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Introduction

When Ned Lebow et al. (1994) argued ‘we all lost the cold war’, they showed that well established theories based on balance of power, MAD, and instrumental rationality were simply inadequate to grasp the end of the Cold War – and were potentially even less useful to understand the things to come. A point that increasingly became evident with the global implementation of ‘precautionary’ and ‘pre-emptive’ security measures in the aftermath of 9/11: the resulting ‘war on terror’ cannot be confined to states’ practices without excluding some of its crucial aspects, rendering a confinement of security studies to states’ transaction and military conduct highly problematic. At this point, the notion of risk became attractive to describe security practices in our post-national era (Aradau et al. 2008; Huysmans and Tsoukala 2008). While ‘security’ points to dangers located ‘between’ states, risk irremediably leaves behind the confines of the state system to point to global and transnational threats like diseases or the pollution and destruction of the environment. Risk applied to security thus emphasizes a shift in the formation of security policies: not the avoidance of threats or the deterrence of enemies but the management of risks constitutes the specific rationale, defines current operations, and provides the background for future development of technology and strategies (Daase and Kessler 2007). Risk shows that threats are increasingly transnationalized and privatized, embedded in global financial structures and answered by new illiberal practices challenging the private–public and national–international distinction. Of course, that does not mean that states are to vanish or are about to become unimportant, but that the stories one could tell with sovereignty alone become increasingly limited.

Despite this overall interest and burgeoning literature referring to risk, this contribution argues that in fact there is no ‘risk’ approach to security studies. This might seem to be an odd point to make given that this contribution is supposed to be all about risk. However, risk is a contested concept that takes on different meaning in different contexts and is by itself meaningless. Looking at the semantic field and the changing significations, the debate appears to be more about different notions of uncertainty, probability and contingency than about risk in itself. Although the notion of risk is certainly widely used, it is the
counter-concept, the concept that risk is differentiated from, that does the explaining. What the current interest in risk does highlight, however, is a systemic shift within the world polity challenging established dogmas rooted in an individualistic philosophy of science and thereby calling for a different understanding of how the world is (made) known. It calls for a different vocabulary detached from the state and thus changes the way we read, write and do security.

This contribution is divided in two parts. The first part provides an overview to different approaches to risk and their basic propositions. It points to the work of Beck, Foucault and Luhmann to argue that the risk approach is actually more about contingency, uncertainty and probability than about ‘risk’ itself. The second part asks for the social presupposition of the use of risk for understanding security and argues that these presuppositions can be found in the changing reproduction process of contingency. Taking this systemic shift as a vantage point, this part then highlights three sites of changes associated with the risk approach: a semantic shift in our political vocabulary, the emergence of new actors and redefinition of already established actors, and changing practices of security partially based on a changing temporality of security politics.¹

Risk, Uncertainty and the Social Construction of Danger

The notion of risk has entered the field of security studies by three different approaches: via Beck’s notion of risk society (Beck 2002, 2003, 2007), via Foucault’s notion of ‘dispositif’ (Aradau and van Munster 2007; Lobo-Guerrero 2007, 2008; Neal 2004), and via contributions inspired by Niklas Luhmann’s autopoietic systems theory (Daase and Kessler 2007; Kessler and Werner 2008; Petersen 2008a, b). In this part I will first outline the basic propositions of these three approaches before in a second step I highlight the maybe unnoticed importance of uncertainty.

What is today characterized as post-industrial, post-colonial, post-modern and post-Fordist is for Beck nothing less than the transformation from the industrial into risk society. The differences between industrial and risk society touch upon the most basic assumptions about social reality. Industrial society is characterized by its modern convictions of progress, linearity and the controllability of both nature and social systems that were cemented in modern societal institutions and practices. Yet just as modernity dissolved the agricultural, hierarchical and class-defined society to pave the way for industrial society, the modernization of the industrial society dissolves the confines of the industrial society itself and, by continuing the project of modernity, creates and forms the new risk society where previous held convictions are unmasked as unjustified beliefs (Beck 1992: 14). Risk society requires us to rethink science, technological progress and the political project of the nation state.

With the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Beck shifted the focus from his original thesis by proclaiming the emergence of a world risk society. The world risk society differs from his previous ‘model’ in at least three respects.² First, it is characterized by its temporality. Not the presence but the anticipation of possible risks provides the rationale for countermeasures; the mere possibility of risks such as for example a terrorist attack, cancer from genetically modified food or flooded cities due to the meltdown of the polar regions feed back on present decision-making and puts the present in the ‘conditional tense’ (Beck 2007: 62; see also Elbe 2008b). It’s the anticipation of some risk that challenges the spatial and temporal conditions of world society. While a terrorist attack is a spatially and
temporally bounded incident, the anticipation and the prevention of it transform the risk into a global ‘beginning without an end’ (Beck 2007: 62).

Second, the world risk society develops further the distinction of risk and danger that has a somewhat longer trajectory in the sociology of risk (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). For Beck, and quite different to other scholars, risk and danger stand in opposition to each other: the larger risks are, the more they become uninsurable. While an insurance company can cover the cost of a potential car accident, it cannot pay for the consequences of life extinction or a nuclear catastrophe. That is – the larger the risk, the more ‘controllable’ risks become indistinguishable from uncontrollable dangers. In this sense, global risks such as terrorism are per se uncontrollable, dislocated and a ‘beginning without an end’. But that does not mean that they are beyond politics. Quite to the contrary: they demand states to transform ‘fortuna of the classical political theory and that is not controllable by politics into virtue, for whom political instruments and institutions need to be invented’ (Beck 2007: 85). States then embrace and implement anticipatory and preventive measures to provide the image of control where there is none.

Third, the world risk society emphasizes the role of non-knowledge.3 Non-knowledge for Beck takes on different forms and ranges from a not-wanted-to-be known over the outer-limits of knowledge to the non-knowledge unknown to us, the unknown unknown (ibid. 231). The consequences of non-knowledge are twofold. On the one hand, it constitutes a cosmopolitan moment as it requires acknowledging the otherness of different perspectives, cultures and interpretations. On the other hand, it is non-knowledge in the form of unintentional consequences of individual and institutional decisions that ultimately feeds back on society and brings risk society about. Non-knowledge gives rise to a societal struggle over the very definition of risks that becomes indistinguishable from the reality of those risks themselves. This struggle ranges from the definition of potential harm, the identification of causal chains, the proof of evidence and the determination of some possible compensation. What risks ‘are’ are thus result from specific modes of knowledge and non-knowledge inscribed in their definition. This struggle in other words holds the same position as the mode of production in the industrial society: in both cases, they establish power relationships.

At this point, it is interesting to note that it is uncertainty that creates these ‘regimes of non-knowledge’. As just mentioned, while global risks are uncontrollable, states are not released from their responsibility of addressing them. Yet insofar as states do act, they counterfactually presuppose a control over risks even when the classical policy measures fail. What has changed, according to Beck, is the uncertain environment within which states have to act. It is the social force of uncertainty that does not allow states to just sit and wait irrespective of whether such an action improves or worsens the actual conditions. Global risks need to get a face in order to re-establish ontological security that was lost when one of the foundations of security calculus, actor, intention, potential, became unknown (ibid. 83, 85).

At the same time, the notion of uncertainty Beck invokes is actor-centric in the sense that risks require decisions and actors who make those decisions when faced with risks. Indeed, Beck subscribes to a notion of inter-subjectivity where states and other social actors engage in a struggle over a definition of risks. But these actors are prior to their interactions. Risks exist between actors when they define and formulate expectations under uncertainty. Even more, the ontological status of risk and uncertainty remains unclear. Although Beck argues that risks are indistinguishable from their definition, the actors’ expectations and anticipations refer to an objectively existing risk: the risk of a terrorist threat does exist and even though
there are different definitions of causal chains, possible compensation, etc., it is the risk that produces the force to redefine the basic contours of world society.

**Risk as Dispositif**

A different approach is proposed by scholars inspired by Michael Foucault where the war on terror introduces risk as a new *dispositif* of security politics (Foucault 1976). The term *dispositif* refers to the ways in which a ‘heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions’ (Foucault 1977c: 194) is configured and assembled into a specific ‘apparatus’ or ‘gaze’ and reproduced by both discursive and non-discursive practices (also Aradau and van Munster 2007: 97). However, while the notion of *dispositif* points to the production of subjectivity by a network of statements and the creation and formation of objects, it points to more than just the episteme of historically specific truth regimes: the *dispositif* is an apparatus of power interweaving what is said and what is not said (Foucault 1977b: 300). It captures the discursive and non-discursive practices by highlighting the ways in which populations, institutions and places are made by disciplining bodies. In this setting, risk is not a thing or cognitive capacity subject to rational decision, but a heterogeneous, contradicting and constantly changing set of discursive and non-discursive practices (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008). Risk shifts the boundary between the sayable and unsayable and between the visible and invisible. It creates new heterotopias such as Guantanamo and new utopian political projects (Neal 2004).

These ideas have been applied, for example, by Aradau and van Munster in their analysis of the impact of precautionary measures on the relationship between the present and the future and the ways in which this relationship is controlled (Aradau and von Munster 2007, 2008). They thereby criticize Beck’s view on an assumed inability to insure and calculate risks: Beck would thereby neglect the politics and lobbying of the insurance companies leading to the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA). This Act effectively provided a temporary bail out as catastrophic risks are actually insured by insurer and reinsurer. Risks are thus not beyond control by proclaiming their incalculability signed in the U.S federal law, but made subject to the art of governance (Aradau and Munster 2007: 97; Lobo-Guerrero 2008). Furthermore, holding on to a realist ontology, Beck would underestimate the constructedness and thus political contestation over risks. Through an assemblage of material and discursive elements risk enact actors and is therefore not just a characteristic of our society, but ‘ordering our world through managing social problems and surveying populations’ (Beck 2007: 97). In particular the employment of precautionary measures acting on the ‘limits’ of knowledge or probably even beyond knowledge, allow for the governance of the unknown. Precautionary risk is based on four rationalities: zero risk, worst case scenario, shifting the burden of proof and serious and irreversible damage – replacing traditional rationalities of risk insurance (risk identification, risk reduction and risk management) (ibid. 102; also Daase and Kessler 2007). As a result, the ‘global risks’ are divided and controlled by proactive security policies, surveillance of populations and movements (or circulations).

It is interesting to note, though far from being accidental, that also in Aradau and van Munster’s discussion on precautionary measures, it is the notion of uncertainty that redefines security measures. As they argue:
precautionary risk introduces within the computation of the future its very limit, the finity of uncertainty and potential damage. It is therefore exactly the opposite of prudence. If the latter recommended what ‘precautions’ to take under conditions of knowledge, the former demands that we act under scientific and causal uncertainty. (Aradau and van Munster 2007: 101)

It is this uncertainty beyond secure knowledge that makes terrorism a “risk beyond risk”, of which we do not have, nor cannot have, the knowledge or the measure’ (ibid. 102). Precaution addresses the uncertain, the unknown we try to prevent. The precautionary principle works at the boundary of risk and uncertainty and is not just a change within the notion of ‘risk’ itself. And as this reference to ‘beyond measure’ indicates, uncertainty signifies a realm where rationalism breaks down but where we try to impute rational calculus.

Risk as Mode of Observation

A third avenue to the ‘risk and security’ problématique derives from Luhmann’s radical constructivist rewriting of systems theory. Of course, this is not the place to engage in a lengthy discussion on systems theory, but it might be sufficient to highlight that systems are not things in an ontological sense, but only constituted and reproduced by the observation and use of distinctions inscribed in communication. Systems exist only in their continuation, in the moment of the constantly reproducing connectivity of the present to a possible future communication.

Insofar as systems operate by the continuing enactment of distinctions, risk has no existence outside of communication. Risk is neither a psychological attribute nor some ontological sequence. There ‘is’ no ‘risk’ that could execute force on the nation state or that somehow demands states to act in a certain way. Rather, risk is a mode of observation based on specific distinctions. As every ‘thing’ or unity results from temporary condensation of meaning using and reproducing distinctions, the meaning of words and concept is not located ‘inside’ but ‘between’ concepts. This includes the very term of risk itself. The notion of risk in itself is meaningless until it is separated from and differentiated from counter-concepts. One cannot simply observe risk without at the same time differentiating it from something else. To know what risk ‘is’ or what it ‘does’, one cannot simply look at it but needs to reconstruct the hidden and (in)visible semantic distinctions. And it is this setting apart that gives meaning to risk.

In this sense, whatever distinction one chooses to start with, risk remains an ascription and a specific mode of observation that creates and performs its own reality (also MacKenzie 2006). From this perspective, risk is not simply a form of knowledge or some material force or necessity, but equally characterized by our non-knowledge. Risk marks the boundary between knowledge and non-knowledge and the way in which this boundary might be made known. At the same time, this boundary between knowledge and non-knowledge and the knowledge about our non-knowledge are of a different kind than simply the knowledge of some fact. The question can only be what the use of risk does and what societal preconditions a specific use of this semantic there are – and not what risk ‘is’ in an ontological sense. The notion and its use inevitably rest and reproduce societal meaning structures concerning the social, time and reality that are inscribed in the connectivity of communications.
This opens the way to see risk embedded in and reproduced by a multiplicity of overlapping and conflicting discourses. What the risk of ‘pollution’ means is different in each functional system such as law, health, economy, religion, etc. Each system, based on its own rules of significations, sense-making and logic, reconstructs and endows risk with a different meaning. The societal observation of some risk, for example of a terrorist attack, then presents itself a flux of contradictions and a multiplicity of logics simultaneously at play.

Exactly this multiplicity or polycontextuality of risk instantly refers back to a constitutive uncertainty. As every discourse reconstructs some assumed ‘objective’ risks in its own terms and logic, uncertainty refers to the specific way in which communication is connected. It is not simply some residual category, but the constantly reproduction of uncertainty absorption and production provides the space of the possible where variety and evolution of communication and its semantics forms become possible. Uncertainty is always reduced to risk by social systems (i.e. by processes of categorization, world disclosure, interpretation and observation, etc.) thereby producing new internal contingencies and uncertainties in the form of other excluded alternatives, other possible worlds and perspectives that always makes one’s own position contingent and fluid. Uncertainty is the noise allowing the construction of order that depends on forms of social differentiation.

Having argued that the risk approach to security studies could equally be called the ‘uncertainty’ approach, one could instantly wonder why then there is so much noise about risk these days when uncertainty is a well-known concept in ‘traditional’ approaches to security anyway. As I will argue in the second section, the notion of uncertainty used by risk approaches differs fundamentally from the one we are acquainted with in international relations (IR) with important theoretical and methodological consequences.

Uncertainty and Risk

The last section has argued that, within the risk approach, it is more the notion of uncertainty than the notion of risk itself that signifies the current changes. At the same time, the notion of uncertainty in itself hardly justifies current interests as it has a long trajectory in IR. Decades ago Hans Morgenthau emphasized the ‘uncertainty’ of the balance of power warning us for overconfidence in our scientific concepts (Morgenthau 1948: 223ff.) and John Herz referred to a structural uncertainty when he noted that: ‘no one can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing unity, power competition ensures, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on’ (Herz 1950: 157). IR as a discipline is almost founded upon the conviction that the international is characterized by the lack of a fixed set of signs, giving rise to uncertainty about the motives or intentions of other states. Under conditions of uncertainty, there is no ‘absolute’ security and attempts to ‘maximize’ security can lead to negative feedbacks, with everybody worse off (see in particular Jervis 1978).

Yet, as the common representation of uncertainty in terms of the security dilemma and operationalization by game and contract theoretical models reveals, the notion of uncertainty used in ‘security studies’ is deeply embedded in a positivist philosophy of science. Uncertainty neither challenges the imperatives of instrumental rationality, nor has it any epistemological connotation. Uncertainty exists only within given games and logically prior to any interaction. The categories and rules of the game remain, thus allowing for change only within the confines of given categories and games.
To capture the relevance of risk and uncertainty for contemporary security practices, it is therefore necessary to leave behind the positivist notion of uncertainty where uncertainty is always equated with and squeezed into the paradigm of ‘risk’ decisions. At this point, the distinction of uncertainty and risk as introduced by Knight and Keynes shows some promise (Keynes 1937; Knight 1921). In situations of genuine uncertainty, we need to answer the question ‘what is the case’, pointing to questions of world making and world disclosure where we first have to ask ourselves in what game and in what model we actually are. This knowledge is fundamentally different from comparing costs and benefits within a model simply because these categories do not have any meaning until epistemological questions are settled. The kind of knowledge that Keynes or Knight therefore envisage is not to be found in propositions, laws and theories, but the ability to follow rules or what Polanyi called the knowing-how. This knowing-how, in contrast to the knowing-that, points to underlying social norms and conventions allowing for interactions and the construction of probabilistic knowledge.

Focusing on genuine uncertainty indicates that our knowledge, models and ideas bring reality about, that knowledge is not simply a passive insight or a mirror of reality but always part of the social world. Not only what we know but also what we do not know are ‘socially’ constructed. Non-knowledge and the knowledge about our non-knowledge is of a different kind than the knowledge ‘about’ the world, opening the space for a different logic that breaks free from the identity principle, its hierarchical relationship of sentences and quest for some foundation, and embraces paradoxes, contradictions and a plurality of worlds.

Starting therefore from a completely different concept of knowledge, the ‘uncertainty as risk’ and ‘uncertainty vs. risk’ approaches differ in their understanding of contingency. For the positivist ‘uncertainty as risk’ approach, contingency is a natural product like the drawing of some variable or the result of a lottery while for the ‘risk vs. uncertainty’ contingency is a social product. Genuine uncertainty is reduced by ‘technologies’ of risk management and disciplinary rationalities and in the moment of uncertainty reduction, new contingencies and new uncertainties are produced generating the realm for new contingencies.

From this perspective, the current interest in risk as an approach to security studies has three legs: a redefined concept of (not) knowing (knowledge as practice), an abandonment of a positivist philosophy of science and methodologies, and the identification of a redefined production of social contingency. I assume that this reference to a systemic shift may also explain why the work of Ulrich Beck, Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann attracts attention. Despite their fundamental differences, they all have in common this reference to some ‘systemic’ shift. For Ulrich Beck, for example, the terrorist attacks have led to a ‘death of distance’ and a silence of words that do not capture today’s reality: ‘the difference between war and peace, the military and police, war and crime, and national and international security are, from within and without, completely annulled’ (Beck 2007: 255). Writings inspired by Foucault use risk to highlight new technologies of self, new inclusion and exclusion mechanisms reproduced by a (redefined) set of discursive and non-discursive practices. A discursive shift that produces new political spaces (heterotopias and utopias) and new discursive practices as represented for example by the precautionary principle. Writings inspired by Niklas Luhmann argue that the shift from ‘security’ to ‘risk’ represents a shift in the social differentiation, i.e. a functional differentiation, of world society where discourses alter their constitutive boundaries. The shift alters the very relation between the political, the economic and the law and thereby goes beyond the image of a ‘broadening’ of the security concept. In the end then, it is
the systemic shift and not the existence of some objective ‘risk’ that a risk approach to 
security highlights.

This raises a further conceptual problem that I think these attempts all struggle with: 
how can the systemic shift be described? How can this newness be apprehended without 
losing it right away by squeezing it into well-known concepts? What kind of vocabulary 
do we need? On the one hand, as all three ‘avenues’ highlight, the war on terror for 
example addresses genuinely inter-subjective phenomena that are beyond the individual 
calculus or ‘rational’ choice. On the other hand, our political vocabulary of sovereignty, 
security, interests instantly point back to the state as an autonomous actor where the 
inter-subjective is ultimately reduced to the subjective level. It is this de-coupling of 
the political vocabulary from the state in order to capture the de-coupling from ‘the 
political’ from the state that the risk approach tries to achieve. A point to which I will 
turn now.

The Saying and Doing of Security

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 are widely perceived to be neither crime nor an act or 
aggression that by itself could trigger the law of war. It was not a private act, but nor 
was it just something that happened between public actors. Terrorist networks might have 
supporters but not a constituency, they might have camps but no embassy, they might have 
speakers sending video messages, but no addresses where a protest note could be 
sent. Of course, terrorism itself is a long-known phenomenon and would by itself not raise 
that many eyebrows. However, the meaning transnational terrorism and the ‘war on terror’ 
acquired does challenge some ‘traditional’ convictions. This feeds back to the meaning we 
ascribe to our political concepts such as the state, sovereignty and the concept of security 
itself.

The notion of security in international relations is tightly connected to the nation state 
and used to point to an existential threat, a state of exception set apart and differentiated 
from everyday life of the state’s citizens. Risk on the other hand is all about the control, 
management and shape of everyday practices, the routinization and normalization of the 
‘exception’ (Bigo 2002; Neal 2004). It transforms contingency into a calculative practice 
where security is transformed from a public into a private good (Leander 2005a). As a result, 
security is commodified and transformed into a business, a product that can be produced 
by private companies not by reducing but by managing and controlling contingency. With 
the commodification comes the idea that private military companies (PMCs) are the more 
efficient and appropriate actors augmenting the neo-liberal governmentality to security 
provision where demand can be ‘generated’ by marketing strategies and ‘positioning’ in the 
market. ‘As such, security becomes increasingly a question of the right technical solutions, 
and not a question of justice or social and political reform’ (Abrahamsen and Williams 

The management of risk is big business: Risk allows the hedging, spread and even the 
deliberate exposure to security threats and catastrophic events by buying or selling risks 
over the capital market by issuing bonds and derivatives. In the end, with the rise of the 
private sector in security provision, the state has lost its pivotal role in interpreting data. 
While the state was the key authority for security concerns, risk points to a transnationally 
organized discourse, shaped by a multitude of rationalities including insurance companies, 
banks, hedge funds, private business (Aradau and van Munster 2008; Peterson 2008b).
These changes are not simply a shift from ‘the state’ towards the market, but highlight the different rules of formation and correlation, a redefining constellation between these various discourses, where for example international law is increasingly used not to restrain but to legitimate violence and has a hard time to regulate these private actors and businesses (Kessler and Werner 2008).

Risk changes not only the social dimension, but the temporality of world politics as well. Risk shows how security practices turn from a reactive towards preventive and proactive measures managing not the actuality but the potentiality of some ‘risk’. Consequently, new methods like scenario planning or targeted sanctions are invoked to provide meaning to an open future. Third, risk changes the ‘factual dimension’ as risk reaches beyond state boundaries towards everyday life (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008; Dillon and Neal 2008; Lobo-Guerrero 2008). While the security technologies were concerned with border-management and coincide with modern forms of knowledge and freedom, today security practices are directed at the biopolitics where, as Mick Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero summarized, ‘biological entities understood in these terms will not be secured through the practices traditionally favoured by the geopolitical discourses of political subjectivity. They cannot be secured in such ways because, representing a differently understood referent object of both freedom and power, living entities pose a quite different kind of security problematic. For one thing their very presence is not fixed’ (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008: 270–1). It is not the human being ‘in itself’, but the self is constructed by a multiplicity of technologies, rationalities or discourses. All three changes, the commodification of security by risk, the acceleration of time and the biopoliticization highlight a parcel of current changes under way but, at the same time, point to the limitedness of a state-based, rational approach to security.

**Conclusion**

This contribution has argued that there is not ‘the’ ‘risk’ approach to security studies. Rather, different avenues with different conceptual schemes try to capture the changing mode of contingency production within the world polity. With the notion of risk, scholars try to capture the overall transformation of the political landscape with its ‘private’ and ‘transnational’ actors and the production of new uncertainties resulting from their interplay. From this perspective, the current interest in risk highlights the different kind of (un)certainties prevalent in world politics, the changing contours of dangers and threats and consequently a necessary shift in the knowledge structure of world politics. In other words, Beck, Foucault and Luhmann provide entry points from where the change of the inter-subjective meaning structures can be reconstructed without falling back on a vocabulary that reinforces the individual actor and loses the inter-subjective from sight. And it is probably the promise of the risk approach to explore this terrain. Having said that, this contribution sought to trace some changes of the ‘saying’ and the ‘doing’ of security, the semantic and structural shifts we can witness, in order to see what a risk approach highlighting the systemic shift encompasses. Of course, this transformation includes changes in ethics, aesthetics, and further the rules of formation and correlation of discourses I could not talk about but instead only highlight a small proportion of this still emerging field.
Notes

1 Of course, the systemic shift identified in part two has more implications and affects diverse fields from aesthetics, ethics, design, art, competition and collaboration between military companies that this contributions unfortunately cannot talk about. For a discussion see e.g. Lacy (2008). For an analysis of the ‘ethics of risk’ see Peter Burgess, Ethics of Risk, unpublished manuscript, and Burgess et al. (2007).

2 I refer to the German edition because, as Beck said, the German version became a completely different and updated book than the English version.

3 A point he now shares with Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory. It might be too much to claim that he has accepted Luhmann’s previous critique, but the notion of non-knowledge and how Beck uses it is surprisingly similar to systems theory. See below on p. 8.


5 In Daase and Kessler (2007) and Kessler and Daase (2008) we tried to develop two typologies of the changing contours and interplay of knowledge and non-knowledge give rise to different security practices in the war on terror.