

FRIDAY: THE IMMORAL MINORITY

While philosopher Slavoj Žižek isn't everybody's cup of quirky tea, he's got a valid point in this video.

The right-wing has abandoned its claim to be the Moral Majority.

Don't mistake this as a validation of the Democratic Party here in the U.S.; they are only earning a majority in terms of politics, and in no small part by being the "Not GOP" party. With its leadership cozying up to war criminals, climate denialists and fossil fuel-based polluters, and general denigrators both of human rights and the public commons, they are not the Moral Majority by default.

But an unorganized left in this country rejects the right-wing's ethical decay implicitly underpinning the Republican Party. The left rejects those values which undermine democracy – misogyny, racism and marginalization of other minorities, the ongoing subversion of individuals' rights to promote the interests of corporations.

A true Moral Majority won't support a social contract undermining democracy by limiting life, liberty, and happiness' pursuit to a narrow few. It's well past time for the broader left to coalesce into an organized entity based upon the belief that all humans are created equal and deserving a more perfect union.

Zapped by Zika

- "ZIKA VIRUS | Days since White House funding request: 186 | Funding response from Congress: \$0 | Zika cases in US and territories: 8,580" (Tweet, Dan

Diamond/Politico)

- Peter robbed to pay Paul: DHHS pulls money from other projects to fund Zika vaccine research (Reuters) – Lacking new dedicated funding from Congress, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services squeezed out \$81 million and spread it into Zika vaccine research, with \$34 million of that to the National Institutes of Health and \$47 million to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). The white House had asked for \$1.9 billion last fall for Zika, but that amount was pared down by 42%; Republicans then objected to any of the remaining portion going to Planned Parenthood, putting Democrats in a bind. Access to birth control is critically important to preventing Zika's spread; access to abortion could prevent the birth of severely deformed infants who will live short, utterly miserable, and expensive lives.
- Arthrogryposis – congenital joint defects – associated with Zika during pregnancy

(The BMJ) – Dislocated and or misshaped knees, ankles, elbows, hips appeared in children born with other neurological defects found in Zika-infected fetuses. Further research is necessary to prove both the virus is causal and learn the mechanism by which the virus inflicts this damage in utero. The patients had been tested for other known causes of arthrogryposis – toxoplasmosis, cytomegalovirus, rubella, syphilis, and HIV. All were negative.

- First infant death due to Zika reported in Texas (KHOU) – The infant's mother traveled to El Salvador during pregnancy where it is believed she contracted the virus.
- Zika virus case confirmed in Monroe County, Michigan (Detroit Free Press) – But the method of infection is not clear (what?!). County health and state officials are working toward mosquito surveillance.

Wheels and steals

- Millions of vehicles made from 1995 on vulnerable to

keyless-remote hacking (USENIX) – Researchers at University of Birmingham and Kasper & Oswald GmbH presented a paper at the USENIX 2016 conference, showing more than 20 years' worth of VW Group vehicles are hackable using inexpensive Arduino-based RF transceiver technology. Alfa Romeo, Chevrolet, Peugeot, Lancia, Opel, Renault, Ford and other makes relying on the Hitag2 access security method are similarly at risk. Researchers also looked at after-market keyless entry remotes for these and other vehicles; the cars for which these worked were also vulnerable. All vehicles tested appear to be those made for the European market, but the research noted the radio frequency differences – 315 MHz band in North America and the 433 MHz or 868 MHz band in Europe – used in remotes. The paper's research team notified VW in November 2015 of their results; NXP Semiconductor, a manufacturer of Hitag2 remote technology, was also notified. NXP had already

informed customers of the vulnerability in 2012 and has already improved device security.

- Volkswagen suppressed news about keyless remote insecurity since 2013 (Bloomberg) – The same researchers from University of Birmingham and Kasper & Oswald GmbH had originally approached NXP Semiconductor and VW with their work in 2012 and 2013, respectively. VW sued and blocked release of their work; the paper was released this past week at USENIX only “after lengthy negotiations” and the removal of a single sentence which car thieves could use to easily crack the keyless remotes. A number of suspicious automobile thefts over the years may have relied on hacking remotes; will insurance companies look into these thefts and demand recovery from VW?
- DOE grants Ford \$6M for fuel cell research (Detroit Free Press) – Existing fuel cell technology has been too expensive for successful commercialization; the grant will be used to develop cheaper technology

competitive with battery and
internal combustion engines.

Longread: Geopolitics

FiveBooks.com interviewed former state department official and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Jennifer M. Harris, about geopolitics. She discusses the topic and offers five book recommendations about the same. Harris is the co-author of recently released *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*. Given her work as U.S. National Intelligence Council staff followed by work on economics under then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, this interview might offer a preview to future statecraft.

Friday Jazz

It's still Friday somewhere according to my clock. Try French performer Zaz, stage name for Isabelle Geffroy. If you like this ditty, preview more of her work on her channel on SoundCloud.

It's been a hectic week here; next week doesn't look any better, but I'll aim to be here on Monday. Have a relaxing weekend!