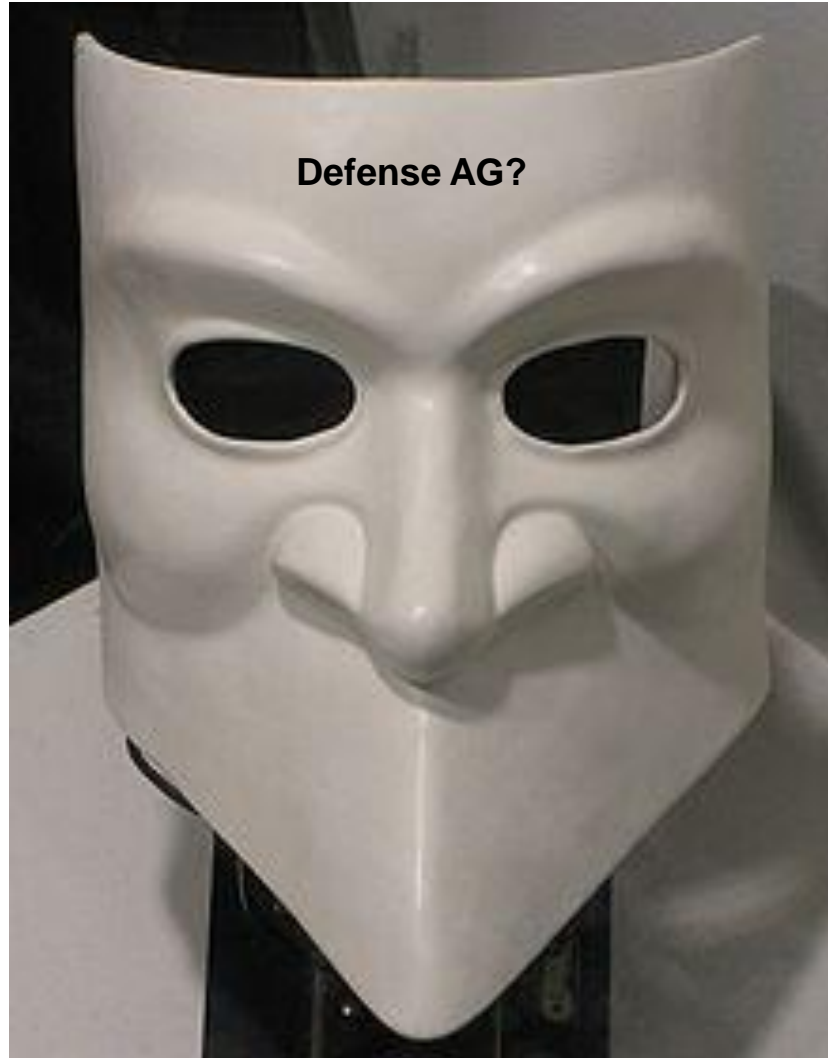




# The Mask of the Honorable Citizen

Why the Venetians of Old would have  
known how to communicate  
and how to do do business  
**anonymously** on the web

# About the Author



# About the Author

**Defense AG?**

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# Anonymity under Suspicion

- Ability to speak freely without wearing a mask is understood as an achievement of democracy
- Bans to wear masks when taking part in public demonstrations are common
- Refusal to show face – e.g. for religious or cultural reasons – raises suspicion
  - Burka discussion



# Anonymity under Suspicion

-  „What if a masked biker runs into me on the street and I do not see her or his face?“
-  „Those who don‘t show their face when saying their opinions are cowards!“
-  „They must have something to hide!“
-  Sweden thinks about ban on cash...





# Internet Anonymity

- On the internet, the image of anonymity is different (at least among many netizens)
- Surveillance is even easier than in the real world
- Customer and user profiling, tracing and dragnet investigations by „masked“ or hidden stakeholders are common, therefore the average user must have a chance to act anonymously.




# Internet Anonymity

-  Only anonymity guarantees balance of power on the net
-  Anonymity is understood as a warrantor of the freedom of speech



# Another Time – Another Culture



 Imagine that you were walking around in your hometown wearing a mask hiding your face, your body and your clothes...

- How would people on the street react?
- Would you be able to do business?
- How would you feel joining a neighbourhood meeting that way?
- What would you think about politicians in parliament speaking that way?






# Another Time – Another Culture

-  In old Venice, wearing a combination of mask and disguise during daily life and work was common among the citizens.
-  The use of these masks was based on an anonymity concept which was regulated by government and widely accepted for several hundred years.




# Another Time – Another Culture

-  During political negotiations and discussions in parliamentary institutions, the citizens of Venice not only wore masks, they also spoke with an altered voice. Only the arguments should speak for themselves.



# Another Time – Another Culture

-  The mask and disguise that made „incognito“ living possible was called „Bauta e volto“.
  - Etymology: Same root as German „behüten“, „to protect“
  - Hood, made of silk, covered the head down to the shoulders
  - Face covered by „volto“ or „larve“
  - Tricorn hat



# Another Time – Another Culture



**Pietro Longhi**  
**„Il Ridotto“**  
**(The Casino“)**



# Another Time – Another Culture





# How the Bauta was used

- A mask for daily life
  - Leaves mouth part free. Speaking, eating and drinking was possible.
  - Hides clothing
  - No problem to walk swiftly
  - Eyes unhindered. Person behind mask sees everything.



# How the Bauta was used

- Commonly used for...
  - A visit to the Casino (mask mandatory!)
  - Different types of adventures (Think of Casanova!)
  - First negotiations with unknown traders from abroad (until their intentions and trustworthiness were proved)



Would love to suggest this to amazon and its affiliates 😊



# How the Bauta was used

- Commonly used for...
  - Certain types of governmental events (conferences, elections – mask mandatory to guarantee equality throughout stakeholder group)
- Used by noble citizens of Venice only








**(those by the way who were accountable and credit-worthy)**





# From the user's perspective

-  Convenient device
-  Anonymity guaranteed
-  „I am a Citizen of Venice“
-  „I can hide what I want to hide –like all my friends and peers!“
-  „Negligible, understandable restrictions are to obtain while wearing it, I will obey them“





## From the user's perspective

- „I will not be allowed to wear weapons along with it.“
- No limitation of business or personal life
- Reduces risks during first negotiations with strangers, „I won't get involved too easily!“
- Respect guaranteed
- „My arguments will speak for themselves.“



# From the user's perspective

-  „I know when to mask and when to unmask.“
-  „My political arguments will be heard.“




# Seen from the outside

- Seen by Venetians and friends of Venice:
  - Bearer of mask is Venetian citizen, a peer
  - Anonymity is guaranteed by law
  - In political life, bearer of mask will not profit inadequately from his or her money or position
  - No weapons
  - „I know how to meet and greet.“  
(„Signora (!) Maschera“)




# Seen from the outside

-  Seen by Venetians and friends of Venice:
- „He or she has something to hide – just like me“
  - „A masked person will not behave antisocial, or I will call the police and other people will help me.“



# Seen from the outside

-  Completely different to Anglo-American „public life“ model:  
In public, the Venetians made themselves irrerecognizable



# Seen from the outside

## Seen by Others:

- „They all must have something to hide, and that must be unethical!“
- „They will behave antisocial, so beware!“
- „A nation of pirates and hedonists!“



**Isn't that comparable to how older generations see internet geeks?**



# Internet vs. Venice

## **The Streets of Venice**

- Everybody knows everybody, and the streets and waterways are narrow
- Every now and then, you have to communicate with strangers from other cultures
- Multicultural, multilingual environment
- Palaver culture

## **The Internet world**

- No chance to know who is spying on you
- Every now and then, you have to communicate with strangers from other cultures
- Multicultural, multilingual environment
- Palaver culture





# Internet vs. Venice

## **The Streets of Venice**


- Politics, business and entertainment intervowen
- Anonymity is part of culture
- > Carnival

## **The Internet world**

- Politics, business and entertainment intervowen
- Anonymity is part of culture
- > Newsgroups, Image Boards...






# Other areas of interrelation

 Flash-Mobs:  
Anonymous  
groups, formed  
by „image  
boards“, tend to  
wear masks  
when entering  
reality





## Why did it work?

-  Anonymity was understood as a right and a warrantor of democracy and freedom
-  Ethical and political framework valued the use of the Bauta as an „anonymizer“
-  Strong psychological contracts compensated for the risk of antisocial behavior. With wearing the Bauta, responsibility, honour and the dignity of the nation were strongly associated.




# Why did it work?

- Shared ethics
- Strong incentive: The Advantages of being allowed to wear the Bauta were strongly bound to staying within the predefined limits of a well-defined role. If you misbehaved, there was a risk of being unmasked and outlawed!
- Acceptance is the key factor!



# Something to learn from it?

 Paradoxon: As long as society tends to see anonymous internet users as potential criminals or traitors and as long as anonymity is understood as a second-choice exception from responsible social life, wearing a virtual mask will always mean stepping out of the limits of civilisation.

**So mistrust in anonymity fosters its misuse!**



## Something to learn from it?

- Acceptance of anonymity can only be brought forward by society, but governments may help by setting simple rules and supporting the right to act anonymously.
- Venice had a good success with supporting anonymity, but taking every chance to combat and prosecute misuse whenever it occurred.  
**Risk management seems to have worked.**





# Unsorted thoughts

- How do we detect weapons of anonymous internet users? We have malware scanners, and the financial industry has brilliant behaviour-based fraud detection in place. Check for bad behaviour, not for the identity of users.

**Please do not ask me now if I would say that old Venice would have been the perfect market for new generation body scanners !!!**



# Unsorted thoughts

-  Prove credit-worthiness without revealing personal information. It works.
-  Discuss aspects of anonymity in schools. Do not devalue it automatically.





[www.licence-to-mask.com](http://www.licence-to-mask.com)