

Journal of Terrorism Research



Volume 5, Issue 3, September 2014



ISSN: 2049-7040



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Articles

Drones, The US And The New Wars In Africa

by Philip Attuquayefio



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Introduction

Since the early 20th Century, Africa has witnessed varying degrees of subversion from the *Mau Mau* nationalist campaigners in Kenya in the 1950s to acts by rebel groups in the infamous intrastate wars of Sub-Saharan Africa. While the first movement evolved mainly from political acts geared towards the struggle for independence, the latter was mostly evident in attempts to obtain psychological or strategic advantages by combatants in the brutal civil wars of Liberia, Sierra Leone, the African Great Lakes region and a number of such civil war theatres in Africa. The element of unrestrained violence commonly identified as a defining feature of terrorism (Attuquayefio, 2006), was palpable in all these movements, yet the socio-political or military drive for these movements barely included religion. The 1990s, however, marked the dawn of religious fundamentalism and its induced terrorism in Africa. With an overwhelming proportion of these terrorist movements tracing their foundations to Islam, a religion that is ordinarily portrayed as one of peace ironically continues to roll out some of the worst acts of terrorism in Africa. This arguably came to the limelight with the August 7, 1998 terrorist bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that killed over two hundred people. Subsequently in 2002, an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya was attacked. (Lyman & Morrison, 2004) The attribution of these events to the Egypt-based Islamic Jihad and other Al Qaeda surrogates such as its name sake in the Islamic Maghreb was the first public indication that international terrorist organisations were inducing affiliates on the continent. Subsequently, actions of Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the rise of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, the insurrection of Islamic Fundamentalists in Mali in March 2012 as well as the renewed interest in security on the continent by the US and key European countries such as the United Kingdom and France all point to Africa's emerging relevance as a frontier for the global War on Terrorism.

The US has conventionally been an advocate of global peace and security and has engineered actions, in collaboration with other countries, to guarantee this state of affairs. This notwithstanding, the post-Cold War readjustment of global alliances along the lines of geopolitical significance saw the gradual waning of US interest and activities in various parts of Africa. In cases like Somalia, humanitarian interventionist disasters further coalesced with this general trend to reduce US interest in Africa. Following the 9/11 attacks on the US and the consequent launch of the Global War on Terrorism, the US has renewed active interest in regions considered as brewing grounds for terrorists. The recent recalibration of US interest in Africa is, justifiably, as a result of the growing movement of terrorists on the continent.

Just like the terrorist threats, the approaches for US interventions on matters of national security have also evolved. From conspicuous full-scale military actions in the Bush and Clinton years to the "light footprints" favored by the Obama administration. The latter has involved the use of Special Forces, and other relatively



more discreet approaches. A critical element of the Obama administration's counterterrorism approaches is the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) popularly known as Drones. UAVs are remotely controlled aircrafts designed with a capacity to carry a wide variety of accessories for both civilian and military use. These include long range and wide angled cameras, communication and target detection sensors and military hardware such as missiles. Added to this is the stealth ability of some drones. Consequently, they are typical for reconnaissance, surveillance and target engagement missions (Washburn & Kress, 2009). Although, it's been suggested that experimentation with drones have been ongoing since the early 1990s, its first deployment in a context of war was in the former Yugoslavia in the mid-1990s where they were reportedly used as surveillance equipment (Turse & Engelhardt, 2012). Subsequent evolution of drones saw its emergence as armaments for target engagement particularly in post 9/11 counterterrorism activities of the US. One of the early cases in this regard was reported in Yemen in 2002, where six alleged Al Qaeda operatives were killed by drone fire (Kretzmer, 2005). Since then, it is fast gaining notoriety as the armament of choice from the options available to the US.

The use of drones has however not been without controversy both in host countries where it has, for instance, garnered political fallouts generally deemed as unfavorable to US moral leverage in global affairs, and within the domestic politics of the US, where the administration has been accused of arbitrarily authorising execution of people including some US citizens. The latter has constituted a legal conundrum that continues to attract negative publicity to the use of drones. The tactical fallouts have been suggested as far direr, namely, an increase in volunteers ready to launch a global jihad against the US and its western allies following the fabrication of drone casualties in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen. (Taj, 2011)

The readiness of the US to deploy drones towards prosecuting the war on terror in Africa has long gone beyond the assumptive phase. In 2001, the US acquired and renovated Camp Lemonnier from the armed forces of Djibouti and subsequently, in May 2003, designated the facility as the base for the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). Since then, Camp Lemonnier has earned the reputation as a critical base for drone operations around the Horn of Africa and Yemen. In March 2013, President Obama announced further plans to set up another base in the West African country of Niger. Djibouti and Niger have been officially confirmed, yet, reports suggest that the US has access to a lot more operational ranges for drones than publicly acknowledged (Whitlock & Miller, 2011). In terms of operability however, the first reported use of drones within the continent was a 2007 incident in which drones guided antitank missile gunships to blow down a convoy carrying one of Al Qaeda's top operatives and suspected hideout in Somalia (Axe, 2012). Since then, the US is reported to have operated drones from a number of sites in Africa including Djibouti, and Burkina Faso.

This paper utilises open source data to interrogate the state of terrorism in Africa (conceptualised as new wars) and the options applicable to the African context. It is argued that one of the ways the US can make game-changing interventions through surveillance and intelligence-gathering in several hotspots in Africa, without compromising its own national security is through the use of drones. The paper begins by briefly discussing the 'new wars' in Africa before making a case for the complementary utility of drones in fighting terrorism in Africa. It concludes by suggesting policy options to counter balance the utility-blighting publicity currently surrounding the use of drones in Africa. A caveat underpinning this paper is an admission by the author that the causal and sustaining factors of terrorism in Africa are multi-faceted and in most cases derive from threats to aspects of human security palpable in terrorists-generating communities. Consequently, the phenomenon can only be addressed through a multidimensional approach – one in which drones can actively feature mainly through surveillance and intelligence-gathering.



Terrorism: The New Wars in Africa

In the aftermath of the independence wars, the second major wave of conflicts on the continent—the civil wars of the post-Cold War era between the late 1980s and early 1990s saw countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Cote D'Ivoire among others witnessing a succession of violent conflicts. The consequence of these conflicts were abductions, systematic rape, genocide and a host of actions that fall within the generic description of terrorism. These acts were mainly domestic in nature and perpetrated by ethnic and political groups. It was therefore not surprising that the US maintained a general disinterest in activities in Africa during that period.

The latter part of the 1990s witnessed a marginal rise in terrorist incidents on the continent of Africa. Unlike the previous period, an overwhelming majority of these acts were attributed to the activities of Islamic extremists. The manifestations of these acts were undoubtedly ruthless yet somewhat limited to relatively few countries in East and the Horn of Africa. In the 1998 attacks on the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, for instance, two hundred people are on record to have been killed and over a thousand injured. Yet in comparison to the global numbers, it was insignificant. In fact during that period, Africa placed a mere fifth, behind Latin America, Western Europe, Asia and the Middle East, as the most targeted regions for international acts of terrorism (Botha & Solomon, 2005).

In the 21st century, acts of terrorism in Africa have gone up exponentially (Hough, 2002). This is attributable to a number of events. One of these has had to do with the post-9/11 War on terror, and the military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan by the US and its allies. Statistics have, for instance, shown dislocation and relocation of suicide terrorist cells and training camps as well as the death or detention of several top operatives of Al Qaeda following the commencement of the US led War on terror (Cronin, 2003). With the disruption of its activities, Al Qaeda has adopted a more diffused approach, one that has seen the centralised command and control previously held by Osama bin Laden diffuse to other parts of the world in line with the objective to strike soft targets of the US and its western allies. With Africa playing host to monumental commercial and state interests of the US and a number of Western countries, strikes against these targets have sought to demonstrate that al Qaeda and its affiliates still retain the will and the capacity to operate around the world (Crenshaw, 2011). Relatedly, the diffusion indirectly caused by the war on terror has made the identification and neutralising of terrorist cells more difficult.

The post-independence narrative of a host of African countries has also been dominated by human insecurity arising out of the multivariate effects of poverty and general economic insecurity, environmental degradation, inadequate management of health related threats to survival as well as erosion in the significance of jealously guarded indigenous culture primarily through modernisation. These effects have been attributed to political instability occasioned mainly by the politics of *coup d'états* as well as the tradition of woeful governance and corruption that defines leadership in many of these countries. Consequently, elements of human security have traditionally not been accorded superlative positions in the thought processes of African States relative to the desire by successive regimes to hold on to power; and where they have, in such lopsided proportions that parts of the polity are palpable left out of development. Responses to these local dynamics have evolved from largely tame protests to outright militancy and terrorism. The surge towards the terrorism end of the continuum have within the last two decades obtained motivation from the relative successes of militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in locking down national and sometimes global attention to their causes. It is therefore not surprising that Somalia, Mali and Nigeria, three of the countries in Africa severely challenged by the activities of organised terror groups have had



infamous records of human insecurity in specific parts of their territories. In Nigeria for instance, Uzodike and Maiangwa (2012) describe the governance challenges as “a cocktail of widespread failures of state policies, inefficient and wasteful parastatal, and endemic corruption, poverty, unemployment, and extensive underdevelopment in the North of Nigeria”. Within that context, it is not surprising that Boko Haram emerged and galvanised active membership among segments of the Northern population.

The franchising of Al Qaeda has also contributed to the increase in terrorist activities on the continent. Out of these loose arrangements, terrorists’ organisations in Africa, continue to adopt and adapt the *modus operandi* of Al Qaeda. One of the foremost organisations depicting this franchise is Boko Haram. Operating mainly from the Northern parts of Nigeria since 2002, Boko Haram claims to be fighting for the institution of Islamic rule in Nigeria. Beyond their objective, their modes of operation; a combination of suicide attacks and car bombs in civilian areas, is dangerously similar to Al Qaeda’s mode of operation.

Elsewhere on the continent, a number of terrorist organisations have engineered actions that fit within the anti-western agenda of Al Qaeda but also indicate, in some cases, the localised grievances of these groups. In North Africa for instance, Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been engaged in some of the high profile terrorist actions against the West and its interests as well as supporters of western ideals (Masters, 2013). Their versatility, coupled with the porous borders and vast territories in the region as well as their collaboration with other like-minded organisations in the area has resulted in an expanding trans-regional terrorist network, fast gaining reputation not just for its adopted Al Qaeda tag but also a conspicuous résumé of terrorist activities.

The West African Sub-Region is also home to two relatively recent terrorist organisations. Boko Haram operates mainly in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon, while Ansar Dine operates from Northern Mali. The former was formed in Maiduguri in 2002 as the Congregation and People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad (Onuoha, 2010). It is however known as Boko Haram, a Hausa moniker accorded to the group mainly on the basis of their proscription of western education. Similarly to AQIM, at foundation, the leaders of Boko Haram exploited Nigeria’s governance challenges particularly relating to corruption as well as socio-economic vulnerabilities which are more evident in the northern region to mobilise a base of followers, discontented with the status quo. With known links to AQIM (United Nations Security Council, 2014), and operating in a region with porous borders, the fear of Boko Haram expanding their influence is justified. In May 2013, a military offensive was launched against the group in Nigeria’s three northern states. Aided by the declaration of curfews in some cities and air strikes on identified training camps, the military indicated that the insurgents had been “halted” (Abrak, 2013). In spite of this, experience with terror cells in other parts of the world suggest that once the underlying motif is active, the dislocation arising through the decimation is merely temporal as groups and cells relocate and often hit back in a variety of revised ways. Moreover, in the particular case of Nigeria, the military has gained a reputation for exaggerating successes while downplaying setbacks (Waddington, 2014). It is therefore not surprising that subsequent to the May 2013 offensive, Boko Haram has proven to be even more organised and effective, striking key targets and conducting high profile operations such as the abduction of 200 girls from a Nigerian government secondary school in April, 2014. A further threat to the region is the presence of Ansaru, a breakaway of fringe elements in Boko Haram. Ansaru has since January, 2012 sought to enforce the fight for Islamist rule. Though a smaller group, it has sought, and perhaps obtained, recognition through high profile kidnapping and execution of western targets (Onuoha, 2013).

Mali has provided another platform for brewing terrorism in Africa. With the fall of the Gaddafi regime



in Libya, mercenaries armed with weapons, proliferated during the war, moved into Northern Mali where ethnic Tuaregs have been engaged in a long-running rebellion with the government in Bamako over the independence of Azawad in the North. Mobilised under the name Ansar al-Dine, this group has since 2012, engaged in various acts of terrorism, thus earning the US State Departments' categorisation as a terrorist organisation.

In the Horn of Africa, Al Shabaab continues to attract attention as arguably the continent's most prominent terrorist organisation both in terms of its links with Al Qaeda and its ability to strike at western targets or targets considered as sympathetic to the western cause or detrimental to Islam. While it is deemed as an outgrowth of the Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI), a radical organisation that confronted the Siad Bare regime in the early 1990s, in 2003 it began its operation as the enforcing arm of the Union of Islamic Courts (ICU), when the latter took control over Mogadishu and tried to exert a level of law and order in the Somali capital that is most notable. Following the Ethiopian intervention in December 2006, ICU was all but disbanded except for the Al Shabaab that withdrew to the south Central region of the country and launched what has become a long running insurgency first, against the Ethiopians and subsequently, troops serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia. While its objective resonates as the creation of an Islamic State of Somalia, its affiliation with Al Qaeda has meant that the group has also sought to hit targets deemed as affronts to the global jihad currently being pursued by Al Qaeda and its affiliates.

The trend of terrorism around the continent is instructive of the intensifying wave of Islamic fundamentalism and the possibility of generating and sustaining training camps and recruits akin to the challenges confronted in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It also justifies the renewed focus of the US on Africa.

Negotiating Drones for Africa

The dynamics of terrorism in Africa are not lost to US policy makers. However, since the Somalia debacle in 1993, the US appears to have conceded to its relative weaknesses on the continent (Adebajo, 2003). This is related to the fact that it was not a colonial power and its actions on the continent during the Cold War were mostly limited to covert operations championed by the CIA. The history of US actions in Africa has therefore been more of covert 'drone-like' operations than open warfare such as witnessed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The current hyper predilection for drones in the US strategy is in line with the Obama Administration's "light footprints" and 'leading from behind policy'.

Admittedly, the adoption of drones is confronted by some controversies. This can be compared to those surrounding waterboarding and other interrogation techniques applied in US detention facilities (Bellamy, 2006). Unfortunately, the debate on the utility of drones in the context of terrorism is significantly challenged by what can best be described as the 'Pak Syndrome'. This is the reality that debates on the utility of drones are heavily influenced by their application to the war on terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Consequently, the application of drones are confronted by utility-blighting propaganda that merely portray drones as killer devices and negates the intelligence gathering and surveillance relevance and the impact of such intelligence to the war on terror. This includes the fact that the intelligence gathered potentially leads to the prevention of even more strikes, and by implication, more deaths by terrorists.

The Pak syndrome also dilutes the complementary capacity of drones in the war on terror by highlighting legal conundrums particularly focusing on issues concerning the responsibility to fair trial for suspects and the application of principles of humanitarian law (Alston, 2010 & Sadat, 2012) among others. These objections are often overrated and do not aptly reflect the reality that the war on terror is unconventional in



many respects. Moreover, certain aspects of the African context peculiarly requires the utility of drones. In arguing the veracity of the latter, it is submitted that an analysis of the trend of terrorism in Africa, points to some continent-wide commonalities from the use of guerilla tactics, the exploitation of large expanses of geographical areas and the implications of Africa's infamous porous borders on the activities of terrorist organisations. While these illuminate the nature of the terrorist threat in Africa, it is also suggestive of the strategies that are likely to make an impact in relation to managing the phenomenon of terrorism on the continent. A number of these commonalities and their implications for drone use are examined herein.

A pronounced feature of the new wars relating to terrorism in Africa is the guerilla tactics (Onuoha, 2011) employed by the various terrorist organisations on the continent. The implication is that timeless principles of war, as espoused by the Geneva and Hague conventions, for instance, are not being adhered to. For Boko Haram, Ansar Dine, AQIM and Al Shabaab for instance, civilian targets are legitimate targets and so are injured US soldiers. The weapons of choice for terrorists have been decided more by availability and less by restrictions of *Jus in Bello*. A stark reminder of the abuse of legal principles is the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, which, needless to say, was a violation of the inviolability of diplomatic premises; one of the preeminent provisions of post-Westphalia diplomatic relations. The tendency for non-state parties or their state sponsors to adhere to these rules of war undoubtedly points to the presence of an asymmetrical war. Unfortunately, the US is bound to largely adhere to the rules that terrorist organisations, herein considered as unconventional combatants, flout with impunity. In such an unfavorably unbalanced terrain, positive outcomes from the use of conventional security operatives even with regard to intelligence-gathering is dodgy.

Africa's disreputably porous borders and the prospects they offer for trans-regional terrorism is another reason why unconventional interventions by the US should be contemplated. As noted above, almost all the Islamic fundamentalist groups straddle entire regions with relative ease. In the case of Mali, it has been indicated, for instance, that porous borders to the North have facilitated the migration of fighters from Algeria-based AQIM as well as vestiges of the Libyan conflict to move in and operate with reasonable ease. The fact of mercenaries crossing the porous borders of Africa means that mobilising terror for cross-country objectives of hitting US and Western interests is made much easier (Dehez, 2010). The expanse of territory straddled, the multiplicity of countries operated in and the implications on sovereignty that the US will have to be confronted with in pursuit of terrorist and networks makes it more difficult for conventional forces to gather terrorism-related intelligence. On the contrary, the reconnaissance capacity of drones makes them ultimately efficient strategies in monitoring the flow of terrorist networks and illicit weapons as well as building of training camps in Africa. Thus essentially, managing the long porous borders could therefore benefit from the surveillance capabilities of drones.

Related to the above is the lack of capacity of most African governments to gather and organise unimpeachable intelligence on the activities of terrorists and their networks. A number of factors account for this reality. The obvious being the lack of political commitment as manifested in the inability of governments to commit funds for developing intelligence databases countrywide and across regions. Additionally, terrorist organisations in Africa are operating on multiple fronts, adopting mutating strategies and enlisting combatants whose identities are at the least amorphous. This makes the collection of intelligence difficult and by implication, makes these wars generally less responsive to conventional deterrence strategies. In the absence of such intelligence, countries currently confronted heavily by the activities of terrorism such as Nigeria and Mali are having to depend on inadequate or inexistent intelligence to fight what is in reality, a lost battle *ab initio* (Amaraegbu, 2013). From the determination of terrorist cells to the identification of key



members and their arrest or execution, the reality is that the war on terror is fought more on intelligence and less on brute force. As such, the utility of the surveillance and intelligence-gathering capacity of drones to African governments grappling with terrorism cannot be over-emphasised.

The proliferation of weapons in Africa also makes it impossible to gauge the strategic or tactical ability of terrorist organisations. This could lead to significant miscalculations with unpredictable consequences. Particularly in Libya, where the revolutionary forces violently confronted the Gadhafi regime, the end of the war has hardly seen any meaningful programme of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of former combatants. A number of combatants also alluded to pro-US sentiments for as long as Gadhafi was the enemy, a simple case of the enemy of my enemy being my friend. The implications of this could be obvious—the existence of many armed people fluid enough to be manipulated, proliferated arms and a growing fundamentalist rhetoric that can be mobilised for running terrorist objectives. A critical component of the US assistance to Africa as regards the war on terror must therefore relate to intelligence gathering and dissemination. The surveillance capabilities of drones are absolutely needed in these circumstances (Drew, 2010).

Related to the intelligence deficit in most African countries is an infrastructural deficit that can forestall the progress of conventional troops yet can be effectively harnessed by radical groups employing guerilla-style tactics. With vast land areas virtually undeveloped, such as the Sahel Sahara region, conventional military tactics will be confronted by accessibility challenges. Such terrain however favors the guerilla tactics of Africa's terror networks who are prone to exploit such vulnerability of conventional troops through kidnapping and suicide bombings among others. Drones on the other hand, are comparatively less prone by design to the hazards of Africa's infrastructural deficit. In this light, drones can better overcome Africa's infrastructural challenges to provide surveillance and intelligence data on terrorism.

Finally, one of the components of the war on terror since 2001 has been America's desire to win hearts and minds. Within the African continent, the US reputation appears to have floundered. Indeed, in terms of security, America's record suggests an opportunistic actor interested in the continent during the Cold War days yet quick to demarcate its interests in the aftermath of the Cold War. While this is undoubtedly symptomatic of the wiles of global politics, the re-entry of the US to Africa's security affairs based mainly on the assessed effects of African-bred terrorism and its impact on US national security should be approached with extreme caution, less funfair and more discretion. Under the circumstances, what is required is a less visible approach to intervention, one that favors the stealth operations of drones.

Considering the Anti-drone school

The argument has been made that using drones against terrorists is not the most lasting way to fight the enemy. To the holders of this opinion, the targeted-killing of terrorists does not deter their fomentation. If a top operative is killed, for instance, it is just a matter of time before he is replaced. Also, the point is made that the more terrorists are attacked with drones, the more they pursue a correction of the asymmetry by targeting innocent civilians as they are in no position to hit back at the drones or their operators (Whetham, 2013). Consequently, it is argued that, to effectively fight terrorism particularly in Africa, the human insecurity generators of terrorism must be eliminated or at least, reduced considerably through transparency and accountability as well as equitable distribution of the national cake to primarily reduce internal dissent likely to fuel insurgencies.

This position is sound and undoubtedly reflective of the multivariate causes of terrorism in Africa. As



indicated above, for instance, the post-independence corruption and mal-governance-filled narratives of the Africa State is proven to be one of the creators of terrorism in Africa. It therefore stands to reason that the search for strategies takes into consideration aspects that rectify the challenges indicated above. Unfortunately, part of the local dynamics influencing terrorism on the continent may point to the ineffectiveness of such human security and governance-inspired strategy. Presently, for instance, the leitmotif for Africa-based terrorists has shifted or is shifting from out-and-out domestic concerns to a hard lined anti-west agenda. In such a situation, one can only be dodgy about whether the terrorists remain interested in pressurising their home governments into pursuing good governance. If governance in Nigeria improves, for instance, will Boko Haram disband? Will the group abort its objective of de-secularisation of the state? In responding in the negative, this paper suggests the presence on the continent, some terrorist organisations whose evolution and motive have no relation to Africa's governance challenges, or who have moved beyond those challenges to represent a global jihad against the West and values largely considered as of western orientation. Thus, in reality, such terrorists are a bunch of 'all or nothing' intransigent killers not willing to meet anybody halfway and as such can hardly be satisfied through negotiations or good governance. This unfortunately reduces the human security and governance-inspired strategies to effective add-ons to multidimensional strategies much the same way as drones. As Olojo (2013) points out, the sources and causes of terrorism in Africa are multiple in nature and as such the best way to counter terrorism on the continent is to pursue a multi-dimensional approach.

Using drones as part of the cocktail of strategies for confronting terrorism in Africa must factor in the Pak syndrome. Civilian deaths and abuse of territorial sovereignty resulting from drone usage are legitimate concerns. Notwithstanding, they are bearable opportunity costs in the war on terrorism. Although the death of non-combatants cannot be justified in absolute terms, comparatively, incidents of terrorism are resulting in the death of more civilians than American drones have accidentally killed. Moreover, the point has been made that the civilian-casualties argument against drone usage has largely arisen due to the well-publicised quality of 'precision' drones are supposed to have. Thus, even one civilian casualty is seen as a preventable case. Such a standard cannot be achieved by any ground combat operation. Beyond the attack functions, the intelligence-gathering utility of drones is a practical tool to fight terrorism in Africa. For instance, after Boko Haram abducted about 200 girls from a high school in Chibok, China offered help by providing satellite imagery to help Nigeria track the location of the abductees. America supported with same, as well as surveillance, intelligence and reconnaissance assets. The excellence of these capacities is undoubtedly essential to combatting terrorist attacks such as the Chibok kidnapping incident.

Conclusion

This paper is not in any way calling for a blank cheque to be issued to America to deploy its drones to Africa. That can only be inspired by the shallow assumption that all is perfect with America's deployment of drones thus far. Through a policy of Disclosure, America can fight Africa-based terrorists with drones yet not leave hanging on the necks of African states, the albatrosses of preventable civilian deaths and a wanton abuse of their territorial integrity as has been the case in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. The surveillance and intelligence-gathering functionality of drones can be deployed by America to help fight terrorism in Africa. The mention of drones should in no way be only construed as a call for targeted killings by Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. However, America should first of all, be willing to co-operate and share information with security outfits in the African states involved. If America's deployment of drones to Africa is based on their explicit



consent to disclosure, it incites a careful and responsible usage on America's part and reasonable trust and support from African states. Such transparency and co-operation between America and Africa will serve greatly the security interests of both parties; make Africa as less safe for terrorists as possible and also give America a colossal upper hand in its global war on terrorism.

Africa is now a hub of terrorism. Unfortunately, the continent is inexperienced and under-prepared to fight the war unlike America. Allowing Africa to fight terrorism in a handicapped manner is risky. Not strengthening Africa's hand with an effective anti-terrorism tool like intelligence-gathering drones is akin to America shooting itself in the foot as that will leave a safe haven for terrorists and a cosy launchpad for attacking Africa and ultimately, America and its allies (Ahluwalia, 2013). Thus, it is in the interest of both parties; Africa and America to serve Africa-based terrorists doses of the same 'drone' pills that have efficiently ruffled enemy feathers elsewhere at virtually little or no risk to the lives of pro-peace soldiers. However to effectively do this, America must commit itself first to proper disclosure concerning their drone activities and also rigorously market the huge intelligence-gathering capacity of drones. The former promises a disciplined deployment on America's part while the latter counters the dominant characterisation of drones as merely killing machines. In all these, the point best drummed is that drones are merely complementary with best results likely to be felt only if the domestic concerns fuelling the recourse to terrorism are addressed.

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The Central Intelligence Agency's Armed Remotely Piloted Vehicle-Supported Counter-Insurgency Campaign in Pakistan – a Mission Undermined by Unintended Consequences?

by Simon Bennett



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Abstract

This paper views America's 'drones-first' counter-insurgency effort in Pakistan through the lens of Merton's theory of the unintended consequences of purposive action. It also references Beck's Risk Society thesis, America's Revolution in Military Affairs doctrine, Toft's theory of isomorphic learning, Langer's theory of mindfulness, Highly Reliable Organisations theory and the social construction of technology (SCOT) argument. With reference to Merton's theory, the CIA-directed armed Remotely Piloted Vehicle (RPV) campaign has manifest functions, latent functions and latent dysfunctions. Measured against numbers of suspected insurgents killed, the campaign can be judged a success. Measured against the level of collateral damage or the state of US-Pakistan relations, the campaign can be judged a failure. Values determine the choice of metrics. Because RPV operations eliminate risk to American service personnel, and because this is popular with both US citizens and politicians, collateral damage (the killing of civilians) is not considered a policy-changing dysfunction. However, the latent dysfunctions of America's drones-first policy may be so great as to undermine that policy's intended manifest function – to make a net contribution to the War on Terror. In Vietnam the latent dysfunctions of Westmoreland's attritional war undermined America's policy of containment. Vietnam holds a lesson for the Obama administration.

Keywords: RPV; War on Terror; CIA; Pakistan; Merton; Dysfunctions.

Seeds of change

In an increasingly risk-conscious world (Beck, 1992, 2009; Waters, 1995) politicians attempt to reduce risk to a level deemed acceptable by their electors. This dynamic functions in every sphere, from energy generation to war-fighting. In a Risk Society, legitimacy lies in the support of the body politic. As shown by western powers' reluctance to commit ground troops to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria (Joshi, 2014), public support is seen by politicians as a precondition for military operations – especially those undertaken not in defence of the homeland, but to promote a foreign policy objective. Regarding military action, existential threats have greater legitimacy power than non-existential threats: The American public's perception that the intermediate-range nuclear missiles deployed to Cuba by the Soviet Union posed an existential threat to the continental United States helped legitimise Kennedy's 1962 blockade. The issue was less clear-cut in the case of the communist insurgency in South East Asia. The growing belief that the spread of communism in that region did *not* pose an existential threat to the continental United States gradually undermined the American public's support for military action. Westmoreland comments: "[O]ur national interest was not at stake Many in the American public thought that our participation was ... not necessarily in the national



interest” (2008: 340).

Most Cold War conflicts were spatially, temporally and politically constrained (Osgood, 1994). Despite its policy of containment, the United States was never comfortable with military adventures (Osgood, 1994). Since the exertions of the Second World War, America’s political class has found it increasingly difficult to win support for military action (Deri, 2012). The Vietnam War proved a watershed. Vietnam was the first war to be fought in the media spotlight. Images of body-bags being unloaded from military transports and of setbacks like the 1968 Tet Offensive were beamed into American homes (Mandelbaum, 1982; Messenger, 1995; Isaacs and Downing, 1998; Cerny, 2010). Losses shaped the public mood:

The USA entering the 1970s seemed a nation in turmoil and shock. The Vietnam war was an economic drain, and divided the country internally (Davies, 1995: 2).

McCain notes:

It took a long time before America became united again. There was a lot of anger ... (2008: 482).

Later reversals like the Carter administration’s 1980 failure to rescue the fifty-two Americans taken hostage by Iranian students and the Clinton administration’s withdrawal from the UN mission to Somalia following the loss of eighteen elite soldiers in the ‘Battle of Mogadishu’ provided further justification for new thinking.

The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)

According to Shaw (2005), today’s wars must be fought in such a way that they deliver both military success *and* public approval. ‘Risk-transfer war’ means risks are displaced to foreign soil (for example, many of the risks associated with fighting the War on Terror have been transferred to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and the Yemen). By advocating a more technology-centred approach to warfighting (James and Kievit, 1995; Sloan, 2002; Scales, 2003; Davis, 2010), RMA supports risk-transfer. RMA synthesises “information superiority, dominant manoeuvre, precision engagement, full-dimensional protection and focused logistics” (Davis, 2010: 14). According to Metz and Kievit, RMA garners public support:

[A] force built around stand-off, precision weapons ... would be more politically usable than a traditional force-projection military (1995: vii).

Given the risk-averse nature of Western constituents, the escalating cost of conventional war-fighting and the post-2007 economic downturn, governments unwilling to eschew foreign campaigns have adopted technologies that offer relatively risk-free and cost-effective capabilities (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011; Alley, 2013). The age of the armed Remotely Piloted Vehicle (RPV) has dawned (Alley, 2013).

Arms-length engagement – benefits and costs

Technologies like armed RPVs are an important component of the new war-fighting paradigm. Although vulnerable to conventional weapons, RPVs all but eliminate ‘home’ casualties thereby making it less likely that the public will turn on the political class (as it did in the United States over the Vietnam conflict (Davies, 1995)). Arms-length weapons systems like RPVs exemplify US General George S. Patton’s philosophy: “No poor bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making other bastards die for their country” (cited in Appathurai, 2003).

However, while the accuracy of drone strikes has improved, non-combatants are still killed or injured (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011; Boyle, 2013). In Pakistan, factors that induce collateral damage include:



RPV strikes called up by unreliable informants (what is to stop someone with a grudge from using the CIA to eliminate an enemy?); insurgents living amongst non-combatants; poor quality video images; and the CIA's use of 'signature strikes' that involve profiling the behaviour of suspected hostiles (Deri, 2012; Boyle, 2013). Boyle asserts that because signature strikes are based on profiling that is deficient in cultural awareness, they exemplify a general disregard amongst US personnel for the lives of non-combatants. Cloud claims that drone operators referred to all mature Pakistani men as "military-age males", abbreviated by operators to 'MAMs' (Cloud, 2011). The MAM nomenclature may have primed operators' perceptions. Speaking to the moral dimension of the CIA's Pakistan campaign, Boyle concludes: "[S]tandards of proportionality have been eroded with drone warfare" (2013: 8). Alley claims that a lack of "reliable, on-the-ground human intelligence" has caused "the barrier of targeting certainty [to be] lowered" (2013: 9). Proportionality is an important moral principle in a State's application of force, whether through a civilian police service or the military. There is little sense of proportionality in the use of force in authoritarian states (like Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union, Pol Pot's Cambodia or Putin's Russia).

It is claimed that RPV-incurred collateral damage has several consequences, including: the alienation of host-nation civilians from the War on Terror; recasting of terrorists as freedom-fighters; instigation of terrorist attacks on home territory (like the attempted 2010 Times Square bombing); undermining host nations' local and national democratic institutions (because of their apparent inability to influence RPV policy); erosion of host nation cultural norms like weddings, tribal gatherings and communal burial ceremonies (because of the fear that any gathering is a potential CIA target); psychological distress (both acute and chronic) amongst those who live or work in the theatre of operation; and hostility to preventive medicine programmes (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011; Pew Research Centre, 2011; Birch, Lee and Pierscionek, 2012; Deri, 2012; International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, Global Justice Clinic, 2012; Ahmed, 2013; Alley, 2013; Boyle, 2013; Foust, 2013).

Seen through the prism of Merton's (1936) theory of unintended consequences, RPV operations in places like Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Yemen have several latent dysfunctions or unintended negative consequences (in Hudson, Owen and Flannes's (2011: 123) argot, "blowback"). The question for US policy-makers is whether these unintended negative consequences are so great that they negate the benefits that accrue from RPV operations (e.g. reducing the number of soldiers who return home in body-bags).

Merton's hypothesis

Merton (1936) claims that purposive social action ("action which involves motives") can have both intended (expected) and unintended (unexpected) consequences (which he terms 'functions'). Manifest functions are the consequences we expect. Latent functions are those we do not. There are two types of latent function: those that support the original intent, and those that work against it. Because they undermine the intent, 'latent dysfunctions' are the worst type of unanticipated consequence. Examples of Merton's 'law of unintended consequences' abound: exhortations to eat sensibly, watch your weight and exercise have both manifest and latent functions. For some they improve health, self-esteem and longevity (manifest functions). For others they undermine health by causing eating disorders like anorexia nervosa. Viewed through Merton's prism, anorexia is a latent dysfunction of well-intentioned advice.

Five factors influence the chances of an action having unintended consequences:

1. Ignorance

The more imperfect the foreknowledge, the greater the chance of an action having unintended



consequences.

2. Error

The more wayward the initial assumptions, the greater the chance of an action having unintended consequences.

3. Imperviousness

The more myopic the actors (the more closed to contra-indications and susceptible to groupthink), the more likely an action will have unintended consequences.

4. Dogma

The more zealous the actors, the greater the chance of an action having unintended consequences.

5. Predisposition

The more predisposed the actors, the greater the chance of an action having unintended consequences.

Sveiby *et al.* (2009: 4) illustrate how predisposition can produce unintended consequences: “[B]ecause organisational change initiatives have failed in the past, [subsequent] change initiatives are met with cynicism by employees, thereby further increasing the risk of failure”. Predisposition may render action ineffectual (the unintended consequence).

Examples taken from the realm of social policy (health campaigns, for example) support Merton’s hypothesis that purposive social action can have both intended and unintended consequences (some of which are functional, others not). But what of the military domain? What does Merton’s hypothesis tell us about innovations like RPVs? Do RVP operations have both intended and unintended consequences (functional and dysfunctional)? If so, what impacts might there be on mission aims and objectives?

The RPV-supported counter-insurgency campaign in Pakistan

Introduction

Like air-launched cruise missiles, RPVs are ‘arms-length’ weapons systems that mitigate the risks inherent in armed conflict. In part, the development of RPVs like Predator and Reaper reflect a shift in American military tactics brought about by a change in American public opinion. Obey (cited in Hamilton, 2012: 687) claims that post-Somalia America wanted “zero degree of involvement and zero degree of risk and zero degree of pain and confusion”. America’s doubts about ‘boots on the ground’ military expeditions were reified in drone technology and doctrine. Seen through the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) lens (MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1985; Latour, 1991; Bijker, 1994; Pinch, 1996), the desire to sanitise conflict was reified (concretised) in the armed RPV. SCOT theorist Jameson (1995: 37) talks about “the ultimately determining instance” – the spur to action, the nub, the catalyst. The Somalia episode could be described as that for the armed RPV.

The number of nations possessing some type of RPV numbers seventy-five. The RPV market is lucrative. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation considers the RPV a force multiplier (Birch, Lee and Pierscionek, 2012). The clamour over RPVs conceals limitations, however.

A critique of armed RPV technologies and modus operandi

1. Because they are slow-flying, RPVs are vulnerable.



2. Compared to manned aircraft, RPVs have a high attrition rate (Tvaryanas, Thompson and Constable, 2006).
3. Even with high-fidelity sensors it is difficult to identify individuals. Cultural events (like weddings or meetings of elders) are susceptible to multiple interpretations, especially by those unfamiliar with local custom. Misinterpretation results in collateral damage (Cloud, 2011). Estimates of such damage are subject to political spin (Boyle, 2013). “[S]tatistics yield a civilian fatality rate that ranges from 15 percent to more than twice that” says Deri (2012: 7). It is claimed collateral damage persuades some to join terrorist organisations. Collateral damage also provokes retaliation (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011). The Taliban said its 2009 attack on the Manawan (Lahore) Police Academy (that killed seven) was in retaliation for CIA-directed RPV operations (Deri, 2012). Following a lethal Predator attack on a civilian convoy, a USAF Major General claimed the hyper-technologisation of warfare might persuade personnel that errors are unlikely: “Technology can occasionally give you a false sense of security that you can see everything, that you can hear everything, that you know everything” (Poss cited in Cloud, 2011). Bainbridge (1983) says automation is Janus-faced.
4. If ground troops encounter suspected hostiles they can detain and question them. While RPV crews can observe suspected hostiles for extended periods, the detain-and-question option is not available (unless ground troops can be guided to the location in time). RPV-centric warfare reduces the number of interrogation-based intelligence-gathering opportunities (Callam, 2010). The Government of Pakistan forbids US ground operations, but tolerates RPV missions. There is a lethal irony to this policy: were the Pakistanis to allow US ground operations, the volume and quality of intelligence would increase, thereby reducing the insurgent threat (and, perhaps, the global terror threat). There would be significant political fallout, however, as demonstrated by the negative reaction to the insertion of Special Forces into Abbottabad to assassinate Osama bin Laden (Mohanty: 2013).
5. Orwell (1949) predicted the normalisation of conflict. Because RPV strikes eliminate the visible costs of war (news-footage of body-bags being offloaded from transports) it is possible to form the view that wars can be fought with impunity. Sanitisation may accelerate the militarisation of foreign policy. Deri (2012) suggests the American establishment and public have normalised drone warfare to the point where it is a ‘background’ activity. “In America ... UAV technology ...does away with the greatest emotional burden of being at war: the condolence letter” explains Deri (2012). While a 2012 Pew Research poll “found substantial opposition to drone strikes among American allies” this was not the case amongst US citizens, where “62 per cent of [those] sampled supported drone strikes” (Alley, 2013: 29).
6. There is the question of operators’ willingness to pull the trigger. According to Otto and Webber (2013), RPV pilots have a similar mental health risk-profile to fast-jet pilots. To counter the possibility that RPV crews might feel disconnected from the battle-space, the USAF has revamped its training to instil more of a ‘warrior culture’ (Barnes, 2010). The life of a RPV operator is very different to that of a soldier or airman who serves in-theatre. After their shift, RPV operators return to a familiar world, possibly domestic. They would be aware of issues connected to collateral damage. Indeed, friends, family, neighbours and even persons in the street might make them aware of the moral dimensions of RPV operations. It is possible that comments and admonitions might play on a RPV operator’s mind. Soldiers under training are de-sensitised. This involves “brutalisation, classical conditioning, operant conditioning and role modelling” (Grossman, 1998: 3). Seeing comrades killed or wounded generally reinforces a soldier, sailor or airman’s resolve. Because they are removed from the front-line, RPV operators do not



experience reinforcement. They do, however, experience at first-hand debates current in civilian life. Towards the end of the Vietnam War, soldiers home on leave were sometimes challenged by those who disagreed with the war, triggering defensiveness (Gitell, 2007). Those connected with CIA operations in Pakistan could find themselves facing the same 'court of public opinion' as that faced by Vietnam veterans. Having said this, the CIA campaign enjoys considerable support in America (Deri, 2012; Alley, 2013).

7. There is the possibility that so-called 'double-tap' strikes will eliminate not only suspected terrorists but also those who attend the dead, dying and injured (Deri, 2012; International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, Global Justice Clinic, 2012; Boyle, 2013). While verifiable evidence is hard to come by, the Bureau for Investigative Journalism believes it has identified several double-tap strikes, including a May 24, 2012, RPV strike against a mosque where a second strike allegedly killed six rescuers, and a July 6, 2012 RPV strike against suspected insurgents where a second strike allegedly killed a dozen civilians (Woods, 2013). In January 2014 the Bureau for Investigative Journalism published (on-line) an internal Pakistan government report detailing casualties from over 330 CIA-directed RPV strikes launched between 2006 and 2013. Although partially censored by Pakistani authorities, the report confirms the deaths of both combatants and non-combatants (e.g. infants) (Ross, 2014).

8. There is the question of how RPV crews react to the considerable psychological pressure induced by operating a drone for long periods. According to the USAF, 46% of Reaper and Predator pilots and 48% of Global Hawk sensor operators experience 'high operational stress' (Dao, 2013). A number of RPV operators also exhibit 'clinical distress'. Birch, Lee and Pierscionek (2012: 8) define clinical distress as "anxiety, depression or stress severe enough to affect an operator's job performance or family life". Stressors include: overwork due to RPV crew shortages (typically an operator works 5-6 days on with 2-3 days off); switching between the military and civilian sphere on a daily basis ("Every day is a small-scale reintegration, requiring the operator to find a balance between supporting the war effort ... and domestic responsibilities" (Anonymous, 2013: 12)); working in isolation; and witnessing death on live feeds (Sifton, 2012; Dao, 2013). One RPV operator who left the military with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) wrote in his diary: "Total war. Every horror witnessed. I wish my eyes would rot". After his first kill he said he "... felt disconnected from humanity for almost a week". As his trauma grew he was less able to communicate. He told his girlfriend: "I can't just switch and go back to normal life". He knew he had a serious problem when he heard himself say to colleagues: "What motherfucker is going to die today?" (Bryant cited in Abé, 2012). Abé (2012) likens RPV pilots' mental dysfunction to "a short-circuit in the brain of the drones" and notes: "One of the paradoxes of drones is that, even as they increase the distance to the target, they also create proximity". Tart (cited in Abé) concurs: "War somehow becomes personal". A stressed or depressed operator may not perform as expected. S/he might launch an unwarranted strike or fail to execute a warranted strike.

9. There is the matter of truth and transparency in regard to drone operations. The CIA-directed programme in Pakistan is not open to scrutiny (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School, Global Justice Clinic at NYU School of Law, 2012). According to Foust and Boyle (2012), one of its defining characteristics is secrecy. This, says Deri (2012), facilitates the manipulation of facts.

10. Finally, and limiting ourselves to the specific type of armed RPV operation that is the subject of this paper, there is the possibility that CIA-directed RPV operations over sovereign territory will so de-legitimise and de-stabilise the elected government of Pakistan that it is less able to withstand the threat



posed by home-grown terrorist movements like the 35,000-strong Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (Boyle, 2013). Boyle (2013) suggests that the US military's drones-first policy undermines the State Department's efforts to create stable nations able to repel both home-grown and insurgent terrorist organisations. According to Hudson, Owens and Flannes (2011) and Boyle (2013), America's anti-terror policy is incoherent. Washington's National Intelligence Council (2012) refers to Pakistan's "faltering governance institutions". In its 2013 *Failed States Index*, the Fund For Peace (2013) ranked Pakistan the thirteenth most unstable state, and Somalia the most unstable state. The CIA engages in targeted killing in both Pakistan and Somalia (Boyle, 2013).

A Mertonian analysis of the use of armed RPVs in Pakistan

Seen through Merton's prism, the CIA-directed RPV counter-insurgency campaign in Pakistan has manifest functions, latent functions and, worryingly, latent dysfunctions.

Manifest functions

1. Elimination of high-value targets (HVTs) and lower-ranked combatants.

Several HVTs have been killed, including, in 2009, "infamous terrorist" Baitullah Mehsud (Deri, 2012: 1). However, International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School, Global Justice Clinic at NYU School of Law (2012: vii) says: "The number of high-level targets killed as a percentage of total casualties is extremely low".

2. Sanitisation of war for aggressor nation.

The elimination of 'home' casualties and avoidance of adverse publicity helps politicians, civil servants and the military 'sell' interventions. It also helps the public come to terms with war. While a 2013 CNN/Opinion Research poll found that 82% of Americans opposed the war in Afghanistan (PBS Newshour, 2013), a 2012 Pew Research Centre (2012) poll found that only 28% of Americans disapproved of drone strikes. Wary of being drawn into open-ended conflicts, Obama's anti-ISIS strategy will probably revolve around airstrikes by fast-jets and RPVs (Joshi, 2014).

3. Reduction of the political risks inherent in foreign actions.

Failed military expeditions undermine leaderships. The divisive Vietnam War ended Johnson's presidency (Davies, 1995; McCain, 2008). Carter's failure to rescue the Iranian hostages harmed his 1980 re-election campaign. Somalia rebounded on Clinton. Actions that risk few or no friendly casualties carry less political risk. The land-borne component of Obama's anti-ISIS strategy will be limited to Special Forces (Joshi, 2014).

4. Reducing the cost of warfighting in a time of hardship.

During the United States's 2007-2009 recession (the longest since World War II) the government sought to maintain its global posture. RPVs provide a cost-effective means of projecting lethal power – although, according to Foust and Boyle (2012), they are not as cost-effective as is sometimes claimed.

Latent functions

1. Helping to sustain US scientific and technological leadership.

According to Boyle (2013), global spending on RPVs will rise. Many nations will look to the US to supply their drones. High-technology products underpin America's economy (Friedman and Mandelbaum,



2011).

2. Helping to maintain the military-industrial complex.

Determined to capture as much of the drone market as possible, the Pentagon has authorised RPV sales to sixty-six countries. Weapons sales underwrite the USA's military-industrial complex – an important economic structure.

3. Helping to sustain a Keynesian economic policy.

In an effort to cushion the effects of the post-2007 downturn, President Obama injected money into the US economy (Mason, 2012). While the Department of Defence budget was cut, spending on the technologically-ambitious and over-budget Global Hawk RPV was secured (Mehta, 2014). Spending on high-technology items like Global Hawk supports the US economy. The state of the economy will help determine whether the Democrats retain the Presidency in 2016.

Latent dysfunctions

1. Killing non-combatants.

The killing of non-combatants in RPV operations has proved a public-relations disaster in Pakistan (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011). It has been claimed that drone warfare is less wasteful of innocent lives than conventional warfighting techniques like carpet-bombing, the laying of minefields or the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This argument is specious. Given the current state of US military affairs and doctrine, no commander would use such overwhelming force against a widely scattered and lightly-armed opposition. Currently there are only two military counter-insurgency options available to a commander: RPV hunter-killer missions (like those directed against Tehrik-i-Taliban in Afghanistan/Pakistan), or intelligence-led operations by Special Forces. Evidence suggests the former lack the finesse of the latter (Boyle, 2013).

2. Swelling the ranks of terrorist organisations.

Civilian deaths have spurred some Pakistanis to join terrorist organisations (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011). Others voice support or sympathy for terrorists (rehabilitated as 'freedom fighters'). Writing before the escalation of the drone campaign, Hersh (2004: 287) observed: "Pakistan ... is a nuclear power that harbours some of the most dedicated and potentially destabilising anti-American Islamic activists in the world". Terrorists have travelled to flash-points like Iraq and Syria (Boyle, 2013). Drone warfare has helped create a terrorist diaspora. One could ask whether it has helped create al-Baghdadi's anarchic (Diab, 2014) (but probably temporary) caliphate.

3. Undermining the legitimacy and destabilisation of a democratic government.

In the eyes of many Pakistanis the government's inability to reign-in the United States has undermined its credibility and legitimacy (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011). The drone campaign has made Pakistan's long-standing governance problem worse. Terrorist organisations are able to fill the political vacuum. Undermining a key actor in the War on Terror (Hersh, 2004) may rebound on the United States and its allies.

4. Destabilisation of a nuclear power in a volatile region.

Unstable nuclear powers or blocs pose a threat to regional and global security (Mearsheimer, 1994). There are tensions within Pakistan, and between Pakistan and her neighbours (Hersh, 2004; Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011; Kapoor, 2013). These tensions are not eased by America's Pakistan strategy. America's



stance on Pakistan is Janus-faced. On the one hand it seeks to create a strong and stable state able to police its borders, while on the other it pursues a drones-first counter-terrorism policy that undermines the government's authority and gives succour to terrorists and their supporters (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011; Boyle, 2013). The US government is either oblivious to, or is unable or unwilling to address the contradictions inherent in its Pakistan strategy. Political unrest over the summer of 2014 further destabilised the country.

5. Undermining the USA's efforts to occupy the moral high ground in the War on Terror.

According to a report in the *New York Times* (Becker and Shane, 2012), all males of military age killed in CIA-directed RPV strikes are classified as militants, unless categorically proven otherwise by whatever post-strike investigation takes place. Put another way, in the CIA campaign, anyone touched by a drone strike is guilty until proven innocent. In the US a party is innocent until proven guilty. Because of the paucity and superficiality of post-strike investigations, and tradition of same-day burials, the CIA's reverse burden-of-proof criminalises innocent parties. Other factors, like the secrecy surrounding the CIA-led campaign (Foust and Boyle, 2012) and deaths of non-combatants further undermine the reputation of the United States.

6. Creating an opportunity for misjudgement.

The Pentagon proposed a new honour – the Distinguished Warfare Medal (DWM) – to recognise RPV operators' contribution. The announcement that the DWM would outrank awards like the Bronze Star with Valour “sparked uproar among troops and veterans” (Tilghman, 2013). Obama abandoned the DWM. Such episodes could impact RPV operators' self-image and morale, possibly making them less reliable in the performance of their duties (Bennett, 2013).

7. Eroding self-esteem.

Because front-line troops overcome existential risks they experience high self-esteem and earn the respect of others. Facing no existential risks, drone operators can struggle to build self-esteem (Birch, Lee and Pierscionek, 2012). The success with which a person performs their duties is influenced by self-esteem (because self-esteem impacts morale). A demoralised operator may not perform as expected. S/he may terminate non-legitimate targets or fail to terminate legitimate targets. A warfighting system that operates unpredictably is a liability (Bennett, 2013).

8. Inviting allegations of illegality in the use of military force.

The legality of US drone strikes is contested (Foust and Boyle, 2012; International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School, Global Justice Clinic at NYU School of Law, 2012; Ahmed, 2013). There are two questions. First, the legality under international law of interstate extrajudicial killings. Secondly, the legality of CIA-directed drone strikes in cases where they are used against US citizens (Ahmed, 2013). Foust and Boyle (2012: 3) suggest the US “... is operating within its bounds under the international framework established by the UN”. Shah, however, argues against extrajudicial killings: “[U]nilateralist behaviour from powerful states to achieve their objectives while violating the territorial sovereignty of weaker states is extremely damaging to the interstate paradigm” (2010: 129).

Why is the USA's counterterrorism strategy afflicted by latent dysfunctions?

According to Merton (1936, 1968), five factors determine the number and severity of latent dysfunctions: Ignorance; Error; Imperviousness; Dogma; Predisposition. The alienation of many Pakistanis from the War on Terror reflects US ignorance, error, imperviousness and dogma in the matter of its approach to counter-



terrorism. By measuring the success of its Pakistan operation solely in terms of numbers of terrorists killed, the United States overlooks the possibility that its drones-first strategy may be strengthening rather than weakening the ranks of organisations like al-Qaeda and the TTP.

Wedded to the CIA's secretive campaign, and content to measure success by counting corpses, the Obama administration has blinded itself to the possibility that its *modus operandi* may fatally undermine the War on Terror. Obama has made the same mistake Johnson did over Vietnam. Content to measure success by counting NVA and Viet Cong (VC) dead (Lewy, 1984; Isaacs and Downing, 1998; Bernhardt, 2008), Johnson and his generals failed to appreciate they were losing the war of hearts and minds. The Johnson administration's ignorance, error, imperviousness and dogma blinded it to the Vietnam War's latent dysfunction – specifically that it was increasingly seen as a war of imperial conquest rather than of liberation (Greene, 1967). Groupthink (Janis, 1972) may have played a part in the Johnson administration's myopic Vietnam strategy (as it did the Kennedy administration's support for the ill-starred 1961 Bay of Pigs counter-revolutionary insurgency).

In Vietnam, events like the My Lai massacre (in which 347 villagers were murdered by US troops (Sheehan, 1988)) served to alienate locals from the American cause. Lewy says: "It was difficult to convince villagers that the Americans had come as their protectors if in the process of liberating them ... allied troops caused extensive harm" (1984: 7). According to Warnke (1994), the American public's reaction to the massacre was muted.

In Pakistan (and Afghanistan) the killing of civilians in drone strikes serves to alienate locals from the War on Terror (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011). The US appears to have no understanding of (or chooses to ignore) the cultural dimension of warfighting in a country like Pakistan. Specifically, it has no understanding of the tribal and other bonds that unite the people of Pakistan's border regions, and no comprehension of what happens when close-knit communities are attacked by a foreign power. As demonstrated by the growth in membership of organisations like the TTP, wilful ignorance of cultural norms is counter-productive. In failing to re-appraise its drones-first counterterrorism policy in Pakistan the US demonstrates imperviousness and dogma. According to Merton (1936, 1968), these traits are likely to produce latent dysfunctions. In his 2013 analysis of the drones-first counterterrorism policy, Boyle mentions a number of latent dysfunctions (which he terms 'second-order political effects'). Hudson, Owens and Flannes recast Boyle's second-order political effects as 'blowback':

[W]e argue that drone warfare has created five distinct, yet overlapping, forms of blowback: (1) the purposeful retaliation against the United States, (2) the creation of new insurgents, referred to as the 'accidental guerrilla' syndrome, (3) the further complication of US strategic coordination and interests in ... the Afghan/Pakistan ... theatre, (4) the further destabilization of Pakistan and (5) the deterioration of the US-Pakistani relationship (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011: 123).

The recruitment by ISIS of foreign jihadis may be considered partly a blowback phenomenon.

An absence of active learning ?

Perhaps the most interesting question is not why the Obama administration continues its counterproductive drones-first policy, but why has it failed to learn the lessons of Vietnam? The parallels between Obama's dysfunctional drones-first policy and Johnson's failed attritional war are obvious. Johnson sought to kill as many of the enemy as possible, regardless of the costs (Bernhardt, 2008). He continued the policy despite the



contra-indications. For example:

- a) Soldiers' awareness that while they were killing NVA regulars in the hills in significant numbers, VC insurgents were taking military *and* political control of lowland hamlets (Lewy, 1984).
- b) The 1968 Tet offensive that sowed panic throughout South Vietnam and disillusion at home (Karnow, 1994; Isaacs and Downing, 1998). The US Army was being outflanked even as Johnson and Westmoreland claimed the war was being won. Defeat in Vietnam challenged America's hegemony (Ambrose, 1971; Hall and Jacques, 1989; Cooke, 2008).

Johnson's dogged attachment to a simplistic attritional war served to undermine the South Vietnamese government's pacification programme, designed to bring security and development to rural communities. By preventing the needs of rural communities from being met, Johnson's war let the Viet Cong in by the back door:

Attrition offered a convenient way to measure success in the short run [but it] meant the underlying political issues of the war were overlooked ... (Hunt, 1994: 341).

Because they lived with the consequences, US troops realised the Johnson-Westmoreland strategy could not work. One Marine Corps officer wrote:

The rationale that ceaseless US operations in the hills could keep the enemy from the people was an operational denial of the fact that in large measure the war was a revolution which started in the hamlets ... the Viet Cong were already among the people when we went to the hills (West cited in Lewy, 1984: 6).

Obama has committed many of the same, or similar errors in relying on CIA-directed armed RPVs to prosecute the War on Terror in Pakistan. Toft's (1992, 1997) theory of isomorphic learning suggests Obama and his generals could learn from Johnson and Westmoreland's failure. Toft describes a person or organisation's failure to translate lessons into action as passive learning. Active learning requires that lessons inform policy and action.

Lessons

By using RPVs to reduce the human, political and financial risks of warfare, the United States has incurred significant costs (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011). However, the USA's new warfighting paradigm has created a set of unintended consequences that are undermining the War on Terror. Failure to manage the campaign's latent dysfunctions could render the War on Terror an exercise in futility.

The CIA's drone campaign offers several lessons for the Obama Administration and for the other nations prosecuting, or considering the prosecution of a conflict with armed RPVs:

1. Latent dysfunctions can undermine, if not fatally compromise, purposive action. The net effect of the drones-first policy may be to increase rather than reduce the risk of terrorism.
2. Ignorance, indifference and dogma can blind actors to latent dysfunctions. Contra-indications (signs that the strategy is not working) are either missed or ignored. The outrage felt by many Pakistanis when non-combatants are killed seems lost on American policymakers.
3. Latent dysfunctions can be avoided – but only with effort. Specifically, those in charge must respond to contra-indications. Had Johnson and Westmoreland reacted to reports that their attritional war was alienating South Vietnam's rural population (Lewy, 1984; Bernhardt, 2008), they might have been able to



challenge the Viet Cong's appeal. Theories of collective mindfulness (Weick, 1987; Langer, 1989; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfield, 1999) and high-reliability (Roberts, 1990; LaPorte and Consolini, 1991; Roberts, 1993; McIntyre, 2000; Mason, 2004; Health and Safety Laboratory, 2011) teach that reflective practice (awareness, constructive critique and recalibration) improves system reliability.

Mindful militaries are more capable. Because Major Orde Wingate heeded the contra-indications of the British Army's conventional war in Burma, he was able to formulate a strategy (reified in a volunteer, deep-penetration guerrilla force called the Chindits) that challenged the Japanese. Wingate revelled in his open-mindedness and rejection of convention (Allen, 1984). Respected by his men and supported by Churchill, he personified mindfulness: "Wingate was a lateral thinker who questioned everything and everyone – especially his superiors" (Bennett, 2010: 5). Wingate "... changed the nature of jungle campaigning" (Allen, 1984: 148).

Conclusion

Our Mertonian dissection of the United States's use of armed RPVs to prosecute the War on Terror inside Pakistan shows how US tactics have produced manifest functions (e.g. elimination of high-value targets) and latent dysfunctions (e.g. deaths of non-combatants and instability). We conclude that the drone campaign's latent dysfunctions may be so severe as to undermine that policy's intended manifest function – to make a net contribution to the War on Terror.

Latent dysfunctions can only be remedied if those directing purposive action are willing to listen and act. In our comparison case study of the Vietnam War, had Westmoreland heeded his officers' scepticism (that is, had he practiced *mindfulness*) he might have been able to salvage a US\$112 billion campaign that cost the lives of nearly 50,000 US soldiers (Lewy, 1984). Regarding the latent dysfunctions inherent in today's CIA drones-first strategy, it would appear that the Obama administration believes that the negatives (collateral damage, vengefulness, de-legitimation of the government of Pakistan, diplomatic rifts, regional instability, etc.) are outweighed by the positives (e.g. the saving of US airmen and soldiers' lives). As of August, 2014, there is no sign that President Obama will act to remedy the latent dysfunctions we have identified that are inherent in the drones-first strategy.

As to how the Pakistan mission is ultimately judged, the answer depends on the criteria applied. Measured against the number of alleged insurgents killed, or against the popularity of the policy with American voters, or, indeed, against induced advances in RPV technology, the mission can be judged a success. Measured against Pakistan's support for the War on Terror, or countering the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, or improving America's relations with the developing world, the answer is less clear-cut. Possibly it is trending towards the negative:

Drone attacks ... deliver a politically satisfying short-term 'bang for the buck' for US constituencies ignorant of, and indifferent to those affected by drone warfare, or the phenomenon of blowback (Hudson, Owens and Flannes, 2011: 125).

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Human Bombing - A Religious Act

by Mohammed Ilyas



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The issue of human bombing, which is popularly known as suicide bombing has become important in the Western world since the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks. Since then the issue of human bombing has become important to academia, the media, and security experts. This interest has resulted in much literature attempting to explain why human bombings take place and what motivates the bombers; for instance, the works of Gambetta (2006); Pape (2006); Merari (2010); Hafez (2006, 2007); Wright (2007); Bloom (2005, 2010); Friedman (2005); and Khosrokhavar (2005).

In this short paper I do not discuss why[1] and how human bombing occurs, and instead argue three points. Firstly, that human bomber cannot be acting with sacred intention (in the path of God) because this intention is unknown to them and the groups that advocate such attacks; secondly, that the standard for sacred intention is impossible to uphold by the bombers; finally that, the bombers could be suffering from secondary trauma, therefore falling outside the criteria that legitimates human bombing because of the individuals illness. I contend that these points serve to dissolve the religious criteria and justification for human bombing.

Human bombing: In the path of God

In their martyrdom videos human bombers state that they are acting in the path of God. According to Abu Qatada al-filistini [2] (from here on will use Abu Qatada) what makes the intention sacred are the benefits the act will bring to the community (Hafez 2007: 129-131). Sacred intention is very important, such that any behavior or motivation other than the sacred can serve to dissolve religious legitimization. Abu Qatada contends that intentionality is anchored in the notion of Muslim interests, and gives many examples of hadiths that he relates to the justification for human bombing (Abu Qatada al-Falastini, 1995). Abu Qatada notes:

Plunging into enemy ranks cannot be done for its own sake. It must contain a benefit for Islam and Muslims. In other words, martyrdom is never simply for its sake; its goal must be to raise God's word on earth and advance the cause of Muslims (Hafez 2007: 131).

However, even if the act, as Abu Qatada contends becomes sacred because of the benefits it brings to Muslims, it does not mean that the motivations of the bomber were sacred. In the many hadiths that Abu Qatada quotes and the commentary he gives on them, there is no mention of how one is to verify if the intentions of the bomber are sacred. From the criteria detailed by Abu Qatada it seems that one has to accept the word of the bomber and the group that the individual has volunteered for the mission, he or she had no psychological problems and was entirely motivated to act in the path of God. At face value it may seem feasible to accept what the bomber and the group contend because both enclose the motivations in Islamic terminology. However, once the motivations and the terminology are interrogated a different picture emerges, one that cannot be upheld by the prerequisite criteria that legitimizes a human bombing as sacred.



Academics such as Merari (2006), Pape (2006) and Hafez (2007) argue that human bombers are motivated by nationalistic ideas and redemption for themselves, their family, friends, community or religion. This suggests that human bombers are motivated by reasons other than Islamic ones, even though they may strike fear into the enemy and bring benefits to Muslims. However, there are also other motivations, which are more important to the argument of this paper, and these concern the personal reasons for becoming a human bomber in both conflict and non-conflict zones.

Bloom, in her 2002 book titled *Bombshell*, notes that personal problems stemming from being involved in activities that have brought shame on to their families leave some Chechen females feeling that they have no choice but to become human bombers. The act, as Bloom (2011: 30-31) argues, allows the women to reinvent themselves and become a source of pride for their families, removing the stigma of shame. Khosrokhavar (2005) makes a similar point with reference to the Palestinian human bombers, stating that death 'allows martyrs to recover their spiritual virginity, to wash away their sins, thanks to an enchanted martyrdom that opens the gates of paradise... A beautifying death releases them from their everyday humiliation' (Khosrokhavar 2005: 133). It seems, then that human bombers are escaping from their socio-political conditions and in doing so are taking control over their bodies, their fate, and their future representation because these are denied to them in their everyday life. If we accept that the motivations of the bombers are personal, this means that their acts were not carried out in the interests of the Muslim community, even though the outcome may prove to bring benefit to some Muslims. This undermines the criteria as set out by Abu Qatada and therefore the intentions are not sacred.

Devji makes a similar observation to Khosrokhavar (2005):

Martyrdom constitutes the moment of absolute humanity, responsibility and freedom as a self-contained act shorn of off all teleology. Martyrdom, then, might well constitute the purest and therefore the most ethical of acts, because in destroying himself its soldier becomes fully human by assuming complete responsibility for his fate beyond the reach of any need, interest or idea (Devji 2005: 120).

Devji alludes to the idea that martyrdom frees the bomber from the shackles of Islamic proofs and defers responsibility and justification from the bomber; meaning that the act becomes self-referential and there is no need for a sacred text to act as a motivation. Devji (2005: 122) makes another interesting point concerning the monotheistic figures of Ibrahim and Ishmael, with both acting upon uncertainty, and obeying out of trust, rather than evidence of God, which makes God's existence possible. Devji here is pointing out the importance of acting out of belief rather than evidence. The same explanation can be used to understand human bombers. The death of the bomber is an expression of absolute uncertainty because it is based on trust rather than absolute evidence of God's path, the beneficial outcomes of the act or the possibility of afterlife. The bomber can only know and be certain of their sociopolitical circumstances and the need to act.

Aside from the issues concerning uncertainty there is also a problem with the groups claiming that they know the intention of the human bomber, and it being entirely sacred. For example Merari (2010: 128) notes in the case of Palestinian and Israeli conflict that religion is a relatively unimportant factor in the motivation of human bombers. However, for Al Zawahiri human bombings appear to be legitimate and Islamically justified:

A generation of mujahedeen that has decided to sacrifice itself and its property in the cause of God. That is because the way of death and martyrdom is a weapon that tyrants and their helpers, who worship their salaries instead of God, do not have (Wright 2007: 219).



In the above quote Al Zawahiri seems to be claiming two things. Firstly, that the intention of the bombers to sacrifice themselves is in the path of God. Secondly, that he has absolute knowledge of the intentions of the bombers and the path of God. In stating this, he and groups that advocate and use human bombings as a weapon are arguing that they know the mind of God, thus they elevate their knowledge to the level of God. By logical extension, this means that they are God. In claiming such knowledge they have committed a blasphemous act, which places them outside the fold of Islam.

The groups attempt to resolve these issues, place themselves back into the fold of Islam, and convert intention into sacred intention in an interesting way. I contend that the groups have reconstructed 'God' into one that will justify human bombings. In order to do this, the groups convert the various acts that inform phrases, such as 'acting in the path of God', and the benefits of such acts to Muslims, into symbolical representations of God through projective identification and cast this into the future. Consequently, the symbolic God then provides the sacred intention, justifications and ways to pursue the 'path of God'.

The key features of human bombing seem to be everything but sacred. The motivations appear to be personal and arguments for their sacredness are full of uncertainty. As Asad (2007) argues, the best explanation for the motivations of human bombers is the assertion that the bombers may not even be certain of his or her motivations. The other entail issues concerning the groups that they claim to know the intentions of the bomber and the path of God are central in determining whether the act of human bombing can be authenticated as Islamically permissible. As I have detailed above these intentions are un-knowable by the groups, yet they claim to know both, taking them outside Islam. The groups overcome both problems by using a rhetorical device that reconstructs 'God' to justify the bombing and provide the sacred intention.

The standard for acting in God's path is too high to reach

As we have seen in the previous section it is difficult to ascertain if the bombers intentions are sacred. In this section I contend that even if we accept that the bomber has sacred intention it is impossible to uphold. I base my argument on an incident that took place during the battle of the 'Ditch' involving the fourth Caliph, which clearly demonstrates that intention derived from anger and revenge nullify sacredness. I use extracts from the 2006 Transatlantic Airline plotters martyrdom videos to support this argument.

The incident outlined above was a fight, between Ali the fourth Caliph and Amr bin Abdu Wud, the champion from the Quraish tribe. At one point Amr bin Abdu Wud found himself in precarious position with Ali sitting on his chest, from which position Ali asked him to embrace Islam, however Amr bin Abdu Wud refused and spat on Ali. In response to this, Ali 'rose calmly from Amr's chest, wiped his face, and stood a few paces away, he gazed solemnly at his adversary, and responded by saying, 'O' Amr, I only kill in the way of Allah and not for any private motive. Since you spat in my face, my killing you now may be from a desire for personal vengeance. So I spare your life. Rise and return to your people' (Grande Strategy 2012).

If we consider the motivations of the foiled 2006 Transatlantic Airline plotters we see that they were motivated by their anger and the necessity to gain revenge, and redemption and gain the rewards of the afterlife. For example perpetrator, Umar Islam stated in his martyrdom video that, 'this is revenge for the actions of the USA in the Muslim lands and their accomplices such as the British and the Jews. As you kill, you will be killed. And if you want to kill our women and children then the same thing will happen to you... We are doing this in order to gain the pleasure of our Lord and Allah loves us to die and kill in his path' (BBC 4 April 2008). Tanvir Hussain, another member of the plot, stated in his video, 'I only wish I could do this again, you know come back and do this again, and just do it again and again until people come to their senses



and realise, you know, don't mess with the Muslims' (BBC 4 April 2008). In the cases of Umar Islam and Tanvir Hussain, anger, revenge and redemption for Muslims play a big role in their motivations.

Comparing the incident involving the fourth Caliph to the 2006 Transatlantic Airline plotters, we see that the Caliph decided not to kill Amr bin Abdu Wud because the act would have been carried out during a moment of anger; by contrast, the intentions of the plotters seem to be determined by anger and the need to seek revenge. For the Caliph acting out of anger is incompatible with acting in the path of God, thus emotions such as anger cannot play a role in sacred intention. If emotions such as anger and revenge become part of the bombers intention, I contend this nullifies the sacredness of them.

Vicarious trauma and human bombers

In the previous sections I have argued that the intention of human bombers cannot be considered as sacred, and acting with sacred intention is such that sacredness is impossible to uphold. In this final section I make a tentative claim that both successful and foiled human bombers that lived in the UK could have been suffering from secondary trauma, as a consequence of visiting conflict zones and from watching videos detailing Muslims enduring violence. Secondary trauma, as Speckhard (2012) notes, is traumatization occurring vicariously through empathetic engagement with a victim of trauma by visiting conflict-zones or watching videos detailing violence and suffering. Aid workers and therapists, for example experience secondary trauma because they start to identify with the victims of traumatic events (Pulido 2012).

By forwarding secondary trauma as an explanation I am discussing two things. Firstly, if we accept that human bombers were suffering from secondary trauma, and it is a clinical condition, they are fulfilling the criteria of sacred intention as set out by Abu Qatada. Secondly, that the emotional conditions generated by trauma may act as mechanisms for one to acquire and act upon extreme ideas as an antidote to the trauma. This leads to two further questions, which are possibly more important but difficult to answer, at least in this paper. The first is more general to Muslims: are there a specific constellation of experiences that we can argue produce 'Muslim trauma' and how does this manifest itself in the lives of Muslims that experience the trauma? The second is specific to terrorism and especially human bombing in non-conflict zones: to what severity does one have to experience secondary trauma in order to propel them to become a human bomber.

From Abu Qatada's criteria for what constitutes a legitimate martyrdom operation it is clear that someone suffering from any form psychological illness cannot take part or be considered a martyr (Abu Qatada, 1995). From the work of Speckhard (2012) and the various media reports documenting the journeys that successful and foiled human bombers took makes it appear that the bombers had experienced secondary trauma. However, in the case of the UK human bombers, we see that they experienced secondary trauma through the combination of contact with victims of traumatic events and by watching videos detailing Muslims enduring traumatic events. Speckhard (2007) notes that:

We find that in nonconflict zones the traumas that are occurring in conflict zones are used to motivate potential recruits. This tactic makes use of the concept of secondary traumatization in which witnessing film clips or photos of real or misconstrued injustices are used to create a traumatic state in the one witnessing it so much so that the outrage and trauma can motivate them to take action on behalf of the victim(s) of such injustice(s).

In the cases of the 7/7 bombers and the foiled 2006 Transatlantic plot we see that they not only visited conflict zones but also watched videos displaying the suffering of their brethren. This combination fostered secondary



identification with the victims such that, it not only compelled them to acquire extreme ideas but also act upon them. In the transcription (see below) of the martyrdom video of Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the 7/7 bombers, we see that he strongly identified with, and seems to have been deeply affected by the suffering of his Muslim brethren:

Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people and your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our target. Until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people, we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation (The Sunday Times 2 September 2005)

Although Khan has not been a victim of any traumatic event, enduring the suffering of others vicariously seems to have played a significant role in him deciding to become a human bomber. Khan's vicarious experience not only made him feel humiliated and angry but also fomented a desire in him to gain revenge. In the martyrdom video of Shehzad Tanweer, another of the 7/7 bombers, he states:

I know they've killed and maimed civilians in their strikes because I've seen it with my own eyes, my brothers have seen it, I've carried the victims in my arms; women, children, toddlers, babies in their mother's wombs.

Like Khan, Tanweer's video transcript clearly indicates his identification with his Muslim brethren and that he has been intensely affected by the suffering he has witnessed. His experiences suggest that he could have been suffering from secondary trauma similar to that which Speckhard (2012) details in discussing what leads a person to become a human bomber in conflict-zones.

The cases of the 2006 Transatlantic Plot members follow a similar trajectory. Abdulla Ahmed Ali, the ringleader of the plot, stated during his trial that in 2002 he went to a refugee camp in Pakistan to help refugees fleeing from the US attacks. He recalls his experience and details the harrowing effect that it had on him:

There were lots of deaths in the camps daily. We had to go to a lot of funerals daily. It was mostly kids that were dying, children, young children. He had been interested in politics since he was a teenager. When I was about 15 or 16 I remember the Bosnian war going on and I remember images of concentration camps, of people looking like skeletons and things like that. I was aware they were Muslims' (Guardian 8 September 2009).

Ali clearly indicates the impact of working in a refugee camp and watching videos of the Bosnian war that detailed Muslim suffering. Two significant issues emerge from Ali's trial: the suffering of children and the images from the Bosnian concentration camps. The impact of the camps on Muslims in the UK has been grossly underestimated. Islamists that I have interviewed noted that the Bosnian war and the consequent suffering of Muslims was a watershed moment regarding their thinking on what it means to be a Muslim in Europe. The camps were Muslim where held during the war also reminded the interviewees of the WWII holocaust.

Although the members of the foiled 2004 Crevice plot were not human bombers, their trial reveals how secondary trauma imparted through visiting conflict-zones and by watching videos that detailed Muslim suffering fomented a desire in them to engage in violence to gain revenge. For example, during his trial, Anthony Garcia recalled watching videos that displaying the atrocities perpetrated by Indian forces in Kashmir. The impact of these videos had on him is demonstrated by Garcia stating that:



It was the worst thing anyone could have seen. Little children sexually abused and women... and I still remember it quite clearly. The effect of these videos, as Garcia recalls made him cry while watching the videos and as a consequence he decided to do something to help his fellow Muslims in Kashmir (BBC 30 April 2007).

While Garcia experienced secondary trauma through watching videos, and identified with the victims through the register of Islam and violence, Salahuddin Amin another member of the plot embraced extreme ideas after his experiences in a refugee camp in Pakistan:

There were a lot of stalls on the main road—on the Mall Road,” he said. “The stalls were set up by the Mujahadeen, the fighters fighting in Kashmir. I was walking up and down at one point I heard a lady making an emotional speech about the atrocities that were happening in Kashmir that was under Indian rule—how women were raped and kidnapped all the time and they had to move from there to Pakistani Kashmir and were in difficulties. She made a very emotional speech and that affected me. (BBC 30 April 2007).

For Amin the effect of hearing about the violence experienced by Pakistani Muslim women at the hands of Indian soldiers captivated him such that he decided to donate money, in addition to attending meetings held by Islamists in his hometown of Luton (BBC 30 April 2007). He identified with the woman speaker and the victims through the registers of ethnicity, Islam and violence.

The experiences of the above individuals highlight how violence experienced, especially by women and children, that can be identified with can foster a state of trauma. If we accept that the individuals were traumatised by their secondary experiences, this means that they have not fulfilled the prerequisite criterion that legitimates human bombing as documented by Abu Qatada.

Conclusion

I have argued that it is impossible to consider human bomber to be motivated by sacred intention, even if bombers and groups claim as such, on the basis of three issues that I consider to undermine the religious criteria outlined by Abu Qatada.

The first issue is one of identifying the motivations of the bomber. It is clear that the bombers have multiple motivations, including, escapism, family honour and politics of representation. Moreover, the human bomber is not acting from absolute knowledge of God's path and certainty of the outcomes that will be beneficial to Muslims, but on trust and uncertainty of the outcomes. Even, if we accept that the bomber may have sacred intention, the standard is such that Ali, the fourth Caliph found it difficult to uphold, as the story documenting the battle of Ditch highlights.

The second issue is the groups assuming that they know the 'real' motivations of the bomber and these motivations are in the path of God. In declaring knowledge of both, the groups are assuming that they know the mind of God and thus elevate themselves to the God's status. This places the groups in a precarious position because and outside the fold of Islam.

The final issue is the possibility of the bombers suffering from secondary trauma. Speckhard (2012) argues that secondary trauma played a big part in compelling individuals to engage in human bombing missions as I have outlined. She contends that secondary trauma can occur in people that live in conflict-zones, as well as those who live outside them. I have argued that the 7/7 bombers and the members of the foiled 2006 Transatlantic plot not only visited conflict-zones and witnessed violence first, they also watched videos that



detailed Muslim suffering; thus they were suffering from secondary trauma and did not fulfill Qatad's criteria. If we accept that the occurrence of either one or all of the aforementioned issues, then this ensures that no scared intention can exist, which means that human bombings falls outside the fold of Islam and can only be explained by non-religious arguments.

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Notes

[1] There are a number of explanations used for the act of human bombing and the bombers themselves. Although Merari notes four types of explanations, I place them into two categories. The first category focuses on the individual, looking at religious fanaticism, poverty, personal trauma, revenge, and psychopathology. The second category tends to focus on political grievances, utilitarian concerns, and cultural reasons (Merari 2010: 125).

[2] Abu Qatada al-filistini was an extremist preacher who operated out of Finsbury Park Mosque, London until his detention under anti-terrorism act in 2002. In July 2013 he was extradited to Jordan to face terrorism charges.

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Entering the Black Hole: The Taliban, Terrorism, and Organised Crime

by Matthew D. Phillips, Ph.D. and Emily A. Kamen



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Abstract

Cooperation and imitation among crime and terror groups in recent years has given rise to a crime-terror nexus. A linear conceptualisation of a crime-terror spectrum, suggests that complete convergence of crime and terror in a failed state can give rise to a 'black hole.' Theoretical models of the crime-terror nexus, however, do not specify the means by which a crime-terror group enters this black hole state, yet others do not. Using the Taliban movement as a case study, this article presents a theoretical extension of black hole theory, using organisation-level characteristics to merge black hole theory with the crime-terror continuum.

Keywords: *Taliban; Organized Crime; Terrorism; Crime-Terror Nexus; Narco-Terrorism; Black Holes*

Introduction

Military, law enforcement, and intelligence communities worldwide have witnessed a shift in recent decades in the behaviour of organised criminal enterprises and terrorist groups. This shift has seen vertically-integrated hierarchical groups focused on either profit or political (or religious) agenda morphing into more decentralised networks with robust capabilities in a multitude of crimes. Experts and scholars recognise that terrorism is not a static threat, but rather a dynamic one that adapts and evolves. Recent evolution has motivated scholars to move away from classic terror paradigms and toward a more modern understanding of insurgencies.

According to Kilcullen (2006), classic insurgency theory considers an insurgent challenger to a legitimate, though perhaps fragile, state (p. 112). Such insurgencies operate from geographic sanctuaries that allow them to regroup and resupply. Contemporary insurgency and counter-insurgency theory acknowledges a modernisation of insurgencies that includes globalisation (Gilmore, 2011), diversification of monetary sources (Kilcullen, 2006), and the adoption of terror tactics to facilitate a resistance to state occupation rather than revolution (Bergen & Footer, 2008; Kilcullen, 2009). Contemporary counter-insurgency theory continues to deal with sanctuaries, although it distinguishes geographic sanctuaries from electronic sanctuaries such as the internet (Kilcullen, 2006). Sanctuaries, fostered by cooperation among insurgents and global terrorist campaigns (Gilmore, 2011; Kilcullen, 2006), protract conflicts by engaging political, social, economic, and military networks (Hammes, 2005). Importantly, sanctuaries also allow a dangerous amalgamation of crime and terror by insurgents, known as the crime-terror nexus. This nexus has accordingly taken on greater importance for study and understanding.

The gravity given to the crime-terror nexus is well deserved; symbiotic relationships between criminals and terrorists represent insidious threats to regional and international security wherever they exist. According to Makarenko (2004), the penultimate threat to security posed by the crime-terror nexus is a 'black hole' state, in which a single organisation engaged in both organised crime and terrorism can leverage the conditions of



a weak or failed state to promulgate and prosper without fear of repercussion from governmental authorities. This black hole state is considered by numerous scholars in the crime-terror literature (e.g. Innes, 2007; Korteweg, 2008).

This article offers an extension of the theoretical literature by merging the crime-terror continuum with black hole theory by specifying the mechanisms by which an organisation can cross into a black hole state.[1] This theoretical extension builds on black hole theory by arguing for the incorporation of organisation-level characteristics into black hole theory, moving beyond the near-exclusive focus on state-level characteristics. Our extension draws on the empirical observations of a mutated crime-terror group currently operating in the context of a black hole, the Taliban. The article proceeds by reviewing the crime-terror continuum and black hole theory in more depth, clarifying the gap between the two, and arraying the necessary organisation-level conditions for entering the black hole. We conclude by discussing the flexibility of this extension and directions for future research.

The Crime-Terror Continuum

Historically understood as distinct phenomena, organised crime and terrorism were rarely linked by security, military and law enforcement agencies. Since the September 11th attack on the United States, the divide between the two has eroded (Perri and Brody, 2011), and the threat of transnational organised crime emerged in recognition of the natural symbiosis that exists. Makarenko (2004) formalised this symbiosis, developing a continuum by which crime syndicates and terror groups can be evaluated based on their commonalities. The crime-terror continuum suggests that at one extreme exist organised crime groups, purely motivated by profit. At the other extreme exist terrorist factions who participate in politically or religiously motivated activities only. Sensitive to changing capabilities and motivations, the continuum allows for the groups to shift from one end of the theoretical spectrum to the other. This process is consistent with Dishman's definition of 'transformation' (2001; Sanderson, 2004, p. 50).

There is debate in the literature over semantics and proper definitions of terms like 'convergence,' 'transformation' and 'hybrid.' Some conceptualisations of the crime-terror nexus refer to a situation in which a single organisation developing operational capabilities of both organised crime and terror as one of 'transformation' (Dishman, 2001; 2005; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007). Many crime-terror scholars who favour this language of transformation use the term 'convergence' to describe a situation in which two organisations – one criminal group and one terrorist group – fuse themselves into a single hybrid entity (Dishman, 2005; Shelley and Picarelli, 2005). To be consistent with Makarenko's crime-terror continuum, we use the term 'transformation' and 'convergence' as defined above. To avoid confusion when referring to a single organisation that has developed both criminal and terrorist elements, while not abandoning its original organising principle, we refer to such a group as a 'mutated' organisation, borrowing language from Dishman (2001). This is in contrast to a merger of two previously distinct groups, forming a 'hybrid' organisation.

Returning to the crime-terror nexus, Makarenko (2004) categorises the seven points on the continuum into four categories, which include: alliances, operational motivations, convergence, and black holes. Alliances refer to the idea that both factions (criminal and terrorist groups) form relationships with one another. Typically, alliances are formed in certain regions in an effort to ensure mutual success. However, alliances may be imperfect. Therefore, many groups avoid them in favour of adopting both criminal and terrorist activities within their own groups, attempting to avoid any alliance-related difficulties. As an example, organised crime groups could use terrorist tactics to solidify their criminal enterprise and foster the



promulgation of conditions necessary to further their criminal activities. Alternatively, terrorists may engage in behaviours common to organised crime as a way of funding their ideological interests and actions. By each attempting to take on the other's role, criminal and terrorist organisations eliminate the need for alliances. Makarenko defines this as 'convergence.'

The convergence hypothesis refers to the idea that both groups have the ability to adopt the other's characteristics, thus becoming a more potent threat. The advantage gained by convergence is summarised by Acharya, Bukhari, & Sulaiman (2009, p. 104); 'the nexus with organised criminal groups gives terrorists a disproportionate advantage in terms of skills and capabilities. Criminal gangs can help terrorists extend their reach beyond the area of their usual operations'. Further, the continuum suggests that after convergence, it is possible for a group to abandon its original motivations and instead occupy a status on the side of the spectrum from which they did not begin.

At the centre-point or fulcrum of the crime-terror continuum is the 'black hole' thesis. In this situation, a weak or failed state provides the fertile ground allowing for convergence between organised crime and terrorism and creates the 'safe haven' for such groups (whether converged or mutated) to continue their operations largely unimpeded, as in Afghanistan (Makarenko, 2004, p. 138). However, this conceptualisation of the crime-terror continuum does not specify the mechanisms that would lead one organisation to completely reverse its position on the continuum, or transform, while another organisation converges (here, mutates) and enters the black hole.

The Black Hole State

Since the terror attacks of September 11th 2001, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policy has been quite concerned with the notion of the black hole state, sometimes referred to as terrorist sanctuaries or safe havens (Campana and Ducol, 2011; Innes, 2007; Korteweg, 2008; Piazza, 2008). These operating spaces are troublesome inasmuch they provide terrorists opportunities to train, organise, raise revenue, and plan attacks (Piazza, 2008). Precise definitions of such terms are debatable and controversial (Campana and Ducol, 2011), but at the most basic level share the notion that in such spaces (physical or otherwise), legitimate government influence is sufficiently weak as to be unable to assert control over criminals, terrorists, or political insurgents.

Both the political and academic realms have been inundated with the use of terminology to describe a situation in which a failed or failing state is exploited by terrorist actors for nefarious purposes. In arguing over the semantics of what constitutes a black hole state, terrorist sanctuary, or safe haven, scholars and policymakers endeavoured to identify the characteristics of black hole states and the signposts that signal their emergence. Some treatments of black holes and safe havens have focused on the geographic dimensions of states, following the lead set by the 9/11 Commission report produced in 2004 (Innes, 2007, p. 4), examining such factors as porous borders and physical inaccessibility. Others have examined non-physical attributes of the state such as demographic and political conditions, for example population density, historical legacies of violence and conflict, poverty, and weak political efficacy. Still others studied less tangible characteristics such as localised power dynamics, social, and religious factors.

However, the extant literature conceptualising black hole states and their empirical relationships to terrorism are overwhelmingly preoccupied with measuring state-level constructs. In other words, variables considered and studied almost uniformly describe some attribute of the state. Campana and Ducol (2011) offer a critique of this limited paradigm, arguing that theoretical formulations of black holes and safe havens be expanded to include local social dynamics (such as clan or tribal governance). This critique argues that local "social space"



has remarkable potential to affect order and routine even when centralised government cannot, thus shaping favourable opportunities for terrorists when local populaces are sympathetic, or curtailing crime and terror when the motives of insurgents are not conducive to the social order. Groh (2010) offers a similar argument, providing an in-depth analysis of the Pashtunwali system of local governance in Afghanistan and Pakistan, suggesting that the tribal structure lent itself to prolonged resistance to outside authority.

Merging the Crime-Terror Continuum with Black Hole Theory

Currently, the literature posits two simultaneous but separate contentions. The crime-terror continuum suggests that criminal or terrorist organisations have the potential to change their identities along a continuum based on their actions and motivations. Such organisations could transform from one type into another, or could mutate or converge into a hybrid organisation with joint terrorist and criminal capabilities. In the context of a failed state, a converged organisation can enter the black hole state. Separately, black hole theory suggests that failed or sufficiently weak states offer terrorist organisations a breeding ground for future operations, and multiple studies examine the state-level correlates of these black hole states or terrorist safe havens.

What is missing from the literature is an examination of organisation-level characteristics that contribute to the black hole state. Characteristics of organisations are crucial to the crime-terror continuum. To enter the black hole state, the continuum requires an organisation whose operational identity is in flux to converge or mutate, rather than simply transform. To transform is simply to move from one extreme of the continuum to the other. The black hole exists at the centre of the continuum. Thus, a reconciliation of black hole theory and the crime-terror continuum incorporating organisation-level characteristics will have utility in explaining why one organisation in flux transforms, while another converges to enter the black hole state. This article offers a limited initial step toward the theoretical integration of organisational characteristics into black hole theory by examining a mutated organisation currently operating in a black hole state; the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Entering the Black Hole

We offer an extension of black hole theory by considering organisation-level characteristics that contribute to a mutated or hybrid crime-terror group entering the black hole state. To construct our theoretical extension, this article builds on observations of one such group, the Taliban movement of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban provide a useful case study for this purpose inasmuch as Makarenko (2004, p. 138) identifies Afghanistan as a failed state in her paper outlining the crime-terror continuum (as well as others; see Campana and Ducol, 2011; Groh, 2010; Innes, 2007; Korteweg, 2008; Piazza, 2008), and because both the criminal and terrorist activities of the group are well documented, as will be seen below. Begun for purely religious motivations, the terror group evolved and mutated into an organisation equally adept at organised crime. Although crafted from observations of the Taliban, we argue this extension is flexible enough to explain why some organisations enter the black hole, while others simply transform.

We posit three factors that push a transforming organisation into the black hole state. First, the organisation must be operational within the geopolitical context of a failed or weak state. Second, the organisation must have simultaneous and continued activities in both terrorist operations and organised crime. Third, and most critical, the organisation's original organising principle, or 'raison d'être', must carry continued



strategic value to the group. Using the Taliban movement as a case study, each of these factors are elaborated and documented below. It warrants noting the first two factors are *preconditions* for the black hole state, rather than discriminatory factors. In other words, their presence is by definition necessary for a black hole state to exist. We include them here because the operational environment and capabilities of a group are organisation-level characteristics, rather than state-level, even if only preconditions for the black hole state.

Failed or Weak State

Literally central to the crime-terror continuum proposed by Makarenko (2004), the “black hole’ thesis’ represents the penultimate threat to international security posed by transnational organised criminal groups. Referring specifically to the melding of organised crime and terrorism, the black hole thesis goes beyond the prior state of convergence in that it occurs in a weak or failed state incapable of counteracting such groups, thus fostering the conditions for the continuation of the groups’ criminal operations. This governmental weakness is the first precondition of our extension of black hole theory.

Fortunately, finding empirical examples of black holes is difficult. This is due to the fact that black holes require the simultaneous presence of a failed state and a group that has converged to display both organised crime and terrorist operational capabilities. Afghanistan’s status as a black hole state is evidenced by the absence of central authority capable of providing law and order, chronic instability caused by factional feuds between rival warlords, and the sanctuary the country’s political situation provided to a number of terrorist groups and transnational organised criminal groups since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 (Atran, 2010).

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the Taliban were able to consolidate their control over the country, becoming the *de facto* ruling government of Afghanistan. As the ruling party between 1996 and 2001 (Reese, 2012, p. 94), the Taliban provided social welfare services, essentially performing some functions of the state (Rashid, 2010). However, the Taliban undertook these projects not for philanthropic reasons, but for self-interested reasons.

Much of the strength of the Taliban movement is found in an equally weakly governed region of Pakistan. Following the US-led military invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the core group of the Taliban had fled the country and emigrated to Pakistan to reorganise. Concurrently, the Pakistan Taliban emerged, a decentralised amalgamation of local tribes and military commanders loyal to Mullah Omar, but with separate structures and leadership from both the Afghan Taliban and each other (Acharya et al., 2009; Atran, 2010; Rashid, 2010). In the mountainous terrain of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the Pakistan Taliban operate a regime capable of functioning well beyond the reach of the Pakistani government (Atran, 2010; Rashid, 2010).

The Taliban movement is capable of operating its criminal and terrorist agenda with relative impunity within its locus of power in Afghanistan and Pakistan precisely because in those geopolitical contexts, the legitimate governments are incapable of removing the Taliban’s influence. A failed or weak state – such as that seen in current day Afghanistan (and the FATA and NWFP regions of Pakistan) – is a necessary precondition for a mutated organisation to enter the black hole. However, it is by no means a sufficient condition.

Simultaneous and Continued Operations in Terror and Crime

A second precondition for entering the black hole, an organisation must be chronically engaged in both terrorism and organised crime. In other words, the organisation must be a mutated one, whose threat comes



from its duality. The Taliban have a well-documented history of religiously-motivated terrorism. While harbouring Al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan, the Taliban trained in and adopted the tactics favoured by Al-Qaeda. These include the use of both suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in both Afghanistan and Pakistan (Rashid, 2010).

Recent Taliban activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to document the movement's fervour in using violence to advance its ideological agenda. NATO coalition forces, Afghan police, Pakistani military, and ordinary civilians remain targets of the Taliban's lethality (Crilly, 2013; Rosenberg & Shaw, 2014). The widespread violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan is prototypical of the Taliban's target selection patterns and modus operandi, as they attempt to eliminate threats to their extreme ideology.

Although established purveyors of religious terror, the Taliban are equally adept at organised crime. The Taliban's involvement in the opium and heroin trades dates back to their ascension to power in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s. Afghanistan harbours something of a feudal system for which opium and heroin is the lifeblood (Rashid, 2010; Schmidt, 2010), extracting profit at all stages of the trade.

The Taliban's involvement in the opium and heroin trades is an important component of their identity and the threat they pose to regional and transnational security. But equally important is the acknowledgement that their interests in organised criminal ventures became more varied and pronounced. Controlling lucrative trade and commerce corridors, Taliban warlords and their soldiers systematically collect taxes on virtually every shipment moving through the territory (Acharya et al., 2009; Reese, 2012, p. 105), including commodities like electronics, clothing, tea and silk, to contraband like rifles, opiates, and precursor chemicals (Rashid, 2010).

The Pakistan Taliban have expanded their organised criminal activities beyond those of the Afghan Taliban. The various Taliban factions have subsumed hardened criminals from Pakistan to leverage their expertise in committing bank robberies, vehicle thefts, and kidnapping for ransom schemes (Acharya et al., 2009; Freeman, 2012, p. 15). Kidnapping for ransom is thought to be one of the largest sources of revenue for the Pakistan Taliban (National Counter Terrorism Center, 2008; Reese, 2012). The proceeds from all of these endeavours are diverted to Taliban coffers.

Diversification and professionalism are now the hallmarks of Taliban organised crime in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Once a tightly-integrated resistance movement singularly focused on the control of their home country, the Taliban embraced the role as a loosely connected and overlapping network of organised criminals able to generate immense revenue from quite divergent sources. This mutation satisfies the second precondition for entering the black hole.

Strategic Value to Retain the Group's Raison D'être

The third and final component of our extension of the black hole thesis concerns a group that has undergone transformation from a terrorist organisation motivated solely by political or religious ideology into a mutated group equally ensconced in profit generation. Makarenko's (2004) original formulation of the crime-terror continuum holds that it is quite possible for a sort of total transformation in which the group comes to occupy a position on the opposite side of the crime-terror continuum from where it started. However, to enter the black hole state, such an organisation by definition cannot complete this total transformation. In other words, the group cannot abandon its original organising principle, or by extension its religious or political motivations. This organising principle, or *raison d'être*, must continue to hold strategic value,



thus ensuring its retention as part of the group's identity. Else, the principle could be jettisoned, the group transformed, and the black hole state avoided.

Since its inception, the Taliban movement has been organised around its radical Islamic ideology and strict interpretation and implementation of Sharia law (Atran, 2010; Rashid, 2010). This radical agenda was formerly directed and guided by Mullah Omar and the Taliban's Supreme Shura (Rashid, 2010), presiding over a monolithic and hierarchical structure. But the Taliban movement is no longer monolithic (Acharya et al., 2009). The Taliban movement has evolved into 'fragmented, transnational force devoid of many of the group's prior characteristics' (Schmidt, 2010; Peters, 2009). Illustrating the evolution from consolidation to fragmentation, Schmidt (2010) frames the Taliban structure as one that shifted from a 'spider' organization to a 'starfish' organization[2] (see Brafman and Beckstrom, 2006). Essentially, this characterisation reflects changes the Taliban have undergone as they reinvented themselves, and emerged as a new decentralised network.

While Mullah Omar remains the de facto leader of the Taliban, he is something of a figurehead, controlling only the core group in Afghanistan (Peters, 2009; Schmidt, 2010). The larger Taliban are decentralised, their commanders showing greater autonomy for their own factions. The characteristics of the Taliban embody the starfish organisation set forth by Brafman and Beckstrom (2006). The removal of any one faction of the Taliban today would not significantly harm the organisation. The factions fund themselves, and cooperate with one another absent any directives from central leadership (Schmidt, 2010).

Part and parcel to their radical ideology, the Taliban are committed to the defence of their home country from outside rule. This resistance to interference from states such as Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States is tied into a local tribal governance known as Pashtunwali (Atran, 2010; Groh, 2010). This ethnically-based system of alternative governance relies on a decentralised tribal network (Campana and Ducol, 2011; Groh, 2010) easily leveraged by and integrated into Taliban authority. The current decentralised structure of the Taliban movement, harkening back to Pashuntwali, is entirely congruent with the norms and mores of the populace with whom the Taliban interface. Because the Taliban soldiers are largely drawn from local populations (Rashid, 2010), structure reinforces commitment to the movement.

In this new and decentralised Taliban movement, abandonment of the group's organising principle is unfeasible. Ideology gives the Taliban shared identity. Although organised crime under the Taliban banner is rampant, profit generation is not the ultimate goal. As a unifying principle, the group is largely focused on the implementation of radical Islam, and eliminating those who violate their religious tenets. Without this identity, the movement likely would fragment (Atran, 2010). Given the number of Taliban factions under the autonomous command of their various warlords, a lack of belonging toward one another could very well cause the factions to become direct competitors. For the Taliban, radical ideology provides identity, and that identity provides unity. Thus we see the strategic value in the Taliban's *raison d'être*.

Avoiding the Black Hole

Certainly, there are a multitude of nefarious organisations besides the Taliban with operational capabilities in both organised crime and political or religious terrorism. Al-Qaeda, for example, has been clearly documented as a potent terrorist group engaged in such criminal enterprises as money laundering, kidnapping, and fraud (Freeman, 2012). It is also the case that for Al-Qaeda, its original *raison d'être* retains strategic value. Indeed, it is equally committed to global jihad and radical Islam as (and arguably more than) the Taliban. Its message has been propagated worldwide through their networks of operatives and splinter



groups. Much like the Taliban, radical ideology provides Al-Qaeda with identity. But unlike the Taliban, Al-Qaeda has not entered the black hole because it does not operate within a failed or suitably weak state. Al-Qaeda's global dispersal – in contrast to the Taliban's near-exclusive regional focus – rarely allows it to gather sufficient force to challenge legitimate states[3]. Al-Qaeda and its scions remain interested in taking advantage of failed or weak states, but thus far have been unable to do so. Although at the midpoint of the crime-terror continuum, Al-Qaeda has not entered the black hole because it has not met the theoretical precondition of operating in the geopolitical context of a failed state.

It is quite possible for terrorist or criminal organisations to operate in failed or failing states, retain their original organising principle, but not to show both terrorist and criminal capabilities. The narcotics cartels operating in Mexico would serve as a prime example. While not a failed state, Mexico ranks highly on the Fragile State Index[4]. The cartels are efficient and ruthless organised criminals, but are not terrorists inasmuch as they do not attempt to shape the political process. Cartels have not met the precondition of simultaneous terrorist and criminal operations, and thus avoid entering the black hole thesis as defined herein.

Our extension of the black hole thesis is further applicable to crime-terror groups who avoid entering the black hole because they abandon their original organising principle. For example, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is one of the oldest terror groups in the Western hemisphere. Initially committed to supplanting the Colombian government with a populist government in its image, FARC evolved into a premier narcotics trafficker that also made extensive profits through kidnappings in its home country. Many have argued that with the immense profits of Colombian cocaine and heroin, FARC's commitment to its populist agenda waned (Dishman, 2001; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007). When it lost strategic value, the organising principle was jettisoned, and thus the FARC never entered into the black hole. It bears mentioning that the Colombian government, though weak at times, was buttressed by the United States, offering further barrier to FARC entering the black hole.

Conclusion

Much has been said of the crime-terror nexus, both of the theoretical connection and the empirical evidence of the melding of crime and terror around the world. The shift from monolithic groups specialising in particular transgressions to decentralised networks of multi-threat generalists sharpens the need for understanding the conditions that erode national and international security. This article endeavours to further the current literature by offering an extension of the black hole thesis, specifying the necessary conditions for a mutated crime-terror organisation to enter the black hole. We have done so by studying one such group operating in a black hole state, the Taliban. We have also endeavoured to merge the crime-terror continuum with black hole theory by considering the organisation-level characteristics necessary to produce black hole states. This article does not present any grand new theory, but instead offers a limited theoretical extension arguing that black hole theory should strive to incorporate organisation-specific variables into future analysis. We argue for moving beyond an exclusive focus on state-level characteristics. In a black hole state, the direct threats to national, regional, and global security emanate not from states, but from the criminal and terrorist actors. Without considering the properties of such actors, theoretical and empirical analyses will be incomplete.



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Notes

[1] We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers who provided helpful feedback on this paper.

[2] This characterisation is derived from the nature of the two organisms. Spiders have a head that is clearly distinguishable from its legs. By contrast, starfish have legs radiating from a central hub, but no head. The head of the spider directs the organism, and if removed the spider will die. If a leg is removed from a starfish, the starfish will survive.

[3] A notable exception is Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's December 2012 martial takeover of northern Mali. AQIM's attempt to capitalise on Mali's weakness was stymied by international forces.

[4] The index can be accessed at <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2014>.

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The Theatre of Cruelty: Dehumanization, Objectification & Abu Ghraib

by Christiana Spens



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Introduction

A clumsy pyramid of kneeling men, naked apart from the hoods over their heads, with a smiling, fair-headed woman and a grinning man with a moustache, wearing green cleaning gloves; a slight woman with a blank expression and a man on the floor, on a limp leash; a hooded, robed figure, standing on a box with his arms outstretched and a pose similar to the crucifixion, with sinister wires behind him, and otherwise blank surroundings. A row of more hooded, naked men, forced to do sexual acts as a female prison guard (Lynndie England), tanned and wearing various shades of khaki, grins and does a thumbs up sign, pointing at him, her cigarette tilted and her expression not altogether different from Bonnie in *Bonnie and Clyde*. A man in uniform and a black beanie hat, sitting on an Iraqi prisoner. Another pyramid of naked detainees, with a man and women behind them, smiling arm in arm, as if they are standing by a caught wild boar or large fish, or a well-organised barbeque. The moustached man (Charles Graner), again smiling and giving a thumbs up sign, this time over a corpse, whose bloody eyes have been bandaged. A naked prisoner covering his ears, as several dogs bark at him, and soldiers watch on. Another prisoner chained to a bed-frame, with some underpants covering his face. These infamous scenes, shown in the Abu Ghraib photographs, shocked many people, and the perpetrators of the torture depicted were condemned by the relevant authorities. They transformed from clandestine mementos of hidden violence to records of an international scandal and evidence of serious crime. Their meaning changed depending on who saw them, how they were interpreted, what reactions they provoked, and the rulings of the courts regarding the people involved. They went from being private victory shots, to an international public relations disaster, to evidence of breaking of the Geneva Convention.

This paper will examine the way in which the meaning of the Abu Ghraib photographs changed, and why, comparing the phenomenon to similar historical precedents such as the lynching photographs of the early twentieth century USA, and the violent pornography that emerged from Bosnia in the early 1990s. It will also discuss similar cases from further back in history, such as the witch trials of the 1660s and Guy Fawkes' punishment following the alleged Gunpowder plot, which occurred before the advent of photography but displayed similar characteristics in terms of the use of spectacular public violence, and its changing meaning in years following. The paper will take a particularly aesthetic approach to this analysis, and in so doing place the photographs in the context of a historical tendency of symbolic and visually aware violence being used to dehumanise and 'other' politically threatening groups. It is hoped that this will serve as a foundation to better understand how dehumanisation works, and how visual and dramatic techniques are used in a political context.

Specifically, the paper aims to uncover a pattern between the Abu Ghraib scandal, and these historical precedents, in order to better understand the flexible meaning of the photographs, and what they say about society's relationship with public violence as a form of communication. (Jabri, 1996) It will argue that the



Abu Ghraib scandal is a concise, modern example of public, symbolic violence being used as a mechanism for 'othering', as well as exposing how changeable that 'othering' can be. In other words, violence used to 'other' through objectification and dehumanisation can have the opposite effect if there is sufficient public engagement with alternative interpretations. The 'villain' narrative, that is present in all cases referred to (and especially in the three the paper will examine more closely), is not fixed: the 'villain' role can be passed from punished to perpetrator easily, if the will of the public, or audience is there.

Abu Ghraib as 'Outsider Art': A New Way of Thinking about Political Violence

The set of photographs from Abu Ghraib are reminiscent of many instances of spectacular, symbolic violence – from private to public, from recent to historical cases, and from fictional to non-fictional violence. These photographs look like stills from a play of the Theatre of Cruelty – a drama in the vein of Artaud (1938) or the Marquis de Sade (Philips, 2005) – with its narcissism, sadism and brutality. The photographs feature hoods that could have been borrowed from mediaeval torture chambers, or witch trials of the 1600s in Europe or the USA. The use of triangular composition appears borrowed from the fine art of the Renaissance, and the pose of the 'hooded man' by paintings of the crucifixion. Black gowns look like they were picked out of the wardrobe from the *Scream* films of the 1990s, or a Halloween parade. The Abu Ghraib set, if not so politically loaded, could easily be labelled as a kind of Art Brut, or 'outsider art' (Dubuffet, 1967), in its seemingly unconscious use of performance and art, beyond the realms and rules of the art world but disconcertingly reminiscent of techniques and motifs used by painters and performance artists the world over. As it is, commentators have understandably been careful not to be seen to trivialise the photographs of torture by pointing out these historical and aesthetic precedents and references. They are not works of art, but war crimes. This paper suggests that the two terms are not mutually exclusive. Rather, the use of performance, artistic techniques and communicative violence has long been present in public punishment and other violence, in political violence especially, and with good reason. (Carr, 2011)

Spectacular, symbolic violence can be extremely effective in emotionally manipulating whoever sees the violence, and whoever is victim of it. The existence of a camera or a physical audience heightens humiliation of victims, and the sense of horror in audience makes deterrence effective. Significantly, too, the use of public violence can be a tool of social division – of objectifying, dehumanising and 'othering' an individual or a whole community represented by that individual. As this paper will explain, history is full of examples of this behaviour. While it can only introduce such ideas, and the notion of a 'history of the art of political violence', it is hoped that this initial discussion will put in place some foundation for further study that seeks to understand political violence through a thorough interrogation of its aesthetic and dramatic elements.

Literature Review

While there has been much discussion of the Abu Ghraib photographs, very little has touched on its historical precedents, or the aesthetic elements of the photographs and torture depicted. Emphasis has, necessarily, been on the role of torture and related moral implications (Danchev, 2008; Todorov, 2009); and the political implications, particularly the way in which the photographs exposed torture and hypocrisy of the US government and military (Danner, 2004), implications of the blow to the reputation of the US (Hersh, 2004), especially the reaction from the Muslim community, and the international community more generally. There has been discussion of what the leaking and distribution of these images globally means for government attempts at (military) censorship, issues of freedom of speech versus national security, and the



effect of the Internet on public understanding of warfare and the efficiency and effectiveness of revolutionary propaganda. (Bolt, 2012).

This paper proposes, however, that the full political implications of these photographs cannot be understood without examining more specifically the aesthetic and historical context of the photographs and the behaviour – the use of spectacular violence for dehumanisation and ‘othering’ – that they represent. Furthermore, the way in which political meaning and message can change depending on ‘re-framing’ of images and wider narratives cannot be properly understood without careful consideration of how these changes of perception happen, and have happened historically. How the public relate to images such as those taken in Abu Ghraib prison, and how images work to alienate or engage or provoke people can be better understood by undertaking a historical visual analysis that considers the Abu Ghraib pictures in the context of similar brutal and symbolic violence, with a specific focus on their visual connotations.

Of the recent books on this topic, there are only brief comparisons made with historical examples but no full report considering each of those groups. For example, in *Lynching Photographs* (Apel & Smith, 2007), the authors suggest a link to the Abu Ghraib photographs, but do not go into very much depth about this connection; rather it is a suggestion of the relevance of the lynching photographs to the modern world, and a suggestion of further research, which this paper will hopefully contribute to. In *Mother, Monster, Whore*, (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007) the authors go into great depth about the way in which the Abu Ghraib narrative was gendered, and the connections to pornography, which were very helpful in this study. However that book, in focusing on gender issues, did not go into as much depth with comparative racial issues and especially the wider context of images of war and punishment, so this paper aims to expand that research in a way that should complement the existing work by Sjoberg and Gentry.

Four books are particularly insightful with regard to violent imagery and the media: *Cloning Terror* by W. T. J. Mitchell (2011), *The Violent Image* by Neville Bolt (2012), *Frames of War* by Judith Butler (2009), and *The Terrorism Spectacle* by Steven Livingston (1994). Between them, they discuss violent imagery and the media with reference to art theory and new biotechnology issues (Mitchell), the study of revolution, insurgency and modern technologies (Bolt, 2012), feminism and wider power dynamics (Butler, 2007), and a critical terrorism studies approach (Livingston, 1994). Each of these titles are insightful and useful in understanding the Abu Ghraib pictures, but as yet there is no work combining these insights, and especially with regard to Abu Ghraib. Given that these images are so iconic in the context of the ongoing War on Terror especially, and their relevance to current debates about issues of torture, censorship and pornography, it seems necessary to analyse them specifically, and with reference to the existing scholarship on terrorism and the media. In some respects, furthermore, analysis of the Abu Ghraib pictures signals a change in the way that violent imagery is understood. A fresh study of these pictures should enrich existing study of the wider subject of terrorism and the media, and expand on points made by Sjoberg, Gentry, Apel, Smith, MacKinnon and Butler, on the connections between images from war, pornography and lynching.

Methodology

This paper will analyse the Abu Ghraib photographs with a historical visual analysis, which selects primary cases for comparison (lynching photographs from the American South, early twentieth century, and photographs depicting torture and sexual abuse used in the Bosnian conflict of the early 1990s), as well as referencing a wider historical context, when useful connections and historical references can be used and revealed. The paper will argue that in each of these cases, whether clandestine or not, whether directed at a



small or global audience, the performance aspect is a tool to objectify and dehumanise the 'other' for political purposes. The Abu Ghraib photographs are part of a long history of performed, aesthetic violence whose central aim is dehumanisation through humiliation and torture.

Historical and Contemporary Context

Violence that is performed and pictured is nothing new: "The iconography of suffering has a long pedigree," as Susan Sontag writes. (2003, 36) It is a normal element of torture past and present, and until quite recently, it was a normal part of most punishment by the state, especially capital punishment such as public hangings. Well-known historical examples include the witch trials of the 1600s in Europe (Maxwell-Stuart, 2003, 2005, 2011) and the USA (Hill, 2000), (see Appendix L for illustration); the punishment of Guy Fawkes after his alleged involvement in the Gunpowder Plot in London (Fraser, 2002; Haynes, 2005; Sharpe, 2005), and the execution of the French aristocracy (among others) during the French Revolution. Although photographs were not taken of these cases, given that photography had not been invented yet, there are nevertheless valuable visual representations of these scenes that were produced contemporarily and in hindsight, and are a fascinating insight into the way that the perception of an event can change through visual representation and interpretation, or 'reframing' (Butler, 2009).

Since the Abu Ghraib scandal, similarly brutal footage has emerged from the Syrian conflict, films of torture and executions associated with the War on Terror (by Al Qaeda), in Afghanistan and Iraq, and associated with the Israel / Palestine conflict. Images of US Marines burning the bodies of 'enemy combatants' emerged in January 2014, (Ackermann, 2014) initially dubbed 'Abu Ghraib 2.0' ('Abu Ghraib 2.0? Horrifying images of US Marines burning Iraqis prompt military investigation,' RT.com 2014) The murder of Lee Rigby in London, in 2012, can also be compared with the Abu Ghraib pictures in the sense that both situations exemplified issues concerning the distribution of politically sensitive images of brutal violence using New Media, in the context of the War on Terror, and could be considered part of the so-called 'war of images' (Bolt, 2012; Mitchell, 2011). While the murder of Lee Rigby was intended to be shown to as wide an audience as possible, however, the Abu Ghraib images were originally intended to be kept secret.

While this paper will look at only the historical (primary) cases as follows, it is worth pointing out that the Abu Ghraib scandal, even in the past couple decades, has not been exceptional in terms of brutality, notoriety or (arguably, for it is very hard to quantify) dramatic political effect. Rather, the Abu Ghraib photographs are a good example of a behaviour, or type of performed violence, that has been repeated throughout history and continues to be used for dehumanisation.

Primary Cases

This paper, given limited space and for the sake of analytical clarity, will focus on the relatively recent examples in which photography was used: the lynching of black people in the Southern states of the US in the early twentieth century (see Appendix D – G), and the Abu Graib scandal of 2003 – 2004 (Appendix A – C). Reference will be made to other examples already mentioned, and to the torture, sexual abuse and murder of Muslims in the Bosnian conflict of the early 1990s, scenes of which were often photographed or recorded, and that material used in psychological warfare and propaganda also. Given difficulty in accessing the Bosnian material, however, these photographs will be referenced using secondary accounts of the photographs by Catherine MacKinnon (2007), while analysis of the lynching photographs and Abu Ghraib



photographs will use primary sources (presented in appendixes at the end of the paper).

Of the images taken in Abu Ghraib prison (as described in the introduction), this paper will examine specifically what it will term (a) The Hooded Man, (b) Pyramid of Bodies and (c) Soldier with Prisoner on Leash (each of which is reproduced in the Appendix). These selected images have been chosen for analysis as they are iconic and have been widely reproduced, in the mainstream media, pornography, and in fine art. They have come to visually represent (often subversively) the narrative of the War on Terror and specifically America's role in it. (Mitchell, 2011, 112) The particular images have been chosen because they represent the whole group well, in displaying between them the main characteristics of the group: the sexual pornographic element, as evidenced in the (b) Pyramid of Bodies photograph and (c) Soldier with Prisoner on Leash, and the torture element, clearly illustrated in the (a) Hooded Man photograph.

Of the lynching photographs available, the paper will specifically look at those pictured in Appendix D – K, showing the lynchings of Jesse Washington, Rubin Stacy, John Heith, Henry Smith and Jim Miller, because as a group they provide a good overview of typical lynching scenes, across a number of decades and several states (including Texas, Arizona, Florida and Oklahoma). The lynching of Jesse Washington (D) was included as it was a particularly infamous event (and photograph) and was instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement, and iconic of lynching photographs generally. (Apel & Smith, 2007)

Analysis

Through a visual historical analysis of the Abu Ghraib pictures (Appendix A – C) as well as the lynching photographs (Appendix D – K) and referring to the images and events mentioned in the historical context section (including Appendix L), which enabled cross-referencing historically and visually, several interesting motifs emerged that were present across cases:

- The use of rope, as a noose and / or leash (all except A (which uses wires however), and C)
- Tied hands and legs (all)
- Bodies raised above the ground (all except B)
- Relaxed, smiling people watching in the background. Body language included folded arms, leaning on trees, arms on hips, smiling, and relaxed posture. (All except A and J)
- Bodies transformed or presented as barely 'human' or recognisable, whether burnt beyond recognition, or covered with hoods. Also including the body, whether through burning, torture or stress positions, in abnormal positions. (All to some extent, but especially A, B, C, D)
- Triangular composition (A, C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K)
- Victim being made to look like an animal (overtly: B, and J, in being in a stable with animals)
- The use of hoods in the Abu Ghraib pictures (A – C) is similar to those associated with witches, and other mediaeval torture, and also those worn by the Ku Klux Klan.
- The use of burning in the lynching of Jesse Washington (D) echoes the images of US Marines allegedly burning Iraqi detainees (RT.com, 2014)
- All photos, to some extent, recall traditional hunting 'victory shots,' where animals and fish are laid on the ground or held from a string when they are caught, with smiling 'victors' standing around them.
- Racial differences between the victim and those watching the lynching or torture (victim is usually



black or Asian, spectators are generally white)

- Sexual elements: victims in Appendix A – K are all men, and are often watched by men and women, including young girls (E); these men are often naked or partially dressed (A, B, C, D). (Context point: castration and / or sexual abuse often happened as well as torture and death.)
- All photographs, especially (A and D – K) were reminiscent of the witch trials / burning images, one of which is reproduced in Appendix L.

From these motifs, the analysis revealed several dominant themes that contributed to the overall effect of dehumanization:

- Distortion of physical sexuality (inc. emasculation / castration)
- Destruction and distortion of the body (including skin)
- Association with animals
- Humiliation by staging the torture (body raised above, as on a stage) with an audience, and / or photographing that spectacle

These themes were all tied into a common effect of dehumanisation, of the individual and the group that individual was seen to represent. In other words, the photographs and the acts themselves (depicted in the image), worked to dehumanise in two key ways: (1) through actual destruction of the human body, and (2) through symbolic humiliation and subordination of the person, i.e. by raising the body on a stage or through hanging, through sexual abuse, and by associating the person with animals. In this respect, photography of performance is a means of contributing to (2) the symbolic subordination, and (2) communicating to others (perhaps as a deterrent or symbol of superiority on the part of the perpetrator) the physical and symbolic destruction of the person.

Discussion

To understand how the methods employed in the Abu Ghraib and lynching photographs work, the paper will consider ideas by Sontag, MacKinnon, Apel and Smith regarding the power dynamics of the torture and abuse, as well as the specific function of performance and photography in dehumanisation. Then it will discuss why this approach is taken in both cases, as well as others briefly mentioned (such as the with burnings, capital punishment, and recent symbolic and performed violence in Syria, London, and elsewhere). What explains the tendency towards performed, symbolic violence? Lastly, the paper will point out the way in which narratives of dehumanisation have historically backfired, and how this happens, to give further insight into the meaning of the Abu Ghraib photographs and the (changing) narrative they illustrate.

The Power Dynamics of Performed Torture

At the centre of the practice and photography of lynching, which asserted white superiority, there was usually a sexual element. The men lynched in these photographs were often accused of sexual harassment or rape of white women, also the evidence of those crimes was usually unproven. Since inter-racial sexual relations were prohibited, often the term 'rape' was also used to condemn consensual sex between a black person and a white person, and sexual harassment a term to cover up attraction. Sexual anxiety was at the root of race relations more generally, given the stereotyping of black men as sexually virile and aggressive, and intimidating to white men (and their women, since women were seen as property). (Apel & Smith, 2007, 8)



The public lynching of black men who had, for whatever reason, appeared to threaten the white male possession of their white women, was intended to reassert those men's superiority, and to deter other black men from intimidating them, or using their sexual and / or physical power against them, in the future. It was also a way to deter white women, and girls, from engaging with black men. One photo of a lynching is described as "Remarkable for the large number of girls standing about and ogling an abject corpse..." (Apel & Smith, 2007, 55) One can argue that these girls, in particular, were being socialised to think themselves "superiors of grown black men" (Apel & Smith, 2007, 56) as well as warned about what might happen if they were ever to engage with such a man. White male supremacism took a 'divide and conquer' approach to the subordination of blacks and women.

Lynching was a tactic used to achieve this end of white male power. Destruction of the (black) body, and symbolic degradation of the individual and the group they symbolise, were the two key ways that dehumanisation was achieved in the cases of Abu Ghraib also. (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2007) In both cases, the symbolic, brutal violence functioned to subordinate the victims to the point where they did not appear human, and least of all powerful humans. (Shapiro, 2003)

One of the key ways that symbolic degradation was achieved was through sexual abuse or castration (in the lynchings) (Apel & Smith, 2007). Sexual abuse is a means of humiliation, which is linked to dehumanisation: the victim is 'broken' and made to feel not human, and anyone watching is shown an individual in a state where he or she is so subordinated or objectified as to seem not completely 'human.' This effect can be heightened, according to MacKinnon (2007), Dworkin (1981) and Williams (2004) by recording that sexual abuse through photography, which heightens the sense of humiliation.

Sexual abuse can also be a weapon in general subordination, and specific racial subordination; sexual humiliation is a way of degrading an ethnic group as well as an individual, if that individual is presented as representing his or her ethnic group. MacKinnon writes specifically about the use of pornography in wartime as a means of waging superiority over women as a tactic in the suppression of a particular ethnic group. In *Are Women Human?* (2007) MacKinnon discusses the filming of sexual abuse of Bosnian women by Serbian military, and therefore the use of actual genocide and rape in the production of pornography. She recounts how some rapes were aired on the evening news in Banja Luke, a Serb-occupied city in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (MacKinnon, 2007, 163) "Many men watched her raped in person; thousands more watched her raped on television." (MacKinnon, 2007, 163) Snuff films, involving rape, were distributed in a more clandestine manner, but nevertheless likely received a wide audience. "Many tortures in the camps are organised as sexual spectacles, ritualised acts of sadism in which inflicting extreme pain and death are sexual acts, performed and watched for sexual enjoyment." (MacKinnon, 2007, 166–167)

The reason behind the emphasis on sexual abuse in this conflict was that it was a tactic to undermine a whole race. By abusing the Muslim women, the Serbian military were hurting the whole community – not simply in the basic way that hurting people's family and friends would ensure, but also in the sense that they were taking ownership of those women as if they were possessions or land. An extreme consequence of this behaviour was the forced impregnation of thousands of Bosnian women; this was a way of the Serbian military seizing their bodies and reproductive capabilities, and the next generation, as their property. As MacKinnon puts it: "In this system, violating other men's women is planting a flag; it is a way some men say to other men, "What was yours is now mine." (MacKinnon, 2007, 171)

That men were being sexually assaulted in the Abu Ghraib photographs (and assaulted by women as well as men) is an interesting development of the tendency that MacKinnon discusses. The manner in which



the performed abuse objectifies the individuals involved, and reduces them to something to be taken or destroyed (much as land or an animal caught in a hunt) is similar in both instances. As Gentry and Sjoberg point out however, the fact that the victims are male and the perpetrators female is significant in the Abu Ghraib case because the gender roles of each are used to send a message that, in a 'War of Masculinities', America wins over Iraq. (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2007, 206). "While the United States likely did not plan the publicity of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal as a part of the gendered narrative of state relations, emphasising the women whose participation serves an important function as a victory narrative for American masculinities. After all, 'nothing feminizes masculinity like being *beat by a girl*, as the old playground adage explains. The images of the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib silently tell a story of the ultimate humiliation of Iraqi masculinity because Iraqi men were deprived of their manliness by American women." (Sjoberg, 2007; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2007, 2006-7). The apparent femininity of the perpetrators, then, is used as a weapon to further humiliate the victims, and to emasculate as well as dehumanise them.

Photography and Performance of Abuse: Why?

The abuse (and photography of it) during the Bosnian conflict, as interpreted by MacKinnon, has similarities with the Abu Ghraib and lynching cases in terms of racial as well as sexual dynamics, and reference to it suggests the general way that sexual abuse and photography can be used to subordinate not only individuals and states during wartime, but also ethnic groups (whether in wartime or not). (Moeller, 1989) It also suggests the way that photography itself can be a tool of dehumanisation, revealing why photographs were taken of the Abu Ghraib abuse and lynching. While MacKinnon's interpretation is a subjective one, it seems plausible that her insights are correct when considered alongside this paper's findings that visual motifs were important for symbolic dehumanisation, and that performance was key in humiliation. Photography of that performance seems a logical way to heighten that dehumanisation and humiliation, especially given Sontag's take on the function of photography: "Photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed. And photographs are a species of alchemy, for all that they are prized as a transparent account of reality." (Sontag, 2003, 72) Whether sexually explicit and / or pornographic, or not, photography can be used as a way to objectify individuals depicted, to varying degrees. (Chambers, 2008) Why, however, is torture and death performed (and visually loaded) at all, let alone photographed?

Juergensmeyer discusses the idea of a violent act as a performance in *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, and argues that the root of this behaviour is in religious rituals. Political violence (often torture) that uses symbolic performance does so in a way that is parasitical on religious ceremony (Juergensmeyer, 2000, 119). This performative aspect of the violence is not all strategic, he says: it is a type of public ritual, developed and conscious of religious ceremony. Themes of martyrdom, resurrection, transcendence, and judgment, are common themes in most major religions, especially Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Juergensmeyer argues that being socialized into religion, and a religious way of thinking – having these themes and ideas indoctrinated in one's thoughts, normalizes public ritual, martyrdom, and symbolic gestures about subjects of life, death and resurrection. As Sontag agrees:

"The spectacular is very much part of the religious narratives by which suffering, throughout most of Western history, has been understood. To feel the pulse of Christian iconography in certain wartime or disaster-prone photographs is not a sentimental projection..." (Sontag, 2003, 71)

The narratives, in other words, are already in place, in religion and in art that is religious, and political dramas and conflicts can be explained through them. Because so many people are also aware of these rituals,



and deeply entrenched ideas and themes, the 'audience' is likely to be receptive to them, and emotionally react to the violence. This sort of violence exploits this inherent human trait, and tendency to engage in ritual and spectacle, rather than linking it directly and exclusively to religious ritual. Themes of resurrection, martyrdom and sacrifice have played a part in many societies and philosophies, as well as the major religions that Juergensmeyer is concerned with.

Douglas's *Purity and Danger* (1966) links these various rituals and performances (as well as other forms of social behaviour, including non-performative violence) to a fundamental desire for purging and purification, which exists beyond religion and modern thought, and which she argues is a common theme in all human societies. The link between violence and ritual is intriguing, and even if it cannot be explained by religious ritual *per se*, it can be explained as a fundamental trait of human nature. If that is so, then spectacular violence engages with this tendency because people react to ritual, just as religious organizations and artists also exploit this human trait to communicate their points and desires. The main point is that all of these forms are communicative.

The Abu Ghraib and lynching photographs are examples of the way in which violence can be used to communicate ideas. In these cases, the ideas being communicated are related to perception of power: in the case of the lynching photographs, the idea was that white men are superior to black men (and all women) and that any threat to that superiority will be punished. In the case of Abu Ghraib, the original message is that the detainees are completely subservient to the perpetrators of the violence, and that the perpetrators have achieved some sort of victory by abusing them. In both cases, there is an implicit communication of the idea that those lynched or tortured are less than human, and 'other'. The irony of both the Abu Ghraib and lynching photographs, however, is that although within the originally intended audience of the photos, the 'performance' worked as intended, because the photos were leaked to the press and received by a wider (unintended) audience, the perpetrators were 'othered' more than the victims. Even the USA was 'othered' for seeming to allow torture to happen, rather than the Muslim detainees.

Meaning and effect is dependent on the framing of and interpretation of those images and ideas, as Judith Butler explains in *Frames of War*. (2009, 10 – 11) Butler points out that the Abu Ghraib pictures broke out of their original frames, from private to public, and that this re-framing is hugely significant politically, because it enables people to see 'enemy' lives as human and grievable, just as we saw in the development of the presentation of lynching photographs, from images that celebrated and compounded racism, and dehumanised the victims, to images that were used as evidence of wrongdoing and a means of shaming the communities who perpetrated those crimes, which became part of the Civil Rights movement. The photographs were key to raising awareness and condemnation of racism, because they were reframed. (Apel & Smith, 2007, 78) This possibility of re-framing is central to the new trends apparent in the use of the Internet for the communication of images that would previously have been censored, hidden, and kept relatively private – or "framed" in the conventional way that Butler talks of. By reframing an image or narrative, 'othering' can be challenged and changed. The villain role is therefore flexible and transferable.

What can be learnt from Abu Ghraib, as well as the lynching photos and other cases briefly mentioned, is that 'othering' a group or individual through performed, brutal violence achieves no static end; it changes as perception and audience do, and often the perpetrators are eventually seen as criminal and immoral, rather than victorious, and the victims, however humiliated, nevertheless individuals worthy of compassion, rather than merely symbols. Dehumanisation does not take away a person's humanity indefinitely, even if it takes away his or her body. It takes away other people's perception of that humanity, however, in therein lies the



political power of performed violence against 'others', and its persistence as a public relations tool in warfare as well as times of civil unrest and division.

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Appendix A



US Military Personnel (2003) "Hooded Man."

This image is in the public domain, as justified by Wikimedia Commons: "This image is in the public domain because it is ineligible for copyright. This applies worldwide. Pictures taken by U. S. military personnel as part of that person's official duties are ineligible for copyright. The photographers of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse photos have asserted this was the case under oath." Accessed on 17 / 07 / 13 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AbuGhraibAbuse-standing-on-box.jpg>

Appendix B



US Military Personnel (2003) “Soldier with Abu Ghraib prisoner on leash”

Ibid. Accessed on 17 / 07 / 13 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Abu-ghraib-leash.jpg>



Appendix C



US Military Personnel (2003) “Pyramid of Bodies”

Ibid. Accessed on 17 / 07 / 13 at: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/05/03/slideshow_040503#slide=2



Appendix D



The lynching of Jesse Washington in progress, by Fred Gildersleeve, May 15, 1916. Published by the NAACP after their investigation of the lynching in *The Crisis* Vol. 12, supplement to No. 3. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5401868>



Appendix E



The lynching of Rubin Stacy, July 19, 1935, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Published in *Strange Fruit: Biography of a Song* by D. Margolick, 2001. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://www.blackyouthproject.com/2011/02/the-rubin-stacy-story-a-meditation-on-lynching-in-a-post-racial-america/>

Appendix F



The lynching of Rubin Stacy, July 19, 1935, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Published in *Strange Fruit: Biography of a Song* by D. Margolick, 2001. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://www.blackyouthproject.com/2011/02/the-rubin-stacy-story-a-meditation-on-lynching-in-a-post-racial-america/>



Appendix G



The lynching of Rubin Stacy, July 19, 1935, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Published in *Strange Fruit: Biography of a Song* by D. Margolick, 2001. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://www.blackyouthproject.com/2011/02/the-rubin-stacy-story-a-meditation-on-lynching-in-a-post-racial-america/>

Appendix H



John Heith lynched by a mob in Tombstone, Arizona on February 22, 1884. From the photo collection of Noah Hamilton Rose, sourced from the US Library of Congress. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JohnHeith.jpg>

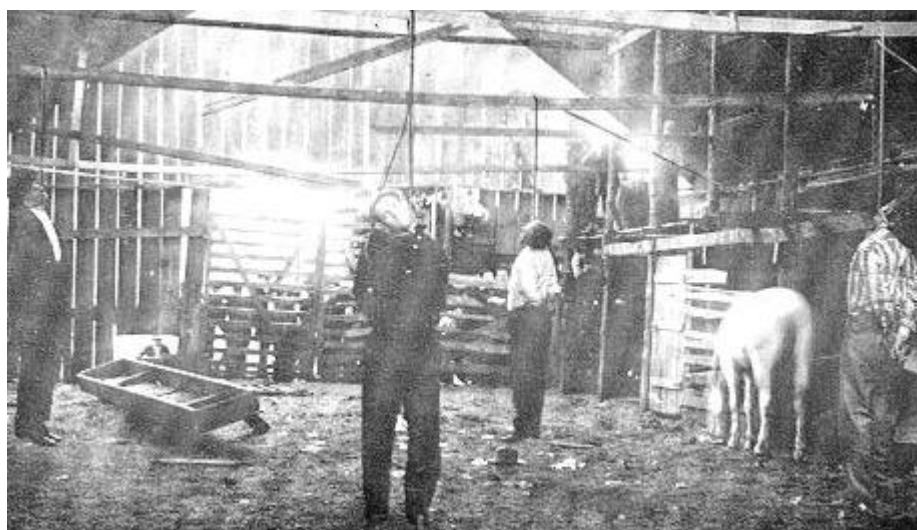


Appendix I



The lynching of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas, 1893. Photographer: Anonymous. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Henry-smith-2-1-1893-paris-tx-2.jpg>

Appendix J



The lynching of 'Killer' Jim Miller and others. Ada, Oklahoma. Published in *The Daily Ardmoreite Ardmore*, Oklahoma Monday, April 19, 1909. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jim_miller_hanging.jpg



Appendix K



A postcard of the Duluth lynchings, June 15, 1920. Photographer: anonymous. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duluth-lynching-postcard.jpg>

Appendix L



Illustration of witches being hanged, from Ralph Gardiner's *England's Grievance Discovered in Relation to the Coal Trade*, 1655. Published in *A New History of Witchcraft* by Brooks and Alexander (2007), page 69. Accessed on March 25, 2014, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Witches_Being_Hanged.jpg



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- (E), (F) and (G)



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(H)

John Heith lynched by a mob in Tombstone, Arizona on February 22, 1884. From the photo collection of Noah Hamilton Rose, sourced from the US Library of Congress. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JohnHeith.jpg>

(I)

The lynching of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas, 1893. Photographer: Anonymous. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Henry-smith-2-1-1893-paris-tx-2.jpg>

(J)

The lynching of 'Killer' Jim Miller and others. Ada, Oklahoma. Published in *The Daily Ardmoreite Ardmore, Oklahoma Monday*, April 19, 1909. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jim_miller_hanging.jpg

(K)

A postcard of the Duluth lynchings, June 15, 1920. Photographer: anonymous. Accessed on March 25, 2014 at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duluth-lynching-postcard.jpg>

(L)

Illustration of witches being hanged, from Ralph Gardiner's *England's Grievance Discovered in Relation to the Coal Trade*, 1655. Published in *A New History of Witchcraft* by Brooks and Alexander (2007), page 69. Accessed on March 25, 2014, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Witches_Being_Hanged.jpg



Book Review

Andrew Silke, et al., (edited by Andrew Silke). Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform. Routledge: Oxon UK, 2014. pp. 282. £28.99. ISBN: 978-0-415-81038-8.

reviewed by Robert W. Hand



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Key Words: *Terrorism; terrorist; prison; incarceration; de-radicalisation; programme*

As a direct result of the 9-11 attacks, the field of Terrorism Studies has grown, and continues to do so, exponentially. While the exponential expansion of our field has re-invigorated our discipline, few of us have had time to consider the ‘strategic gaps’ that exist in our knowledge. One particularly salient topic, the consequences of incarcerating terrorists and extremists in our civil penal facilities, is almost devoid of any systematic study—until now. *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform* (Andrew Silke, ed.) is, as far as this reviewer has seen, the only book in publication comprehensively identifying many of the key issues of, and possible solutions for, using our civil penal system to deal with terrorists. It opens, defines, informs, and guides the debate of how democratic societies do and should treat those convicted of terrorist acts. It is a foundational text that is at the forefront of a new and critically important area of research.

“Part I. Introduction” begins with Silke’s excellent preamble of the theme and the clearly stated problem that is the focus of the book. Next, Colin Murray’s chapter, “To Punish, Deter and Incapacitate”, superbly frames the issue and brings to the fore several key challenges regarding the mixing of terrorists and civil criminals in penal facilities. Murray concludes by pointing out that the UK’s system of dealing with convicted terrorists is, “undergoing a necessary evolution...” (p. 30) and leaves the reader with a sudden epiphany: Much in this area has changed since 9-11, continues to change rapidly, and further systematic study is imperative. Murray opens the first of many doors that lead the reader to investigate further.

“Part II. Radicalisation, de-radicalisation and disengagement” contains four well-written and convincing chapters that largely focus on the psychological landscape of the convicted terrorist and the potential for de-radicalisation to occur. Joshua Sinai’s Chapter 3 examines numerous aspects of a terrorist’s psychological make-up to devise a seven-phase model of radicalisation. His “Table 3.1 Phased model of prison radicalisation” is complex in its implications but clear in its presentation of the factors that affect a convict’s potential for radicalisation. His proposed model is convincingly sound and well-supported. Liran Goldman’s chapter (“4. From Criminals to Terrorists”) is a succinct account of the US experience of radicalisation in prisons. It generally follows Sinai’s model while offering some more practical aspects from which we can view the radicalisation process and its results. Kurt Braddock’s chapter (“5. The Talking Cure?”) logically follows those before by providing us a look into the mind of the terrorist undergoing a de-radicalisation process. It is based largely on cognitive theory and communications techniques, further supported by vignettes from the Saudi and Yemeni approaches to de-radicalisation. Braddock’s conclusion that, “Current and future programmes should seek to understand these communicative effects...” is compelling and we would, indeed, be wise to heed his advice. Part II concludes with John Morrison’s examination of the IRA



prisoner experience. Morrison's use of the British experience with IRA prisoners as a vehicle to examine the role the *prison setting* (environment) plays in de-radicalisation is insightful. Ultimately, Morrison reveals to us that incarcerating terrorists in civilian penitentiaries does have potentially good aspects favourable to de-radicalisation—if handled correctly.

“Part III. Critical Issues in management, risk assessment and reform” moves from the modelling and theory into the application of methods and systems that lead to identification, risk assessment, and de-radicalisation. Christopher Dean's chapter on the UK experience of intervention to prevent radicalisation is a logical application of the concepts introduced earlier in the book. Silke's own chapter is a practical application of the preceding and existing theories and results in a critically important risk assessment framework. Silke admits that this framework, the assessment process, and the understanding gleaned from the application thereof is both complicated and not without its shortcomings. However, he also states, and correctly so, that the complexity and imperfection of the current process and the lack of a large evidence base does not mean we should not make the attempt. (p. 120)

D Elaine Pressman and John Flockton's chapter (“9. Violent Extremist Risk Assessment: Issues and applications of the VERA-2 in a high-security correctional setting”) is a logical continuation and provides a detailed examination of the VERA-2 system. Key here is that not only do Pressman and Flockton elucidate VERA-2, they also reveal the elements of the process that rely on the individual's history and other specific qualitative factors. As Pressman and Flockton point out, “Critical to these decisions [that a prisoner is ‘at risk’ of further extreme violence] is the item and domain structure of the VERA-2. This provides for ongoing assessment of individual dynamic risk factors.” (p. 129) Their conclusion: VERA-2 is, “...not a silver bullet of prediction”(p. 138); however, it is clear and well-argued that VERA-2, or a similarly constructed protocol, is essential and will be useful wherever violent extremists. The final chapter of Part III is Sagit Yehoshua's mini-case study of the Israeli experience with Palestinian prisoners. While at first glance this chapter would appear to be a better fit in “Part IV. Key Case Studies”, the reality is that Yehoshua's chapter highlights several of the factors that prove to be critical in the risk *assessment* frameworks. This chapter is also particularly effective in showing us that cultural differences do, indeed, hold significant importance for addressing the issues and formulating a de-radicalisation plan tailored to the individual and the setting.

In sum, Part III is a collection of strongly-written chapters that further open doors to the reader. The collection of chapters makes it very clear that not only is there value in the practices as they exist, but there is merit in further exploration, investigation, and refinement of those processes. Consequently, Part III opens many more doors for the budding researcher, who often struggles to identify a distinct topic or project that is unique and adds to the greater body of knowledge in the field. Certainly, Part III identifies or suggests a number of those potential topics.

“Part IV Key case studies” is an equally-dense and exceptionally useful section for those searching for new means and methods. This part walks the reader through the superbly-chosen examinations of different de-radicalisation programmes in various regions of the world. It begins with Richard Pickering's excellent investigation of incarcerating and attempting to de-radicalise terrorists in prisons in England and Wales. Here, we begin—even at this stage—to discover some foundational truths about our subject that have major impacts on the success or failure of our attempt to de-radicalise terrorists. Marisa Porges' superlative investigation of the ‘soft’ approach in Saudi Arabia continues our education by highlighting the roles of family and culture as well as the necessity for a tailored approach to de-radicalisation.

The focus then moves to Sri Lanka, where Kruglanski, Gelfand, Bélanger, Gunaratna, and Hettiarachchi



examine the processes and context used in the de-radicalisation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Kumar Ramakrishna then provides us a compact but brilliant explanation of Singapore's "Three Rings" strategy in dealing with Jemaah Islamiyah. Sulastris Osman examines the dual-faceted nature (i.e., the interaction and affects prison has on terrorists and *vice-versa*) of the Indonesian legal and de-radicalisation processes in the wake of the Bali Bombings. Osman's conclusion: "...de-radicalisation' and rehabilitation efforts in Indonesia need to take into account both sides of the equation in order to be effective, and broader prison reform, too, is necessary to curb the problem of radicalising inmates" (p.226) is sage advice that applies far beyond the Indonesian context.

Part IV returns to Europe with Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann's detailed investigation and evaluation of the Red Army Faction members' experiences in West German prisons. Although seeming a bit out of place given the previous chapters, Diewald-Kerkmann adds an historical and contextual flavour to our examination, while also alluding to the differences and the similarities between the various regional examples in Part IV. This very dense subdivision of the book then concludes with Manuel Soriano's superb discussion on terrorism and incarceration in Spain. Key to Soriano's findings (and another door opener for the reader) are the revelations that the ETA terrorist and the Al Qaeda-inspired terrorist were fundamentally different in goals and mentality and that different tools and methods had to be applied to attempt to de-radicalise the jihadist terrorists. Indeed, Soriano's key lessons list (p. 253) is pure gold in terms of a scientifically-based, proven, and succinct guide for the practical application of a de-radicalisation programme for New Terrorism. Again, the doors for the aspiring researcher open, as it becomes obvious that Soriano's chapter, as well as those preceding, points clearly to areas we have yet to fully investigate.

As would both be expected and is appropriate, *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism* concludes with the obligatory (although brief) look at the post-prison experiences ("Part V Post-release experiences"). Benedict Wilkinson's examination ("18. Do Leopards Change Their Spots?") reveals the practical challenges and the conflicts for the UK in managing multi-agency processes supporting de-radicalisation and individual risk assessments while taking into account the civil penal code, democratically-based laws and norms of incarceration, and the persistence of institutional bias against the possibility of rehabilitation. Neil Ferguson reviews the Northern Ireland experience, and reveals not only the impact prison had on the prisoners, but the affect these (and former) prisoners had on ending The Troubles. Unfortunately, while much more could be said and many more chapters from various regions around the world could have been included, this part of the book is scant. This, however, may not be a bad thing in that here, too, we have another open door for a researcher looking for a relatively untouched topic that can contribute to our knowledge and practices in de-radicalisation and the evaluation of such programmes.

Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism 'works' on three levels. First, it provides the reader a well-organised, focused, and lucid exploration of a known function (de-radicalisation within the civil penal context) that many nations have engaged. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, it is the only book in publication addressing these issues. Second, it is exceptional in that it clearly highlights regional practices, cultural and psychological issues, and historical context in such a way that the multi-discipline character of the text flows and is natural for the audience to both comprehend and support. Finally, it is among the very few academic books that engender creative thought and lively debate not by being controversial, but by simply opening the doors to so many areas we have yet to explore and understand. For these reasons and many more, this book will become a foundational text on the study of de-radicalisation within the context of civil penal practices in democratic societies. *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism* is a truly unique and superbly edited volume that academics in Terrorism Studies, analysts and professionals performing risk assessments, and practitioners of Counter-



Terrorism cannot afford to be without. It is the perfect cross-walk between the academic and the practical with implications for both sides of the divide. *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism* is a 'must-have' that should be on the shelf of anyone serious about understanding the full spectrum of Terrorism Studies and Counter-Terrorism in practice.

About the reviewer: Robert Hand is a retired US Army officer who has extensive, nationally-recognised experience in all-source intelligence collection, analysis, counter-terrorism, and force protection. After 9-11, he was chosen to lead the NATO efforts that created; NATO's inaugural Unit Terrorism Intelligence and Force Protection architecture, the initial ISAF Force Protection and intelligence processing systems, the intelligence architecture in support of NATO Contingency Planning for humanitarian and peace support operations (Africa and Afghanistan), and the Regional Counter-Terrorism structures and standing operating procedures within the NATO headquarters of the Northern Region. He is currently a doctoral candidate of Politics at the University of Aberdeen.



About JTR

In 2010 the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence launched the online Journal of Terrorism Research. The aim of this Journal is to provide a space for academics and counter- terrorism professionals to publish work focused on the study of terrorism. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the study of terrorism, high-quality submissions from all academic and professional backgrounds are encouraged. Students are also warmly encouraged to submit work for publication.

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