

Mumbai: City-as-Target

Introduction

Ryan Bishop and Tania Roy

Abstract

This article introduces the themes and theoretical concerns of a special section that explores the various ways the specificities of the Mumbai attacks serve as a metonym for issues found in other urban sites within the conditions, concerns and vulnerabilities of globalization-as-urbanization and does so through the rubric of the city-as-target. As urbanization grows exponentially in unforecastable ways, the likelihood of violent urban targeting of many different kinds – state-sponsored, paramilitary, sectarian, economic, racial, tribal, etc., to name but a few – grows as well. Mumbai is a specific event, but it is also the common-place, the cityscape that is our daily lives and quotidian existence rendered unusual in all the expected ways. With Mumbai, the article argues, one does not necessarily see the future of the urban, but rather a reminder of what the urban has always been, even from the great walled cities of antiquity: a target. There is an imperative, then, to rethink urban space at all levels. The pieces in this section consider immaterial and material aspects of the city: its plan, infrastructure (economic and military bases), buildings and dwellings, polity and policy, protection and penetration. The technologies and technicities involved in the attacks, as well as the specific historicity, reveal a great deal about the Mumbai events, as well as revealing potential modes of engagement with cities in the present and future.

Key words

Mumbai ■ target ■ technology ■ terrorism ■ urbanism

In a frontier land, freedom of maneuver is the latchkey to success, whereas the commitment to the ground for whatever reason is a recipe for defeat. The outcome of the confrontation is decided by the ability to surprise, by the speed with which the blows are delivered and the swiftness with which the

-
- *Theory, Culture & Society* 2009 (SAGE, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore), Vol. 26(7–8): 263–277
DOI: 10.1177/0263276409349658

deliverers escape the reprisal. Not the territory, but the capacity and freedom to disregard it, are the true stakes of the power struggle. (Zygmunt Bauman, *Living Together in an Urban World*)

THE ATTACKS of November 2008 in Mumbai offered to the world a mesmerizing drama that played out, uninterrupted, over the course of almost three days: sailing from Karachi, 10 terrorists pirated a fishing-boat in the coastal waters off the city by virtually decapitating its owner, disembarked directly into Mumbai's downtown, and took 172 lives over the following 60 hours. Traversing the localities of south Mumbai in order to display their own remarkable mobility, they exposed the social topography of this entire area of the city to global visibility, while all the time enacting a use of tactics, weapons and communications that was virtually symmetrical to the domestic counter-terrorist forces that confronted them. Breaking into four groups, the terrorists deployed cars and pedestrian itineraries through the city as it emptied of rush-hour traffic, freeing themselves from the accidental presence of commuting crowds while multiplying their ability to target citizens instantly and randomly *en route* to their final destinations. These comprised two luxury hotels and a Jewish cultural centre; a café, an entire metropolitan railway station (where terrorists opened fire in the central hallway to cause the largest number of fatalities at any one site) and a hospital, figured as diversionary excursions towards this end. The split itineraries of the terrorists served strategically to produce a perception of overwhelming simultaneity. Protracting this multiplication-effect in the eyes of the media – an effect hitherto achieved through sequential or simultaneous bomb-blasts in the recent history of urban terrorism – the attackers themselves occupied several physical, social and symbolic spaces at once.

In the immediate aftermath of the Mumbai attacks, columnist and critic Girish Shahane posed a wry, deflatory line of questioning in an opinion piece entitled 'The Morning After' (2008). Asserting counter-intuitively that the protracted media coverage of the 60-hour-long attacks was 'stultifying', Shahane reminded his readership that not one privately owned television channel broke their coverage of Mumbai to report on events of arguably comparable national importance. So, there was no television coverage of catastrophic flash floods in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, which had begun just two days earlier and had reportedly already claimed 70 lives; nor, remarkably, was there any significant comment on the death of V.P. Singh on 26 November, a former prime minister who, in a sweeping affirmative action plan, reconstituted discourses on social equality and distribution around official identifications of caste to fundamentally transform the nature of modern Indian electoral politics.

This special section explores the various ways the specificities of the Mumbai attacks serve as a metonym for issues found in other urban sites within the conditions, concerns and vulnerabilities of globalization-as-urbanization, and do so through the rubric of the city-as-target as posited by Bishop and Clancey (2001). The 20th century was one of violent urban

targeting writ large, and the 21st seems likely to be a continuation of this unfortunate situation as terrorism and asymmetrical warfare know only one battle space: the urban formation. Cities become targets for the simple reason that they are the sites of massive, virtually inexhaustible, material and immaterial concentrations of human energy and value, production and consumption. As urbanization grows exponentially in unforecastable ways, the likelihood of violent urban targeting of many different kinds – state-sponsored, paramilitary, sectarian, economic, racial, tribal, etc., to name but a few – grows as well. Mumbai is a specific event, but it is also the commonplace, the cityscape that is our daily lives and quotidian existence rendered unusual in all the expected ways. With Mumbai we do not necessarily see the future of the urban, but rather a reminder of what the urban has always been, even from the great walled cities of antiquity: a target. There is an imperative, then, to rethink urban space at all levels. The pieces in this section consider immaterial and material aspects of the city: its plan, infrastructure (economic and military bases), buildings and dwellings, polity and policy, protection and penetration. These analyses bear either directly or implicitly on notions of cosmopolitanism, civic space, entitlement and responsibility, which comprise the process by which mourning is mobilized and given a public form; even as collective affects like anger or passionate affinity re-make, displace and often erase the contested, often socially stratified histories of such ideas from public space and memory.

Mumbai Attacks and Targeting the Public-as-Victim/Audience

City planning is – once more – an adjunct to the science of war. (Le Corbusier, *Radiant City*, 1934)

Do I love the world so well/that I have to know how it ends? (W.H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety*)

Mumbai's riveting visibility during the three-day long siege has accomplished for its own self-understanding – perversely and exactly through terrorists' targeting of it as such – the status of a 'global' city. The attackers targeted unarmed victims across class, sectarian and national identities, taking hostages randomly and executing them without any political demands; yet media attention was saturated with coverage of events at the two luxury hotels. (Here, it should be noted that, for the first time in Mumbai's history, the rich were the intended, rather than accidental victims of terrorism, having been directly targeted as a leisure-class in the affluent areas of south Mumbai, in luxury and historic hotels.) The attacks were represented overwhelmingly, in both domestic and international media, as directed towards the global city aspects of this complex urban formation. Codified by US Senator John McCain, the Republican nominee for President at the time, as 'India's 9/11', this apparently replicable and open metaphor was deployed instantly by 24-hour English news channels, allowing a small but highly visible section of the financial 'cosmopolitan' elite to interpret events

according to its own exclusionary interests and stridently proclaimed anxieties. The metaphor succeeded in eliding Mumbai's complex internal politics, as well as continuities with other domestic urban targets and related histories of violence, as discussed in this section.

Mumbai's reiterated experience with urban terrorism since the 1990s has been conflated with the self-evident idiom of '9/11', and with an emergent global history of violence that links the city with capitals like Madrid, London or Baghdad. This interpellation into a globalized narrative, however, suppresses an entire local genealogy of religious violence and terrorism that has been both rehearsed and re-signified by the attacks. In 1993, the length of the city was convulsed by serial bomb-blasts that continue to be understood collectively, across sectarian and ideological lines, as retributive violence visited on the city by its Muslim underworld, on behalf of the victims of the urban riots of the year before. Occurring in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Mosque by Hindu super-nationalists, the nation-wide riots claimed 1000 mostly Muslim lives; the city alone saw 250 dead in internecine conflicts waged in the streets on a scale unprecedented in the city. While the political elites responsible for the demolition of the mosque have faced no penalties, the perpetrators of the blasts have been pursued and tried through the judiciary, thereby reinforcing the moral posturing of agents of para-statal violence – a position that has been volubly expressed by the perpetrators of the 2006 train-blasts, which killed 250 in 11 minutes. These attacks were executed by a domestic terrorist outfit as putative retaliation for the state-supported massacre of 2000 Muslims in the western state of Gujarat in 2002, whose capital Ahmadabad has some parallels with Mumbai.

In this rebounding, spiralling violence between state and para-statal forces, the city of Mumbai has been exposed not only as an obvious and iterable target, but also as a geo-territorial node in networks crossing domestic, national and institutional boundaries. So, as in the case of the 1993 bomb-blasts which rendered the city's landscape into that of a battle-field, Mumbai appeared to subvert its own official image as the centre of transnational trade and finance, presenting itself instead as an axis point within criminal trade networks that link the city to Karachi and Dubai, where the attacks were planned and financed. (It is illuminating that in the first reports of gunfire at the Café Leopold and in the road by a landmark cinema-hall in the 2008 attacks, the terrorists were assumed to be gangsters.) And in the case of the 2002 massacre of Muslims in the state of Gujarat, undertaken as 'retaliation' for the deaths of 60 Hindu pilgrims in the town of Godhra, a line of affinity both material and ideological can be drawn from Mumbai's Gujarati mercantile and financial elite, to the city of Ahmadabad. Here, predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods in immiserated and older areas were ravaged, displacing 150,000, while affluent residential parts were unaffected. According to word-of-mouth reports from survivors of the Trident Towers siege in the 2008 attacks, the perpetrators asked their hostages at gun-point the rhetorical

question of whether they still recalled the Babri Mosque and Godhra massacres.

Paraphrasing Shahane's provocation for the purposes of the city-as-target project, we ask: why is it that scenes of an urban centre under attack serve as a lightning rod for constructing an occasional yet sovereign public, while smoothly erasing the historical scale of events more integral to the institutions, if not the constitution, of a national politics (relegating these, in the case of India, and V.P. Singh's death, to arbitrary and passing coincidence; or, more pressingly, the intersecting, escalating histories of domestic urban violence and acute social suffering in its aftermath – 'terror' – to non-significance)?

Underlining the obsolescence of the state's once supra-rational powers of broadcast-'interruption' in the event of an emergency, Shahane, in an exemplary use of black humour, remarks:

When India's electronic media were state controlled [over three decades, up until liberalization in 1992] the death of any politician was marked on television by the appearance of a *sarangi* player sawing at his instrument. In advance of popular sports events, people prayed for the health of current and former ministers lest, turning on the TV, they saw not Boris Becker or Mohammad Azharuddin, but the *sarangi* player.

In the figure of comic redundancy – the musician of an official culture whose absence from the national 'now' is neither marked nor missed by an urban viewership – the columnist measures the velocity and sweep of '24-hour' broadcasting by accounting for the arc of calendrical or *national* time that has been compressed, overcome and effectively wiped from the middle-class imaginary. During the three-day long coverage, such hyperbolic forgetting involved not only the suppression of deaths that occurred synchronously with the attacks (noted explicitly by Shahane, 2008), but also of local histories of catastrophic urban targeting. These events mark the historical coincidence of economic liberalization, with the rise of Hindu super-nationalism in India; their legacy remains largely unreconciled in the realm of public justice and in the urban imaginary.

As Arvind Rajagopal (2008) has argued elsewhere and as Shahane intimates, also suppressed is the memory of a public *space* once characterized by the distance between state-power and an uncoordinated citizenry cast into the spiralling uncertainty associated with strategic, sustained 'interruptions' of official communication. Before the liberalization of news broadcasting, the rule of the news 'black-out' during a public catastrophe tactically sundered citizens from a state that was only intermittently and peremptorily visible on the television, which thereby maintained the monopoly on emergency mobilization while leaving public self-understandings de-centred. During the era of state-control, media-broadcasting was the primary tool for managing political crises and ensuring the survival of established political elites and institutions. In the totalized media coverage

of these attacks, by comparison, competing private news channels precipitated – while simultaneously ‘representing’ – the mobilization of their own viewership, which comprises socio-economically mobile classes and a financial elite.

These sections of the citizenry swiftly appropriated the space and pulse of an aftermath that had remained unclaimed by sectarian discourses and their collective enactment in the urban ‘riot’ (a silence that was remarked upon in the public domain with a mixture of relief and unease, as an historical incongruence). Organizing themselves through a moral discourse of accountability and retributive justice, this vocal counter-public articulated its claims on 24-hour news channels through imported, hitherto insignificant idioms of public mourning – candles, vigils, snapshots – that were borrowed from the global ‘scene’ of 9/11. While angry protests were directed towards the Pakistan-based backers of the terrorists and threatened to pressure the government into adopting a rhetorically militant position, they were equally and perhaps more immediately addressed to the ‘politicians’ of the state and central governments.

This development has suggested to many, particularly in the print-media, that for Indian politics, the case of Mumbai represents the displacement of state-power by a cultural-consumer elite that dictates the nature and form of public representation. If so, the implications for the project of city-as-target at large are pressing. After all, these professionalized attacks were manifestly timed to unfold over prime cable and satellite television viewing-time for audiences in Europe and the United States, even as they were initiated and executed past peak traffic hours on a largely unrestricted local terrain. If the early days of broadcast media allowed for a simultaneous linkage of a national population as a technological civic construct (as FDR’s ‘fireside chats’ in the 1930s did), then the current global television of satellite and cable allows for ‘the world synchronization of international public emotion’ (Virilio and Lotringer, 2008: 214) and this delivery system of world-wide ‘real-time’ affect was clearly a target of the attacks. In the case of Mumbai, urban space was deliberately arrested and emptied by the four groups of terrorists, its local topography precisely re-traversed, temporally extended and visibly exploited for optimal (global) media exposure, making for an exemplary ‘9/11-type’ performance.

The City-as-Target

After the classical and political ‘Great War’ we now have the Asymmetrical and Trans-political War of groupuscles, groups and other ‘paramilitaries’. The aims of Anti-City Strategy shifted from the Balance of Terror to Hyper-Terrorism (2001). The external ‘Theatre of Operations’ is no more: Metro-political Concentration has won out over Territorial Geostrategy. Geopolitics has failed in favor of Metropolitics. (Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*)

Putting these observations on the question of suppression, visibility and representation differently, we ask why *the city* is privileged by both terrorists

and publics alike in the gaze of an increasingly globalized ('post-liberalization') spectatorship. From this viewpoint, sovereign territoriality is dramatically, if passingly, re-imagined through the urban. The city's sudden visibility is, however, fabricated through cross-cutting axes of domestic and transnational power, and is constituted through a series of historical suppressions and displacements. Toward this end, we deploy the idea of the 'target' heuristically to reflect on how urban and military planning are exposed as homologies in the experience of a singular yet protracted moment of violence. If the incendiary explosion or the siege comprehensively jams urban infrastructure and corresponding networks of circulation, it simultaneously exposes their form to a collective spectator-citizen.

In this context, Jon Coaffee's article in this section addresses the global sporting event of cricket to re-open the question of multiple, overlapping, but also divergent histories of 'spectacular' urban terrorism. Discourses in the UK media following the Mumbai attacks focused on the self-evident 'inevitable attack' of a near future; these, it was presumed, would occur on European and American capitals. Events in Mumbai were thereby read through a forced narrative that turns on overstated references to Al Qaeda, and to an unspecified assertion of 'capitalist modernity' (associated with European and American capitals). Linking such discourses to an analysis of one of the attacks that *did* immediately follow Mumbai – in Lahore, on the Sri Lankan cricket team in March 2009 – Coaffee attempts to destabilize the dominant western gaze within which scholarly and policy discussions of urban targeting since 9/11 have been rehearsed.

The end of the Cold War marked a new military relationship with the city. The city from the end of the Second World War until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union had been rendered almost irrelevant for military planning because it had been targeted out of existence. The complete erasure of all major cities was an operational assumption, although hope for some semblance of urban survival remained at the level of civil defence. The survival of cities was left largely to local governmental bodies, while the wholesale targeting of them was a matter of national policy and the very basis of geopolitical strategy, all of this despite the massive targeting of cities that occurred during the various 'hot wars' that sprang up during the Cold War (in Vietnam and Korea, for example).

The military targeting of cities was taken to new heights during the Cold War, in which all global cities were targeted for mutual destruction. Each global city was linked globally by IT networks for surveillance. The Cold War gave us the entire battery of IT, hardware and software, tele-technologies and tele-strategies that provide the capacity for 'real-time' global control and forecasting, by allowing hard geopolitical strategies, especially militarized ones, to be realized and realizable.

Just as currently constituted and understood globalization processes [including interlinked global cities] emerged from Cold War policies, practices and technologies, so did the interconnected fate of global cities. As nodes in the

global, ideological grid of surveillance and intercontinental ballistic missile targeting, each global city was potentially every other global city. (Bishop and Clancey, 2001: 75)

This is not to suggest a universal exchangeability of cities, but to highlight the deep links connecting them in such a manner that they could all be potentially destroyed at one fell swoop. An attack on one meant an attack on all, due to Mutually Assured Destruction policies. It is their status as targets through the networked array of information technologies and surveillance systems that renders them, *de facto*, ‘global’.

Through an analysis of various instances of so-called ‘Fourth Generation’ military doctrine, Stephen Graham’s contribution to the section focuses on the ideological, material and existential emergence of the city as ‘battlespace’, an idea that was formalized in the recent history of US operations in Baghdad. Graham contends that the contemporary weaponization of everyday life and public space in the city has pushed the Cold War homology between military and urban planning to an extreme, effectively conflating the ‘military and civil spheres, local and global scales, and the “inside” and “outside” of nations’. Emphasizing the weaponization of cultural difference, immigration and the diasporic city in the US in particular, Graham’s argument suggests that if state-backed wars against ‘racialized and biopolitically disposable others’ are directed against external threats, they have also, increasingly, transformed the internal geographies of the nation-state by rendering the citizen into a potential and ever-present combatant. Such a proposition poses a disturbing symmetry between new military doctrines and the ideological imagination of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the Kashmiri irredentist group that has been identified as responsible for the Mumbai attacks. With Mumbai, de-territorialized claims to a global caliphate, hitherto advanced by Al Qaeda and discussed in this section by Benjamin Bratton, have been apparently reversed and re-signified into a perspective that links the territorial dispute over Kashmir, to the figure of a ‘bio-politically’ disposable community of Muslims within the Indian nation-state, and beyond it.¹

Our project is intended to open lines of related histories and genealogies that intersect within the phenomenology of the city-as-target, which links and enfolds stratified populations, audiences and tourisms into the material and ideational form of the urban. Following Bratton, one of these points of intersection might lie in Kashmir, as it is figured into the ‘psycho-geography’ of the LeT’s domain of operations, where the group is understood, provocatively, as a ‘design movement’ that both incorporates even as it emerges from a 60-year history of ‘design-decisions’:

The Partition of India and the assignment of Indian rule over Kashmir was a design decision, and the image and map of the Pakistan that would result was constituent of a design imaginary, however practical or misguided the Mountbatten Plan may have been... . To scale up the partition from a single

site to the regimentation of a social system is to . . . recognize a very direct material plurality. A city is a multidimensional complex of partitions, interfaces and boundaries, nested within and without each other. . . . A partition, material or projective, is both nested within a larger territorial context and is simultaneously the necessary component of that context: both medium and substance. (Bratton, this issue)

Bratton's striking approach to the fraught terrain of post-Independence history in the sub-continent is recalled here as a material and ideational 'fold' within and without Mumbai in 2008. This might suggest, in turn, an alternate genealogy of the Cold War and its production of a 'global' city discussed above, whose trajectory runs through the sovereign 'parliamentarian rationalities' of postcolonial constitutions and public spheres.

In all this, the city-as-target continues to operate in several different ways, with military or paramilitary targeting being but one. It operates in a positive manner (something you aim for) and a more negative one (something you aim at). The city protects through its city walls but attracts through the very act of protection (only that which is valuable is in need of protection). The city is targeted in material and immaterial ways, through concrete actions and through architectural plans to pour concrete or remove it. The urban vision to renovate industrial mill-lands in order to attract investment in retail, to market high-end leisure activities, or simply to clear ground for real-estate developers, for example, displays targeting strategies in the material environment but also in the immaterial realm of planning and global capital circulation. Everyday urbanism is experienced as a slow-motion mortar attack, with the need to unbuild environments being as great as the need to build them: a simultaneous and ongoing constructive and destructive spectacle. One can access this from a range of visual materials, as the pieces by Caren Kaplan and Benjamin Bratton in this section detail:

Simply to see the violence – and not as *process* toward something but as a series of actions with trajectories and intentions, and with random and contingent results – is the task of the moment, and one that can begin equally well with the aerial reconnaissance images of a pilotless drone or the blueprints for a new urban megaplex. (Bishop et al., forthcoming)

Finally, as a method, the frame of city-as-target allows us to suspend dominant socio-political categories of analysis that reinforce the assumption of the nation-state in order to valorize arguments made from sovereign right, and to address both symmetrical and asymmetrical warfare in terms of the weaponization of city-spaces. It focuses on modes of political as well as symbolic violence, through which citizens are aligned forcibly with the position of the combatant, or otherwise mobilized as such. Local temporalities that structure established repertoires of collective memory are, accordingly, enfolded into the fluid landscape and tactics of 'liquid terror'. If the iconography of '9/11' was imported into the media-spaces of Mumbai, it functioned as the vehicle of vested claims to that space. Here, discourses

of public mourning reveal the city-as-target to be an endlessly citable ‘event’, a mediatized process through which the singularity of urban destruction is archived and recalled at the cost of other historical, cultural and mortal effacements.

Temporalities and Visualities: The One and the Many

In the game of humanity, the death instinct, the silent instinct, is definitely well-positioned... You would have to be endowed with a truly bizarre style to speak of anything else than death these days. On the earth, on the seas, in the air, now and in the future, there is nothing but death. (Louis-Ferdinand Celine, Zola address in Medan, 1934)

Real-time tele-technologies that make global military and economic targeting possible and that have shaped our chronographic imagination for almost half a century provide specific demands for thinking and considering ‘the event’, as evidenced by the attention many theorists have lavished on it. At one level, ‘real-time’ access to the globe erases the past and the future (pace Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard), marooning us in an endless ‘now’ without shape or substance but filled to overflowing with images, sounds, moving pictures and rapid-fire edits. Temporal separation from occurrences becomes all but impossible in the heedless rush for immediate access anywhere and everywhere. At another level, a multitude of temporalities exists, often in relation to ‘real-time’ IT, media and business. Those who are a part of the ‘real-time’ global formations, in that their lives are directly affected by them, but who dwell apart from them, in that they have no say in how these formations shape their lives, must traverse temporal terrains that operate in relation to but are separated from those that dominate global urban life. One way of thinking about the attacks in Mumbai, as well as other large-scale terrorist attacks on western sites in the post-Cold War world, would concentrate on the temporal domination of the West with regard to media, information, capital, military and political temporal control of a very specific stripe.

For this section, we take a moment in time, a very specific ‘now’ prompted by the Mumbai attacks, to explore diachronic and spatial specificities that marked it as something like ‘an event’ as Derrida or Deleuze might define one. At the same time, we wish to consider those synchronic dimensions that mark the horrors experienced and enacted there as yet another instance in a very long, sad story of urban targeting and killing: an approach that nullifies the Mumbai attacks as ‘an event’. Yet there are other temporalities operative that make this section what it is. One is the fact that we know cities and urban formations are always, everywhere, being targeted in material and immaterial ways for profitable, peaceful, detrimental and violent aims. Thus, we would have to be aware of the fact that the time lag between the attacks and publication would mean that, sadly but certainly, other attacks would have pushed these traumatic events out of the ‘real-time’ slot of the perpetual ‘now’.

We had no choice but to be right, unfortunately, in this regard. Almost a month to the day, Gaza was blown up again. Just a couple of months later, the cricket matches in Lahore saw scenes of violence that immediately were lumped in the public discursive domain of ‘real-time’ media with the Mumbai attacks. The temporal proximity of these attacks, as well as their unavoidable conflation in broadcast and satellite spheres, resulted in their being made into a kind of vertical temporal construction: a pile up of urban violence having taken place in the same moment in the same manner. Through this specific temporal lens, the specificities of the attacks disappear into their all-too-easy generalities and similarities. These three urban sites could just as easily have been three others, in the same manner that London and Madrid were linked despite their enormously divergent causes and conditions. All of these events, too, are further swallowed in the *ur-urban* occurrence of violence that is 9/11 (and, ironically, *not* Hiroshima or Nagasaki).

Yet another temporal layer is found in the ongoing nature of urban violence as experienced in the Middle East and other global ‘hot spots’, echoed in our section by the sustained urban targeting experienced in African cities that almost never find space in the ‘real-time’ frozen moment of global attention. Edgar Pieterse’s contribution elegantly and hauntingly documents this simmering, invisible (to the global media) violence. The Mumbai attacks filled the mediascape in African cities, as they did the globe’s, but the sealed sphere of the globe in solipsistic and self-referential mediated form excluded the continuous and horrific urban onslaught of routinized violence taking place throughout the continent and just beyond the TV and computer screens noisily flickering there. This section, then, gestures toward the infinite temporal complexities that urban spaces embody and generate, especially as they pertain to violence, death and targeting by military, paramilitary, and IT bodies and systems. The one global temporality and the many other non-global temporalities come to bear on our thinking of these attacks as events. More importantly, these different temporalities understood as singular time, and vice versa, result from and result in the complex ways urban space is targeted.

The one and the many also extend to the visual technologies that populate our global mediascape. The overwhelming myopia of the media in its collective and singular not plural sense subsumes the Argus-eyed capacity and deployment of ubiquitous video technologies. Despite the fact that a substantial portion of the world’s population in specific and inter-linked portions of the globe routinely carry with them digital still-photographic as well as video-streaming recording capabilities, these are accessed for the most part through a handful of media outlets that telescope their polyvisual potential. Youtube is perhaps the least centralized of these, but its overall unruliness, which is its democratic strength, makes it less of a source for ‘news’ than for sheer entertainment. (Most people watch the clip of the toilet-flushing cat, not the ones of street protests in Tehran.) The use of these technologies by attackers and attacked alike extends to the entire

range of opto-electronic devices that were once the provenance of the military but are now readily available to civilians, converting ways of targeting urban spaces into activities with many participants with many goals and designs.

Problems of Perception: Aesthetics and Targeting

The more horses you put to, the faster your progress – not of course in the removal of the cornerstone from the foundations, which is impossible, but in the tearing of the harness, and your resultant riding cheerfully off into space. (Franz Kafka, *The Zuru Aphorisms*)

To return to Shahane's bathetic dismissal of the event of '26/11', we note that it is, of course, and not in the least, as *symbolic* acts of violence that the images of Mumbai might claim their status as a culturally traumatic event. It has been widely argued by Susan Sontag (2001, 2004) and others that the media-image performs a dialectic of historical erasure and inscription, disseminating imperatives to remember/forget with unaccountable velocity. Baudrillard takes this standard concern of the violence wrought by the image and reverses it to examine the violence being done *to* the image. The image becomes all-pervasive and omnipresent but also incompetent in its capacity to create lasting effect. Although we live in an era of excessive imagery due to digitalization and real-time transmission technologies, we could follow Baudrillard and assert that we live in an era bereft of images. For images should surprise us, affect us with their original language, have the power of perception unforeseen by opening the world to us in astonishing ways. Instead, the image has been hijacked and violated by a host of ideological purposes: documentation, testimony, witness, moral-ethical gain, political advantage, economic control, and even just plain information, thus emptying the image of any power of its own and filling it with instrumental purpose (Baudrillard, 2005: 91–101). To this end, just as Mumbai was both an event and not an event, both unique and common, the images that emerged from the attacks were both images and not. An ambition of this section, then, is to consider the fate of objects and phenomena erased by image-producing and image-circulating technologies as well as to examine how the images are themselves the subject of violent targeting, not least by the very technologies that make them possible and accessible.

More significant for our purposes is the possibility that such symbolic processes as the complexly contradictory operations of images and media may be isomorphic with the structure of trauma on the one hand, and the actual workings of technological reproducibility and mass dissemination, on the other. In other words, the violence of the attacks exists *in their inseparability* from regimes of mediation and transmission. So, Mumbai rehearses now-familiar contests over the ideological (ab)uses of 'India's *own* 9/11' (Smith and Mukherjee, 2009): deploying the reference to the collapse of the World Trade Towers in New York (and its aftermath) constatively, such incantations circle around the virtual power of that name without speaking

to it. If the attacks on the World Trade Center towers in 2001 enfolded *all views* across culturally, politically and geographically diverse audiences into the position of the media-spectator, they didactically exposed the global pressure of virtuality upon presence. While this is now a truism, it is also the case that the hyper-mediated event of post-9/11 terrorism renders legible the profoundly *ambivalent* relationship that network societies bear to the representational technologies that saturate them and the urban spaces in which they flourish.

The attacks in all of the sites discussed in this section, but most especially Mumbai, reveal a tactical technological sophistication that allows for specific engagements by actors and spectators alike, as well as for lines of flight from engagement, to transpire. Combatants, voluntary or not, suddenly engaged their urban environments through a host of IT and software they used regularly for quotidian purposes in strategic ways, reminding the users, even if obliquely, of their military origins. (Almost all of the IT and tele-technologies that we use daily – cell phones, satellites, the internet, GPS, digital computers, computer graphics, simulated environments, etc. – are of military provenance with civilian applications coming long after their military applications were in place and often when they have been largely exhausted.) These technologies can control time and space in specific ways, ones useful to the military: conflating sensory perception and action, removing the gap so that sighting equals destroying.

Additionally, their use in this instance has given rise to a new set of techno-fears, especially circulated in the global media and impacting issues of public sphere formation and civic society as discussed earlier, which are all issues Kaplan deftly engages in her article for this section. She provocatively and productively asks:

Did mobile technologies such as wireless devices and cell phones provide the Mumbai attackers with significantly new tools that changed the very tactics themselves or were these devices simply convenient devices employed to make standard tactics more efficient? Did the boom in blog posts, twitters and cyber-communications that is associated with the unprecedented level of civilian reporting during and after the Mumbai attacks signal the birth of a full-blown ‘electronic agora’ that bolsters Indian nationalism while producing a transnational virtual community, or were most of the communications transmitted through social media remarkable only in terms of speed of transmission and level of emotional immediacy?

These attacks in Mumbai can be read as being irregular and asymmetrical ones carried out against a population who did not know they were at war, as Bratton argues in his densely innovative contribution to this section. They did not see themselves as targets until the irreducible relationality of targeting made it visible (as ‘total war’ and the Cold War have done since the middle of the 20th century). Similarly the citizens’ cityscape was recast as a war theatre, its invisible daily violence made visible through the bodies of the terrorists acting in accord with the assumptions of subject-controlled techno-science and targeting. The social and political circuitry of the

cityscape mirrored the instability and reversibility of its IT circuitry and infrastructure. Google Earth became a medium for target planning and strategic movements as well as for counter-movements by citizens fleeing the attacks. Its reversible use signals the intractable nature of control and accident. The lesson of this appropriation, according to Benjamin Bratton, is *'we do not control even what we control'*. To amplify and reverse this point so that it applies to symmetrical and asymmetrical warfare alike, all bombing is suicide bombing: the target is always ever ourselves.

Note

1. Faisal Devji has argued that the LeT's emergence onto a global theatre with Mumbai represents not only its own philosophical transformation but also the ideological and tactical displacement of Al Qaeda from the scene of a 'global' jihad.

[The LeT's] traditional preoccupation with Shiite and Hindu enemies is now augmented by experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal territories, fighting alongside the Taliban and Al-Qaeda against the Coalition forces from which it seems to have learnt the most. For this new kind of terrorism resembles a military operation more than it does the amateur and individualistic militancy of Al-Qaeda, to say nothing of the tribal warfare of the Taliban. Whatever its larger aims, in other words, the terrorism that revealed itself in Mumbai represents Al-Qaeda's displacement from the cutting edge of militancy. Indeed the world's most celebrated terror network appears to have been swallowed whole and fully digested by the Pakistani outfits that protect its leaders, which is the same thing as saying that the global has disappeared into the local to animate it from within. (Devji, 2008)

References

- Baudrillard, Jean (2005) *The Intelligence of Evil, or The Lucidity Pact*, trans. Chris Turner. London: Verso.
- Bishop, Ryan and Greg Clancey (2001) 'The City-as-Target, of Perpetuation and Death', in Ryan Bishop, John Phillips and Wei-Wei Yeo (eds) *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Bishop, Ryan, Greg Clancey and John Phillips (forthcoming) 'Cities as Targets', in Ryan Bishop, Greg Clancey and John Phillips (eds) *The City-as-Target*.
- Devji, Faisal (2008) 'Attacking Mumbai', in *Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion and the Public Sphere* (SSRC blog), URL (consulted October 2009): <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/12/12/attacking-mumbai/>
- Rajagopal, Arvind (2008) 'Violence, Publicity and Sovereignty', in *Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion and the Public Sphere* (SSRC blog), URL (consulted October 2009): <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/12/15/violence-publicity-and-sovereignty/>
- Shahane, Girish (2008) 'The Morning After', *Time Out* (Mumbai) 8(12 December).
- Smith, Phil and Kritivas Mukherjee (2009) 'Grief, Anger, as India Reckons with its own 9/11', URL (consulted June 2009): <http://in.reuters.com/article/topNews/idINIndia-36708320081129>
- Sontag, Susan (2001) *On Photography*. New York: Picador.

Sontag, Susan (2004) *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador.

Virilio, Paul and Sylvère Lotringer (2008) *Pure War*, trans. Mark Polizzotti. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Ryan Bishop teaches in the Department of English at the National University of Singapore and publishes on urbanism, military technology, critical theory, literary studies and international sex tourism. He is the editor of *Baudrillard Now* (Polity, 2009) and co-author of *Modernist Avant-Garde Aesthetics and Contemporary Military Technology* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010). [email: ellrb@nus.edu.sg]

Tania Roy teaches in the Department of English at the National University of Singapore. She is working on a book-project involving extrapolations of the Frankfurt School for a study of Indian modernism. She is interested in the relationship between aesthetic form and historical memory, and has published in this area with a focus on T.W. Adorno. [email: ellrt@nus.edu.sg]