

INTRODUCTION

Oligarchic Corporations and New State Formations

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Current configurations of global, imperial, and state power relate to formations of oligarchic control. A major feature of this is the command of political organizations and institutions by close-knit social groups (families or familial dynasties, groups of kin, closed associations, or tightly controlled interlinked networks of persons) for the purpose of the relatively exclusive control of economic resources and their distribution, these resources being vital to the existence of larger populations. For many theorists, the state, throughout history and in its numerous manifestations, was born in such processes and continues to be so. Moreover, the oppressive powers of state systems (e.g., the denial or constraining of human freedoms, the production of poverty and class inequalities) and the expansion of these in imperial form are a consequence of oligarchic forces.

A diversity of political theorists of different persuasions (from anarchists and Marxists to liberals) have developed such themes. This essay continues their argument but is concerned to show that the oligarchic formation of political processes and, indeed, the character of the state itself are undergoing significant transformation(s) or transmutation(s) in the current historical moment. The state takes multiple forms and defies most attempts to arrive at an adequate definition of long-standing worth. The once broadly accepted Weberian definition of the state as that authority with the legitimate monopoly of violence over defined territory seems to be undergoing challenge in many global regions. Difficult to define, it is nonetheless a hard, if often different, shifting and uncertain, imagined and felt reality in the experience of most. Rather than define the state in some absolutist sense, what I intend to do is to explore its formation as a commanding and differential organizational complex of power in relation to oligarchic processes.

What is broadly referred to as globalization (a catch-all term that is conceptually problematic, despite its trendy appeal) is widely conceived of as subversive of the state, particularly in its modern, territorially defined nation-state form. But the concept of globalization disguises the emergence to unchallenged (if momentary)

global imperial dominance of the US, whose own claims to international sovereignty reduce the sovereignty of many nation-states. Globalization, in other words, is both the cause and the effect of the emergence to political and economic dominance of a relatively new political formation (with many historical antecedents) that I will refer to as the oligarchic-corporate state formation.

Although they do not describe it in the same terms, Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (2000) essentially recognize this fact and point to many of the key distinctions of this formation from other kinds of state orderings that continue in the environment of what I call oligarchic-corporate political emergence. I am well aware that the particular contemporary rise of oligarchic-corporate power might be better described as having state effects (see Trouillot 2001) rather than being the development of a relatively original state formation.¹ But writing of state effects might reduce an understanding of the force and implications of what is taking form, which, while not reducible to what is often conventionally assumed to be state orders (frequently conceived in historical realities once dominated by the still far from defunct nation-state), are indeed state formations, though of a relatively original kind.

Anthropologists have been recently struggling anew with the concept of the state, and this often appears to have a political agenda of its own, relevant to debate within the subject. The state—specifically, the European and North American nation-state—is conceived of as being the context in which a static, totalized, hierarchical, deterministic, overhomogenized understanding of power and society took shape. The critique of the state and the attempt to reconceptualize it by some anthropologists (see Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Geertz 2004) are also a critique of anthropology and, by implication, the participation of its proponents (even if unintentionally) in the institution of the humanly destructive and oppressive orders of the state at home and abroad. Many of the points are well taken and reflect an attempt to forge a new, more open-ended anthropology that stresses the hybrid, flexible, contested, and negotiated aspects of human realities that an earlier anthropology is held to have neglected.

Contemporary globalization became of intense interest for many anthropologists (mainly post-modern and oriented within the North American intellectual frame) because it highlighted the limitations of a previous anthropology and attacked the state orders that gave rise to such an anthropology. Despite ambivalence about the effects of globalization, there is a sense that some of the disasters that have come in its train have something to do with the dying struggles of the nation-state in the context of globalization. While undoubtedly there is much truth in this, these anthropologists have overlooked the emergence of what I regard as new kinds of state formations and political orders, their structural processes, and original forms of sovereignty or “wild sovereignty” (Kapferer 2004a, 2004b; see also Aretxaga 2003). There has been a tendency to oppose globalization to the state rather than concentrating on the new state formations that are emerging within globalizing processes and, indeed, are integral to it. A re-energized economic determinism and related rationalism have sometimes burst onto the anthropological scene (see, e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 2003), though usually with an insufficient attention to the kinds

of socio-political processes that are taking shape (and within which the economic itself becomes conditioned).

Perhaps more problematic, some of the anthropological writing against the state—for example, right down to new methodological recommendations as part of the overhauling of anthropology—is organic to new forms of political-economic formations and processes. The virtual business-management-speak of some anthropology inspired within contemporary globalization insufficiently recognizes that it manifests some of the ideology that is vital in the coming to dominance of new oligarchic-corporate forms (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 2003; Marcus 1998, 1999). By so doing, anthropologists run the risk of blunting their critical edge by becoming blind to important dimensions of the political context (the often new state formation in which they are participant) for the production of their own innovative discourse.

A broad argument I develop is that contemporary globalization and what are deemed to be its effects (the failure of the regulative function of post-colonial states, the porosity of borders, the privatization of erstwhile state-controlled institutions of redistribution) are features of oligarchic processes coming into new internal and external relations with the political-bureaucratic machinery of nation-states (orders, I add, that are far from defunct). More importantly, I explore the engagement of these processes in the generation of critical shifts in the orders of state power and the formation of new kinds of state structure.

A note of caution before I start. I often use the concepts of oligarchy and corporation together. This is to indicate not only a connection but also the social dynamics of the connection. Broadly, in my usage oligarchy refers to a particular organization of power usually founded in dynastic processes tied to family and kinship. Corporation refers to a body that routinely comes together, undifferentiatedly, to pursue a common interest, which, in the contemporary context, is the unmitigated search for economic profit. The corporation in some legal definitions has all the rights of a person; although it may be internally complex and differentiated, it acts and responds as a singular entity (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2003). As anthropologists (Peters 1991; Smith 1960) have noted, there is a similarity between modern notions of the corporation and powerful kin-based structures that act in concert to protect their political and economic resources. Such kin-based orders are described as corporations, their unitary, self-directed interest overcoming any propensity of individuals within them to act independently.

Modern corporate power indeed can have a similar overwhelming sense and is in ironic contradiction of the very contemporary individualism that is often the environment of corporate action and an ideological support for its corporate pursuits.² Describing corporations as oligarchies refers to their internal system of autocratic power (frequently closed and exclusive), based in principles of personal association, patterns of patronal distribution, and ideals of loyalty often oriented in the real or fictive idiom of family, kinship, and lineage (see Roland Kapferer this volume). The oligarchic power in corporations (sometimes the basis for their foundation or else emergent within them) is a source both of their potency and often of their vulnerability.

Oligarchic Formations

Oligarchic formations are present throughout recorded history and themselves took a state form that was apparent in ancient systems (e.g., Mesopotamia, Athens, Carthage) and feudal Europe, and was especially evidenced in Italian city-states, Venice and Florence being both outstanding examples. Political strife in ancient systems was repeatedly expressed in rivalries between and within oligarchies, which also embroiled loose and shifting alliances of dependents or ordinary citizenry within the wider population (e.g., the conflicts between factions relating to populist reforms involving the Gracchi in imperial Rome, or the much later struggles between the Guelphs and Ghibellines throughout Europe.)

However, I suggest that in the modernist period (in Europe with the formation of centralized, territorially bounded nation-states in Europe and later in North America), oligarchic forces defined their economic interests and power through varying kinds of alliances with mass populist movements and sentiment through which they gained control of the machinery of state, developing it away from absolutist monarchical domination. Indeed, revolutionary movements (increasingly of left/right designation) over the last couple of centuries centered their struggles in relation both to entrenched oligarchic interests and to newly forming oligarchies developing from the expansion of trading ventures (as a result of Old and New World exploration and colonial settlement). This gathered pace from the Protestant Reformation on, coming to a head in the seventeenth century through to recent times.

The kind of state that came into being was, of course, highly various, often depending on the degree of popular involvement in its formation or the degree to which already entrenched political and economic interests took a part or controlling direction in the creation of their state-political circumstances of existence (e.g., the Cromwellian *vis-à-vis* the French Revolution). Broadly, the modern nation-state in its variety of forms—nationalist elite, egalitarian democracy, fascist, socialist, or class (oligarchic) dictatorship (frequently military)—took shape each with its particular compact with previous or newly created oligarchic interests. These interests were by and large pursued through the order of the state (or subordinated to state concerns); its machinery was either captured by oligarchic groups, or else such groups themselves were captured by populist forces in control of state apparatuses who were external to the social orders of local oligarchies. This latter aspect was the extreme feature of the fascist nationalisms of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy, whereby family corporate-industrial concerns either formed willing and beneficial compacts with political interests or were forced into compliance or simply stolen through policies of racial terror and extermination, as in Germany.

Not only was mass populism a critical element in the formation of most modern nation-states (both dictatorships and democracies), it was also a vital factor in the creation of state-regulated systems for the distribution of wealth. Oligarchic interests were constrained within national orders even as they were oriented to the control of the political machinery of these states (by a diversity

of means, from dictatorial coups to democratic elections). The regulation of oligarchic practice (with or without the approval of oligarchs) operated in the interests of oligarchic-industrial and other economic ventures, both in controlling competition (e.g., through anti-monopoly legislation) and in maintaining, as Marx argued in *Capital*, a reserve army of labor. (The close connection between advertising, consumerism, and nationalism has been widely noted and is a factor in the influence of oligarchic interests in nation-state control.) The nation-state system permitted the expansion and further development of capital and simultaneously operated to order the mass of nationally defined populations in expansive capitalist interest (see Arrighi 1994; Harvey 2003).

The current moment indicates both continuities with the relatively recent past and also new developments. One major shift is the breaking of oligarchic power away from the containing and regulative political order of the state. The development of the modern corporation has been of importance in this, further facilitated by the development of new technologies, especially relating to cyberspace, and new kinds of productive labor use. As summarized by Hardt and Negri (2000), production is now decentered and widely distributed (across different productive systems, such as tribal, peasant, etc.) in a post-modern 'putting-out' system articulated via computer technology—what Hardt and Negri label as 'post-Taylorist Toyotatism'. The state has become, in many instances, a hindrance to oligarchic-corporate expansion. The rhizomic mushrooming of corporations, interlocking directorships, and shadow companies has been met with state constraints, but corporations have found creative ways of escaping them and the revenues that states had been able to command.

Organized extra- and trans-state oligarchic and corporate orders have garnered an increasing political significance (as a function of their economic power and other influences)—their organizations operating as independent political structures *without* a dependent population (apart from shareholders whose interests are thoroughly in accord with oligarchic and corporate self-interest). This key difference from state polities (who must enter into some kind of social contract with their populations, an essential aspect of state-promulgated nationalist ideologies), as these have hitherto developed, results in a relative lack of concern for populations except as consumers. Corporations are more or less immune from populist social demands and are likely to be little interested in long-term programs of social development that do not serve oligarchic and corporate self-interest. Rather, their approach is more in the direction of charitable assistance. The US is an example. In many ways, it can be described as an oligarchic state par excellence, whose charitable foundations are the key institutions of public support but whose focus is intensely tuned to oligarchic-corporate concerns.

In the contemporary era of corporate dominance over the state or release from state constraint, the privatization of public-state programs is not merely a means of opening avenues for capital expansion but a way of increasing the indebtedness of populations (which, of course, is a major form of political and social control). In addition, it removes the capacity of populations to politically challenge corporations (especially in contexts where there are either no unions

or weak ones); indeed, the democratic possibility of the mass (or multitude, as Hardt and Negri 2004, following Marx, would say) is dramatically reduced. While oligarchies and corporations may have some interest in controlling populations, their capacity to move outside the state (and effect shifts in state orders, to corporatize them), paradoxically can—at least in the short term—be an effective means of subordinating the mass to oligarchic and corporate control.

Thus, I am arguing that the growing independence of oligarchies and corporations from state control is producing a change in the state form. I am also suggesting that the nature of oligarchic and corporate orders is also changing. Corporations and oligarchies are assuming increasingly state-like potencies but without the obligations of states. They are the global state form—states without borders that are, in many ways, not reducible to notions of the state born in a history of nation-state formation.³

Corporate and Oligarchic State Effects: The Present in the Past and Contemporary Mutations

The modern transnational corporation and aspects of a global oligarchic power were prefigured in the trading companies of the largely northern European colonial and imperial expansions from the sixteenth century on. They acted like predatory states with virtually no moral obligation except to make money. In this, they were much like modern corporations (see Bakan 2004). But brought within state regulative control, they assumed a clear state, often bureaucratic, form; effectively, they became parallel states.⁴ This is evident in the British East India Company, the British West Africa Company, and, of course, the British South Africa Company, which in southern Africa was virtually the state (or a state within a state) right through to the end of colonial rule and after. The mining companies of southern Africa operated in a socially constitutive way, creating a society within the society of the encompassing colonial state.

Contemporary corporate-oligarchic activities continue patterns evident in the colonial era (as Ho 2004 stresses in the context of the World Trade Center attacks). They are involved in the creation simultaneously of mobile global elites and of what could be called a global working class. Perhaps Marx is more relevant today than ever before, as far as the creation of class relations is concerned—a point that Hardt and Negri (2004) optimistically elaborate upon and indicate in their development of the concept of the multitude. My own view is that this multitude, relatively powerless before the coherent, organized, and often socially cocooned elites sponsored by company oligarchies, is weaker than in earlier eras, highly fragmented, and much more vulnerable (see Kapferer 2002).

A major distinction of the past from the present is that corporations and trading oligarchies were largely based in the nation-state, empowered by it as they were ultimately regulated by it. Fundamentally, they were formations of the state or nation-state (the freebooting extension of the state that acted as if it was independent) that operated a state-like bureaucratic system, which continued

through into post-colonial state orders. Apparently independent of the state, they were not bound by state legitimating moralities but were nevertheless under the cover of the state, acting in its interests.

In the current context, the situation is almost reversed. Nation-states are becoming the instrumentality of oligarchic empires and corporations. (The influence of News Corp and Fox is one example, but there are many others less publicly visible.) These, as I have said, are not only independent of states (are deterritorialized states) but have a state form all their own, managerial rather than bureaucratic, with a tension to person-centered autocracy stressing flexibility rather than rule-driven impersonality (Sennett 2000). Moreover, the modern state (the nation-state) is transforming in the corporate direction rather than the other way around, as in the past.

Corporate forms and practices are being fused with state processes so that the state itself is taking a corporate shape, as well as a more overt oligarchic political form. The Hobbesian idea of the state (as mediating and in a contractual relation to society) is in retreat. The Singapore model is becoming more evident in the sense that state forms and practice are becoming modeled after corporate organizational/management ideals. This was the potential in the very beginnings of the US and was integral to its distinction from the monarchical, bureaucratic, centralized states of Europe. The individualist and oligarchic tendencies of the US, which were explored early by de Tocqueville, provoked the excitement of the anarchist Kropotkin ([1898] 1993), who appreciated these trends (and what he recognized as innovative and creative flexibility) and the country's effectively anti-nation-state direction. The US might be considered the modern and post-modern exemplar of the oligarchic state, though territorialized. Another example of contemporary oligarchic state formation is the European Union. It is a transitional form sharing some of the territorializing dimensions of the nation-state with the deterritorializing, encompassing shape of the corporate state form. Its much commented upon bureaucracy, I suggest, is a hybrid elaborating around new managerial practices (Shore 2000). Overall, the newly emergent corporate state recognizes far more thoroughly than in the past the economic as the political. The market is its transcendent ideal and gives it ontological direction. This direction has minimal interest in either control over persons (except through the dictates of the market) or control over territory (other than that 'territory' defined by consumption).

I should add that the imperialism generated from Hobbesian state processes is distinct from what could be described as the imperialism of the corporate state. The imperialism of the former involves an expansion of the boundaries of sovereign territory (Queen Victoria becomes the Empress of India). The imperialism of the corporate state respects no boundaries, is transterritorial, and denies sovereignty of any territorial kind, operating primarily a logic of control (of the market) rather than a logic of rule (of power over persons and populations).

The discourse of globalization is, I suggest, imbued with the logic of corporate control and can be conceived of as unfolding an ideology related to the emergence of the imperialism of corporate state forms. The fledgling organizations of control (e.g., the World Economic Forum at Davos, the G8) of the

new corporate imperialism are located in politically neutral state territorial zones (Davos as a site is qualitatively distinct from Geneva) or else are shifted between different urban centers of economic articulation, so that none is given political pre-eminence over that defined in economic terms. It is worthwhile contemplating the symbolism of Davos as distinct from Geneva and also Brussels. As the center of the European Union, Brussels betrayed its birth within a state-political imagination, the European Union being transitional between the political and corporate state forms. Davos eschews completely the image of the bureaucratic nation-state. It is located in a veritable oligarchic skiing playground for the families of the rich. Not only is this an expanded version of modern, largely corporate, gated communities, but also it is potent with the images of sport and play, key metaphors of corporate managerial logics.

The Nationalism of the Oligarchic-Corporate State

Oligarchies (contemporary ones that create the social on the basis of economic organization in relation to the market) have an associated mythos that is increasingly delocalized. They might be described as alienated, dislocated forms. Superficially, they bear some similarity to nation-states, with the critical difference that they are not territorialized. They have kinship, religious, and communitarian aspects but are generalized in an open space without borders. Their character is akin to product loyalty. The territory that they define marks out a space of consumption as a way of existence or life that can be shared across great differences in actual social and cultural practice. Religion, the community, the family—everything becomes a product for consumption (e.g., evangelist preaching, new Pentecostalist movements such as Hillsong in Australia and in Europe) and exists chiefly as a product, virtually a fantasy, that can be truly lived only in the space of the product.⁵ The US as the wellspring of oligarchic nationalism provides numerous examples. The well-known discussions on ‘Disneyfication’ and ‘McDonaldization’ provide some illustration.

The ideological development of the family in the US was a conscious, state-supported effort to forge national unity among an extraordinarily diverse immigrant population. Corporations were at the forefront, advertising agencies being strongly influenced by Freudian subliminal theories (see Adam Curtis’s BBC documentary, *The Century of the Self*). The national ideology of the family (iconic with one definitional aspect of oligarchic power) is an alienated virtual fantasy space lived perhaps most concretely in the roadside diner or the larger company chains (McDonald’s, Cracker Barrel, etc.). Peter Weir’s film, *The Truman Show*, gives a marvelous sense of a global, all-encompassing, family-centered, oligarchic-controlled cosmic possibility. Whereas state nationalism centered and opposed populations on the basis of a territorialized, national cultural difference, oligarchic nationalism decenters, deterritorializes, and yet unifies populations in relation to corporate-generated totalities and values. In the latter, culture is created through consumption, labile and movable, whereas in the former, culture is embedded, essential, and grounded.

It might be added here that in the emergence of corporate state forms, what was once public space, held in the larger public interest, is now made into corporate space. Paradoxically, that which was common (the commons) is transmuted into corporate territory and given back to the public as part of corporate largesse. The nation-state—even if only ideologically—protected the public interest, the commons as public right. The corporations capture or create ‘public space’ (often making it internal to the corporation, a right of the corporation) and link it with what I have already referred to as the charitable practice of binding populations in the moral economy of the gift.

The ideologies and practices of oligarchic state forces not only contribute to what some might identify as a growing tide of popular conservatism (intensifying processes of alienation) but also constitute a new structuring of power, bolstering the capacity of corporations to define the society of populations and to simultaneously politically tighten their grip over them. The corporate and oligarchic invasion of the once public sphere is everywhere in evidence, from attacks on institutions concerned with the redistribution of social justice (education, health, social security) to the privatization of a vast array of public services.

The oligarchic state as an alternative to the nation-state (and certainly subversive of it) was implicitly expressed in a recent interview on Fox News (10 April 2005) with Shimon Peres concerning the transfer of Gaza to Palestinian control. Peres recommended (echoing US policy in Iraq) that corporations should take over the task of development and socio-economic reconstruction in Gaza. In other words, the Palestinian state should not be a nation-state but an oligarchic state in which corporations should appropriate the key roles. This idea is undoubtedly fostered by the view that Palestinians are fragmented by kinship and lineage (the Palestinian failure to achieve unity often being assigned to this factor, ignoring the fragmenting, overweening power of the Israel state) and thus suited to oligarchic-corporate political forms. These, as I have said, are by and large antithetical to the nation-state as an institution of regulation and distribution (factors that might provide for the social-political unity of a future Palestinian state against Israel).

A New State Form

What I have described as an oligarchic-corporate state is a comparatively new state form, as, too, are emerging corporate orders powerful enough to work independently of state regulations and controls. The nation-state may be in decline, but it is giving way to a relatively original state order or political-economic formation that has multiple state-like effects and is able to act in ways systemic with deterritorializing global processes. What I have labeled the corporate state has developed in the context of nation-states, along with the emergence of corporations with state-like effects. In breaking free of state constraints, or by assuming control of state apparatuses, new exploitative possibilities are opening up for these corporate orders. The corporate apotheosis is already registering effects reflected in growing poverty, failures in public facilities, and an increased

sense of insecurity—dimensions of Ulrich Beck’s (1992) “risk society.” The issue of public order, the Hobbesian legitimation behind the nation-state, has been transformed into the problem of security. This is increasingly a private matter and has been corporatized. Security and surveillance have become a major concern for the corporate state; in many ways, they are a means for protecting ruling interests against the public.

If the nation-state frequently abused the rights of its citizens, this is now a strong potential of the corporate state, which both privatizes the means for violence and turns the greater violent power of economically dominant groups against the general citizenry. State violence takes a new oligarchic and corporate form. In guarding against the public, corporations project a vision of the mass that accords with the most abject view of the essential baseness of humankind (sometimes attributed to Hobbes but vital in the most dismal economist thinking). If we are in a ‘risk society’, it is now also a society of intense suspicion. I suggest that this is not so much a consequence of the so-called War on Terror but rather has been generated in the very dynamic of the growth of the corporate state, whose logic is founded in a dialectic of competition, control, and self-protection. Corporatization and, of course, the capitalist ethos that it further impels and transmutes are founded in a discourse of desire and envy. The current stress in some scholarly circles on the larger political relevance of a psychoanalysis of desire, insightful as it undoubtedly is, is also organic to a contemporary rise of oligarchic and corporate power. The War on Terror is to a great extent fueled in the formation of the corporate state, whose participants present themselves as objects of desire and of envy and who must be protected—such protection, of course, becoming itself a product for consumption and profit.

The nation-state was incorporative (often oppressively so), creating public order in a society of the state. The corporate state is oriented differently. It is not concerned to totalize society or to provide uniform regimes of order. The problem of order is resolved not by ordering the mass into a relatively static whole but rather by retreating from it, enclaving, and guarding against the dangers of the mass at large. The corporate state is oriented to the creation of micro social orders of total control, highly adapted to a social world premised on movement and displacement in which the social is always in the process of being reconstituted, often as a direct result of oligarchic and corporate action. If the nation-state has given rise to the impossible paradox of society against the state, the corporate state escapes such a paradox by sealing off spaces where persons must submit to control as a condition of access and participation in them from other spaces in which control is more open.

Human beings are made to choose continually between relatively open and closed social, political, and economic worlds. As in nation-states, but motivated by different ideological commitments (which often accentuate individual freedom and which are antagonistic to government or ‘big government’), populations are being made complicit in their own domination, engaged in the acts of making choices between personal freedom and control—choices that they have little opportunity to avoid and which are oriented in the direction of willing submission.

A somewhat stark example is Iraq. This is becoming a corporate state par excellence, certainly distinct from the totalitarianism of Saddam Hussein. In distributed totalitarian enclaves, the citizenry is routinely given the choice—a choice that is more or less impossible to refuse—to forgo personal freedoms in order to gain access to the means of survival. Moreover, the public is engaged in its own control and surveillance: the BBC reports that Iraqis engaged in security work, now the main employment, outnumber the occupying troops. This self-policing is a feature that scholars following Foucault describe as governmental-ity. Developed as part of nation-state systems, it is at least as crucial to what I am calling the corporate state and its rather distinct processes of ordering.

The post-imperial or post-colonial peripheries have become regions where the violence of the state against society as a function of oligarchic and corporatizing processes is apparent. West Africa is conceived of as a region where the nation-state appears to be in collapse (see Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999). This is often seen as a consequence of traditionalizing forces—the ‘big man’ complex, clientalism, etc. (see Ifeka this volume). If so, these forces were conditioned and made anew in the context of the ‘indirect rule’ of colonialism, as I have described a kind of corporate state in the making that encouraged self-rule through corporate-like groups based in kinship, ethnicity, and religion and focused around key patrons. The nation-state that took form had an intense oligarchic and corporate possibility already locked into it (a fact that is evident across a great number of states formed in the wake of colonialism). The unequal encounter with new corporate expansion from Europe and North America especially has exacerbated the situation, accelerating the corporate enclaving (often along kinship, religious, and ethnic lines) and resulting in protectionist actions and extortion. The point is that the violence at the periphery is due neither to the failure of state orders nor to traditionalism, but rather to the appearance of new forms of ordering practice that are part of the modern emergence of the corporate state.

The entire direction of this introduction is to indicate that new forms of state power are emerging that are not reducible to the past. What I have presented are a few thoughts that might be relevant to further discussion.

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The essays in this forum, which involve several lines of analysis in different concrete locations (North America, Russia, West Africa, and Australia), constitute a beginning. Nonini tackles directly the oligarchic corporatism of the US and the contradiction of democracy that is contained in it. His discussion contributes to an understanding of the distinction of the US as a corporate state that reproduces within its own order the changes that it may be effecting in larger global realities. Reyna in a way continues this analysis, concentrating on the relation of oligarchic forms to violence and the perpetration of war. In what is perhaps an amazing aspect of contemporary state formation, war itself is being revalued. The state, once legitimated as an organization for the perpetration of peace, is now conceived of as an order that enables peace through acts of war. Its legitimacy is

tied to its warring capacity, a feature, incidentally, of corporate manuals of managerial practice. One of my current favorites is Wess Roberts's *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*. The advertising promotion on the Amazon.com Web site states that the author "draws from the imagined thoughts of one of history's most effective and least beloved leaders, Attila the Hun, to discover leadership principles you can apply to your own situation." Such a manual might apply to the new breed of oligarchs in Russia that Rigi's essay explores. Rigi outlines the struggle between the bureaucratic order of the nation-state and the mafia-like tactics of Russia's oligarchs. The violence that is produced is a dimension of the forces that have developed to protect new and old oligarchic interests. Ifeka examines the different situation of West Africa, but here too oligarchic and corporate power is shown to engage with other well-established customs and practices, creating new forms of inclusion and exclusion. She describes how this is exacerbated by global forces of corporate intervention. Roland Kapferer's description of the transitional meeting of Murdoch's News Corporation, whereby this global media organization announces the relocation of its capital from peripheral Adelaide to metropolitan America, is a demonstration of some of the central arguments of this volume. The account draws attention to the autocracy of corporate power as displayed in a key corporate political performance, the annual general meeting—an elaborate ceremonial of corporate power and state.

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Notes

1. Clearly, corporations are not states in the conventional sense of a complex of governing institutions who hold sway over territorially defined populations. However, many have state effects in the senses that Trouillot has outlined. But I am also suggesting that there are developments in corporate control and organization that are taking on a more firm state dimension. This is so in corporations' appropriation of domains of public space and service, previously in control of states, through which state-governing institutions exercised control and regulation of populations. I also am pointing to the increasing determination of state policies by corporations and, as well, the formation of transnational or transterritorial organizational structures in which corporate alliances (often involving governments) are beginning to have major force over populations.
2. The development of modernity, especially in Europe and North America, is frequently described in terms of a growth in individualism often associated with a coming to dominance of an egalitarian and increasingly secular ethos. The development of the modern corporation—which seems to feed on an ideology of individualism and free choice—is a major contradiction of such ideological value, enjoining a disciplinary conformity of its members and a subordination of their will to the project of the corporate whole. This whole is not the sum of its collective parts but a totality in itself that is defined by its capacity to generate profit.
3. During a reflective moment regarding corporate practice, the character played by Dennis Quaid in the 2004 film *In Good Company* (Universal Pictures) actually describes corporations as states “without borders.”
4. They were, in effect, incorporated within the state. Their often dramatic fiscal failures enabled states to take them over. Of course, the agents of the trading companies had heavily engaged the political interests of the state in their operations, and the take-overs were largely a formalization of the state-political controls that were already integral in operations that had the appearance of being independent.
5. Two articles in *Harper's* (May 2005) fill out a good deal of what I am referring to here. Gordon Bigelow (2005) describes the religious fundamentalist origins of modern economic theory (especially that which refers to the self-regulative properties of the market), which underpin so much current neo-liberal and neo-conservative political economy. In other words, the market as virtually synonymous with corporate power has the same fetishized and overdetermined quality of the nation-state form that it is replacing. Jeff Sharlet's (2005) account of New Life Church at Colorado Springs, organized by Pastor Ted Haggard, who presides over the National Association of Evangelicals in the US, is highly informative regarding the corporate nature of the new evangelism in the US. This is not so much a return to an earlier fundamentalism but a new fundamentalism born within corporatist transformations of modern America. There are numerous parallels between the internal political orders of present resurgent evangelism (including its ideological message), on the one hand, and the consumer-oriented economic and political policies of corporations and agents of the state, on the other hand.

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