperation. This leads to the paradoxical maxim that, in order to pursue their national interest, countries need to denationalize and transnationalize themselves. In other words, they need to surrender parts of their autonomy in order to cope with national problems in a globalized world. The zero-sum logic of mutual deterrence, which held true for both nation-states and empires, is losing its coherence.

In this context, then, a new central distinction emerges between sovereignty and autonomy. The nation-state is built on equating the two. So from the nation-state perspective, economic interdependence, cultural diversification and military, judicial and technological cooperation all lead to a loss of autonomy and thus sovereignty. But if sovereignty is measured in terms

of political clout – that is, by the extent to which a country is capable of having an impact on the world stage, and of furthering the security and well-being of its people by bringing its judgements to bear – then it is possible to conceive the same situation very differently. In the latter framework, increasing interdependence and cooperation, that is, a *decrease* in autonomy, can lead to an increase in sovereignty. Thus, sharing sovereignty does not reduce it; on the contrary, sharing actually enhances it. This is what cosmopolitan sovereignty means in the era of world risk society.

Fifth lesson: I think it is necessary to distinguish clearly between on the one hand, not national, but *global unilateralism* – meaning the politics of the new American empire: *the Pax Americana* – and on the other hand, two concepts of multilateralism or the multilateral state: namely the *surveillance* state and *cosmopolitan* state. Before and after September 11th, US foreign policy changed rapidly from national unilateralism to the paradox of a ‘global unilateralism’. In the aftermath of the Afghanistan war, the idea of a ‘new world order’ has taken shape in Washington’s think-tanks and the US is supposed to both make and enforce its laws. The historian Paul Kennedy believes that the new American empire will be even more powerful than the classical imperial powers like Rome and Britain.

This is America’s core problem today: a ‘free society’ is based on openness and on certain shared ethics and codes to maintain order, and Americans are now intimately connected to many societies that do not have governments that can maintain these ethics and order. Furthermore, America’s internal security depends on peoples who are aggressively opposed to the American way of life. For America to stay America, a free and open society, intimately connected to the world, the world has to become – *Americanized*. And there are two ways to go about it: open societies either grow from the bottom up or freedom, democracy and capitalism are imposed from the outside by (the threat of) external intervention. Of course, there is the alternative: to affirm and value real international cooperation. Real cooperation will require the Bush administration to swallow a word that even September 11th didn’t quite force down: ‘multilateralism’. In effect, the message from Washington to Europe and the other allies is: ‘We will do the cooking and prepare what people are going to eat, then you will wash the dirty dishes.’

On the other hand, we have to distinguish between two forms of multilateralism as well: surveillance states and cosmopolitan states. *Surveillance states* threaten to use the new power of cooperation to build themselves into fortress states, in which security and military concerns will loom large and freedom and democracy will shrink. Already we hear about how western societies have become so used to peace and well-being that they lack the necessary vigour to distinguish friends from enemies. And that priorities will have to change. And that some of our precious rights will have to be sacrificed for the sake of security. This attempt to construct a western citadel against the numinous Other has already sprung up in every country and will only increase in the years to come. It is the sort of phenomenon out of which

a democratic authoritarianism might arise, a system in which maintaining flexibility towards the world market would be premised on increasing domestic rigidity. Globalization's winners would get neoliberalism, and globalization's losers would get the other side of the coin: a heightened fear of foreigners, born out of the apprehension of terrorism and bristling with the poison of racism.

This is my sixth and final lesson: if the world is to survive this century, it must find a way to civilize world risk society. A new big idea is wanted. I suggest the idea of the *cosmopolitan state*, founded upon the recognition of the otherness of the other (Beck, 2002b).

National states present a threat to the inner complexity, the multiple loyalties, the social flows and fluids of risks and people that world risk society has caused to slosh across national borders. Conversely, nation states cannot but see such a fuzzing of borders as a threat to their existence. Cosmopolitan states, by contrast, emphasize the necessity of solidarity with foreigners both inside and outside the national borders. They do this by connecting self-determination with responsibility for (national and non-national) Others. It is not a matter of limiting or negating self-determination. On the contrary, it is a matter of freeing self-determination from its national cyclopean vision and connecting it to the world's concerns. Cosmopolitan states struggle not only against terror, but against the *causes* of terror. They seek to regain and renew the power of politics to shape and persuade, and they do this by seeking the solution of global problems that are even now burning humanity's fingertips but which cannot be solved by individual nations on their own. When we set out to revitalize and transform the state in a cosmopolitan state, we are laying the groundwork for international cooperation on the basis of human rights and global justice.

Cosmopolitan states can theoretically be founded on the principle of the national indifference of the state. This is a concept that is redolent of the way in which, during the 16th century, the Peace of Westphalia ended the religious civil war we call the '30 years war' through the separation of church and state. In a similar manner, the separation of state and nation could be the solution to some global problems and conflicts of the 21st century. For example: just as the a-religious state finally made possible the peaceful coexistence of multiple religions side by side, the cosmopolitan state could provide the conditions for multiple national and religious identities to coexist through the principle of constitutional tolerance.

We should seize this opportunity to reconceive the European political project as an experiment in the building of cosmopolitan states. And we could envision a cosmopolitan Europe, whose political force would emerge directly not only out of the worldwide struggle against terrorism, ecological and financial risks, but also out of both the affirmation and taming of European national complexity.

Methodology of World Risk Society

The consequences of the theory of world risk society are not only political but also methodological: world risk society questions the mostly non-reflective fundamental premises of social science, that is 'methodological nationalism'. *Methodological nationalism* takes the following ideal premises for granted: it equates societies with nation-state societies, and sees states and their governments as the cornerstones of a social science analysis. It assumes that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations, which, on the inside, organize themselves as nation-states and, on the outside, set boundaries to distinguish themselves from other nation-states. It goes even further: this outer delimitation, as well as the competition between nation-states, represents the most fundamental category of political organization.

A sharp distinction should be made between *methodological* nationalism on the one hand and *normative* nationalism on the other. The former is linked to the social sciences observer perspective whereas the latter refers to the negotiation perspectives of political actors. In a normative sense, nationalism means that every nation has the right to determine itself within the frame of its cultural distinctiveness. Methodological nationalism assumes this normative claim as a socio-ontological given and simultaneously links it with the most important conflict and organization orientations of society and politics. These basic tenets have become the main perception-grid of social science. Indeed the social science stance is rooted in the concept of nation-state. It is a nation-state outlook on society and politics, law, justice and history, which governs the sociological imagination.

These premises also structure empirical research, as in, for example, the choice of statistical indicators, which are almost always exclusively national. A refutation of methodological nationalism from a strictly empirical viewpoint is therefore difficult, nigh impossible, because many statistical categories and investigation processes are based upon it.

The comparative analyses of societies, international relations, political theory, a significant part of history and jurisprudence all essentially function on the basis of methodological nationalism. This is valid to the extent that the majority of positions in the contemporary social and political science debate over globalization can be systematically interpreted as transdisciplinary reflexes linked to methodological nationalism. It is therefore of historical importance for the future development of social science that this methodological nationalism, as well as the categories of perception and disciplinary organization that pertain to it, be theoretically, empirically and organizationally reassessed.

The critique of methodological nationalism should not be mistaken for the thesis of the end of the nation-state – just as, when criticizing methodological individualism, one does not necessarily promote the end of the individual. Nation-states (as all investigations have shown) will continue to thrive or will be transformed into transnational states. At any rate, the

decisive point is that *national organization as a structuring principle of societal and political action can no longer serve as a premise for the social science observer perspective*. In this sense, social science can only react to the challenge of globalization adequately if it manages to overcome methodological nationalism, and if it manages to raise empirically and theoretically fundamental questions within specialized fields of research and to thus elaborate the foundations of a *cosmopolitan* social and political science.

Cosmopolitan social science entails the systematic breaking up of the reciprocal confirmation process through which the national perspective of politics and society as well as the methodological nationalism of political science, sociology, history and law approve and strengthen each other in their definitions of reality. It thus also tackles (what had previously been *analytically* excluded as a sort of silent cartel of divided fundamental convictions) the various development versions of de-bounded politics and society, corresponding research questions and research programmes, the strategic expansions of the national and international political field as well as basic transformations in the domain of state, politics and society.

This paradigmatic reconstruction of social science from a national to a cosmopolitan perspective can be understood and explained as a 'positive problem shift' (Lakatos, 1970), that is, in the sense of a broadening of horizons for social science research. 'When politics and society are de-bounded, the consequence is that the labels "national" and "international" can no longer be separated. Considering the fact that, to an increasing extent, governing takes place in de-bounded spaces', the increasingly problematic distinction – though it is a distinction typical of the field – between 'domestic' and 'foreign' politics, as 'national governmental politics' and 'international relations', becomes definitely obsolete. Thus it is not only a matter of integrating national explanation factors in the analysis of international political processes, or of re-evaluating the international determinants of national political processes, as was pursued in numerous approaches over the past years. Rather, it is a matter of questioning the very separation between 'inside' and 'outside' (Grande and Risse, 2000). To sum up, traditional conceptualizations of terms and constructing borders between domestic and foreign politics or society and state are less and less appropriate to tackle the challenges linked to the world risk society.

Therefore, it becomes necessary systematically to raise the question of a paradigmatic change, which is characterized by the conceptual opposition of methodological nationalism and methodological cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2002a, 2002b) (see Table 1). The horizon opened up by this distinction reveals a new configuration of the world. Previously, the national cosmos could be decomposed into a clear distinction between inside and outside. Between the two, the nation-state governed and order was established. In the inner experiential space, the central themes of work, politics, law, social inequality, justice, cultural identity were negotiated against the background of the nation, which was the guarantor of a collective unity of action. In the international realm, that is, in the outer experiential field, the

Table 1 Paradigmatic Change from a National Perspective to a Cosmopolitan Social Science

		Political action	
		<i>National perspective</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan perspective</i>
Political science	<i>Methodological nationalism</i>	Nation-state-centred understanding of society and politics both in the political practice and science	Critique of ‘zombie categories’ of nation-state organized societies, cultures and politics. ⁴
	<i>Methodological cosmopolitanism</i>	Opening up of the nation-state-centred society and politics, sociology and political science: New Critical Theory with a cosmopolitan intent	The cosmopolitan society and its enemies: what do a cosmopolitan society, state and regime mean?

corresponding concept of ‘multiculturalism’ developed. Multiculturalism, by delimiting and defining the foreign, mirrored and crystallized national self-image. Thus, the national/international distinction always represented more than a distinction, it actually functioned as a permanent self-affirming prophecy.

Against the background of cosmopolitan social science it becomes suddenly obvious that it is neither possible to distinguish clearly between the national and the international, nor, in a similar way, convincingly to contrast homogeneous units. National spaces have become de-nationalized, so that the national is no longer national, just as the international is no longer international. This entails that the foundations of the power of the nation-state are collapsing both from the inside and the outside, and that new realities are arising, a new mapping of space and time, new coordinates for the social and the political, coordinates which have to be theoretically and empirically researched and elaborated.⁵

However, the paradigmatic opposition between (inter)nationalism and cosmopolitanism does not establish a logical or temporal exclusivity, but an ambivalent transitional coexistence, a new concurrence of non-concurrents.

Thus world risk society makes heavy demands on social science. Social science must be re-established as a transnational science of the reality of de-nationalization, transnationalization and ‘re-ethnification’ in a global age – and this on the levels of concepts, theories and methodologies as well as organizationally. This entails that the fundamental concepts of

'modern society' must be re-examined. *Household, family, class, social inequality, democracy, power, state, commerce, public, community, justice, law, history, politics* must be released from the fetters of methodological nationalism and must be reconceptualized and empirically established within the framework of a cosmopolitan social and political science which remains to be developed. So this is quite a list of understatements. Nevertheless, it has to be handled and managed if the social sciences are to avoid becoming a museum of antiquated ideas.

Notes

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1. Of course, September 11th was a moment of decision. This marks the decision the Bush administration took. There are alternatives: for example, strengthening of international law, choosing the 'cosmopolitan alternative' (see later).
2. But, of course, there is a new attraction of nihilism in combination with religious fanaticism, and there are important roots and movements of this violent nihilism in the West as well.
3. This does not imply, of course, that the concept of state is becoming irrelevant. The opposite is true: it has to be redefined in the context of world risk society.
4. For the critique of zombie categories see Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002).
5. This is the research agenda of the 'Reflexive Modernization' Research Centre at Munich University; see Beck et al. (2002).

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