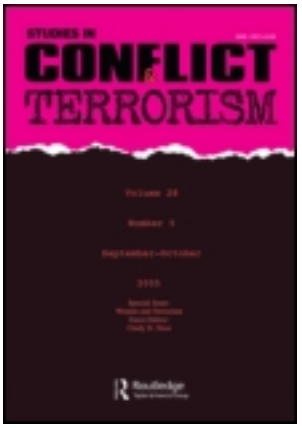

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Understanding Terror, Terrorism, and Their Representations in Media and Culture

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Review Article

Understanding Terror, Terrorism, and Their Representations in Media and Culture

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This review article examines four recent books published on terrorism and insurgent warfare. It argues that the narrative developed from the early 1970s within terrorism studies or "terrorology" was considerably different from the discussion of terrorism in the post-1945 period and tended to marginalize the role of states in fomenting terror. The article looks at depictions of terrorism in both art and film as well the recent historiography of terrorism. The article argues that far more emphasis needs to be placed on the role of the French Revolution in the gestation of terrorism in the nineteenth century; by contrast the emphasis on late nineteenth century Russian terrorism has been rather exaggerated as many terrorist movement (such as that in 1880s Chicago) owed little to the Russian connection. Finally the article shows that the connection between terrorism and political nihilism has been overplayed and that few terrorist movements (as opposed to some terrorist theorists) were driven by a nihilist agenda.

Matthew Carr, *The Infernal Machine: An Alternative History of Terrorism*. London: Hurst and Co., 2011, 409 pp. + xxi, index.

Alex Danchev, *On Art and War and Terror*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 236 pp. + xi, index.

Neville Bolt, *The Violent Image: Insurgent Propaganda and the New Revolutionaries.* London: Hurst and Co., 2012, 363 pp. + xxv, index.

Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al Qaeda Merge in Afghanistan, 1970–2010*. London: Hurst, 2012, 426 pp. + ix, index.

> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all." (*Through the Looking Glass,* Chapter 6)

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The academic industry surrounding the study and discussion of terrorism is quite a recent phenomenon despite the longevity of the term. Until the late 1960s most analysts preferred to focus on the role of "terror" or even "violence" in politics, whether this was deployed by states or sub-state movements. In one sense of course "terror" has always been with us in a range of different forms and guises; the whole of Western history indeed can be seen as marked by major acts of terror by rulers and leaders anxious to establish or maintain political control and authority—whether this be the cruel execution by Odysseus of servant girls who had slept with the suitors of Penelope before his return from the Trojan War to the spectacular crucifixion along the Appian Way of the survivors of Spartacus's slave revolt against Republican Rome in 71 B.C.

One enduring complaint of many critics of terrorist analyses has been the focus on sub-state or grass-roots terrorist movements to the downplaying or even complete exclusion of the use of terror by states. This focus can be explained by looking at how and why terrorism studies first emerged. The formal study of terrorism did not begin in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War but rather later when a newer set of political issues began to emerge linked to European decolonization and the rise of terrorist movements in Europe and the United States. The immediate postwar period saw some studies published, but these were heavily influenced by the experience of state terror by the "totalitarian" regimes of the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Thus Robert Payne in *Zero: The Story of Terrorism* (1951) measured terrorism through the experience of Nazi state terrorism although he also pointed to Russian terrorism in the late nineteenth century as instrumental in the spread of "nihilism" throughout Europe. With one chapter dramatically entitled "Hitler and Nechaev" Payne rather overstated the case and was too strongly influenced by the prewar text by the Nazi defector Hermann Rauschning *Germany's Revolution of Destruction*.[1] The drift of his argument though led him to see terrorism as an ethical issue concerning the nature of state power and authority, given the manner in which the Nazi regime had come to power in Germany in the 1930s. Payne saw the challenge of "nihilist terrorism" as less a policing issue to be managed by an ever-more powerful state, but as essentially a moral challenge to the developed world and one that should be studied in Departments of Humanities in Universities that should "constantly watch the administration of the laws, to see that they are administered humanely."[2] Moreover, he went on to warn "the state is in its colonies or mandated territories with all the dangers of becoming itself corrupt, inhuman and bureaucratic."[3]

Postwar studies of terror up to the mid-to-late 1960s also tended to emphasize the military significance of terrorism. In one early important study that examined the Irish rebellion in the early 1920s; as well as other campaigns including that of the Irgun in Palestine, the French writer Roland Gaucher argued that terrorism was essentially a technique of warfare executed by a high command and carried out by a small and disciplined army of followers.[4] Contemporary analysts might see this as a description of "old terrorism" largely shaped by the pattern of maneuver warfare that characterized the "third generation" warfare such as that of World War Two. It continued to shape military thinking over the following few decades until the emergence of military revolution led to the network-centric concept of "fourth generation warfare" that utilizes social, economic, and military networks to convince an enemy that it cannot secure its strategic goals.[5] Out of this would emerge the more controversial concept of a "new terrorism" in the 1970s onward that has led to more network-centric modes of terrorism in recent decades.[6]

During the post-1945 period a degree of discontinuity emerged in discussions on insurgent and terrorist strategies that never became completely reconciled: military analysts tended to focus on the military and strategic uses of terrorism while pure "terrorism" analysts

often preferred to focus on the psychological impact of terrorism on civilian populations as well as its capacity to spread in the newly emerging form of "international terrorism." A division of labor began to occur between the two groups of analysts, which was fostered by the way that each tended to go to separate conferences and seminars and to publish in identifiably distinct sets of academic journals: at a broader level too the audience and student population was in some degree different in that military analysts of terrorism tended to write and lecture primarily to military audiences while terrorism experts sought a rather wider media profile by becoming advisers to governments and police forces in Western states seeking a more sophisticated responses to various sorts of domestic terrorist threats.

The differences of focus between the two groups was exemplified in the critical response to the perceptive essay in the mid 1960s by Thomas Perry Thornton. This explored the symbolic uses of "terror" as a weapon by movements that often lacked the means to use more constitutional methods of political advance. "Terrorism" Thornton saw as largely a tactical means for the strategic deployment of "terror" and it would encompass a range of objectives including the building up of morale with the movement itself as well the disorientation of the mass of the general population through what he termed "agitational terrorism." By such means terrorism was seen to serve both military and political objectives by demonstrating the incapacity of the ruling regime to protect the population under its control.[7] The approach met with some criticism from the emerging coterie of terrorism specialists. The late Paul Wilkinson, for instance, attacked Thornton by suggesting that many terrorist movements are likely, especially in the later stages of their struggle, to employ terror as part of a military strategy than for mere symbolism.[8] Similarly, the U.S. analyst H. Edward Price suggested in 1977 that Thornton's thesis was only likely to hold in certain situations since in anti-colonial struggles it would be highly unlikely that "agitational terrorism" by the state would work given that the state incumbents and the anti-colonial insurgents are usually divided on racial and ethnic grounds[9]—an argument that has not really born out by the way the White settler regime of South Africa successfully used various forms of state terror, backed up by draconian legislation, to undermine and delay nationwide popular resistance to apartheid until the middle-to-late 1980s.

Neither Wilkinson nor Price's papers were really interested in state-led terrorism and were broadly reflective of the sub-discipline of terrorism, which emerged during the 1970s focused around terrorism against the state. This new sub-discipline succeeded in disconnecting the study of terrorism from the pattern of Nazi and Soviet state terror from the 1930s to 1950s and developed a different historical narrative focused on more recent sub-state movements in Europe and the post-colonial world. From 1969 onward Northern Ireland saw a renewed upsurge in terrorist activities by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), while in the Middle East, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) embarked on a terror campaign that led to the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Elsewhere in Europe the Baader Meinhof group in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy began campaigns of bombings and kidnappings that ensured "terrorism" was frequent front-page news. In fiction and film terrorism began to become an increasingly attractive sub-genre symbolized by the success of Frederick Forsyth's novel, *The Day of the Jackal*, with its fictional plot by the OAS to assassinate general De Gaulle (1971; later turned into a film directed by Fred Zinnemann in 1973).

"Terrorism" thus emerged over the following three decades as a sub-discipline of the social sciences. A number of analysts still strove to achieve some form of scholarly objectivity within this sub-discipline, although in the late 1990s, the South African scholar Adrian Guelke complained that the broad bulk of the literature developed over the previous two decades was deeply judgmental and ideological.[10] Nevertheless the new terrorism

discourse sought to define and dominate the contours of general political discourse in Western societies.[11] In 1971 for instance, Robert Moss defined terrorism simply as "the systematic use of intimidation for political purposes" with terrorism exhibiting itself in three categories of "repressive," "defensive," and "offensive terror." This at least maintained a link to state-led forms of terrorism such as the Nazi model of terror, but only provided a series of descriptive labels rather than any form of general theory seeking to explain why terrorism should occur.[12] More controversially, Claire Sterling's *The Terror Network* in 1981 attempted a more conspiratorial explanation for rising global terrorism by linking it to the politics of the Cold War and Soviet strategy to subvert Western regimes.[13]

Despite this generally conservative political agenda of early terrorism studies academic research did begin to develop a historiography of terrorism. One notable example was Walter Lacquer's *The Age of Terrorism* (1977), which remains a useful text for studying the ideas that have impelled many key figures in terrorist movements. Randall D. Law's *Terrorism: A History* (2009) is also a good recent example of this historiography of terrorism as it attacks what Law terms "jury-rigged definitions" that narrowly confine terrorist movements and activities to certain times and places and as a sub-state force.[14] The book is notable for the way it encompasses state-led terrorist movements as well as White supremacist and racial terror such as the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. However the broad emphasis of the volume still remains on sub-state terrorist movements stretching back to terror and tyrannicide in classical times.

By the late 1990s, there were signs of a growing drive for the construction of a more robust academic literature on terrorism; one good example of this was Martha Crenshaw's lengthy collection *Terrorism in Context*, first published in 1995. Here Crenshaw chose to emphasize the conspiratorial nature of most terrorist movements while pointing out that there were major problems for analysts in defining clearly the boundaries between "terrorism" and other forms of political violence.[15] In addition, she argued that one of the central challenges for historians of terrorism was to outline the historical context and conditions in which terrorist movements emerged, while avoiding any resort to historical determinism. This could be aided by looking at a range of different movements comparatively although historians would still need to avoid evaluating them by any ahistorical theory of terrorism.[16] The conclusion to the volume by Michel Wieviorka also hinted at some loss of nerve as he urged analysts to employ categories other than terrorism in order, through a sharply empirical approach employing Ockham's razor, to ensure that "terrorism" is defined parsimoniously in order to shed any ideological and ethnological blinkers in the use of the term.[17]

In the years after 2001 and the U.S. promulgation of a "Global War on Terror" (GWOT) the debate on terrorism has gained a new intensity, especially as some radical critics now charged that it was being used effectively to implement a new "Pax Americana."[18] The history of this debate remains to be written but it has led in some quarters to a demand for more focus on state-led terror as well as terrorist movements from below. At the same time, though, it is not clear that there has been any widespread academic demand to debunk the very word "terrorism" that, as the late Fred Halliday pointed out, was a "toxic, indispensable and ultimately indispensable term."[19]

Matthew Carr's "alternative history" of terrorism therefore needs to be seen as part of this renewed debate on how to study and understand terrorism. The paperback version published by Hurst in 2011 is in fact a reprinting of an earlier hardback edition published by Profile Books in 2006, although there is no formal acknowledgment of this. In a new preface to the paperback edition Carr outlines the reasons for writing the book. He wanted in particular to challenge the domination of political debate by the "terrorism experts" and to "demythologise the phenomenon that we call terrorism and trace how it had come to

acquire such toxic political potency in the modern world" (p. xvi). Carr acknowledges that, while the history of the uses of terror is a long one, the formal and systematic deployment of terror as a major political weapon of both mobilization and control really only stretches back to the French Revolution where it was an instrument of state rather than sub-state power. The execution of the French king Louis XVI in 1793 thus "heralded the advent of the new kind of violence that the modern world has come to associate with terrorism" (p. 17). This has meant, Carr argues, that—in broader ideological terms—the exponents of terrorism from the period of late nineteenth-century Russian terrorist movements were "the sons and daughters of the Enlightenment, socialists, anarchists and believers in human progress, whose members came mostly from the middle and upper classes" (p. 18).

However, having briefly addressed the issue of the French Revolution, Carr fails to follow it up with an analysis of its impact on state-led terrorism in the nineteenth century and prefers to fall back on the conventional assessment that the decisive phase in the development of global terrorism was the late nineteenth century, with the inevitable link with Russia. Carr thus concludes, "almost every organisation that has been called 'terrorist' has retained elements from the Russian tradition, in terms of their tactics, organisation and morality, regardless of their aims or ideology" (p. 19). This general omission of the French Revolution is a pity since, for some analysts of terror, it is of central importance. In a thoughtful essay published over twenty years ago, Peter Calvert for instance argued that the French Revolution is central to understanding the operation of terror, which he defined as "the systematic use of fear in revolutionary circumstances to aid the establishment of a new government."[20] French revolutionary terror was, he suggested, a "spectacular feature" in the events of the revolution although it came at a late stage in the revolutionary process to defend the revolution from attack following the assassination of Marat in 1793. It was associated less with revolutionary movements than forces of state repression and it would only be much later that it would be associated with forces of revolution from below—most classically in the emergence of revolutionary guerrilla warfare after 1945. But even then state-led terror in response to these revolutionary challenges from below has regressed in the form of the "national security state" and the various forms of military dictatorships operating Latin America from the middle 1960s onward.[21]

Carr's emphasis, therefore, on the centrality of Russian terrorism by the latter part of the nineteenth century is one that has not been unanimously accepted by historical analysts who have pointed to the importance of the urban model of insurrection of the Paris Commune of 1871. In any case the advocates of the supposed "Russian model" were deeply divided over the use of terrorism as against other methods based on the strikes and popular insurrections, repeating in one sense a pattern in Russian history that stretched back to the Decembrists of 1825.[22] The idea of a Russian model ready for export is undoubtedly a neat and simple argument that has gained the support of analysts such as Steven G. Marks's sweeping survey of Russian influence on the modern world in which Russia is seen as the key terrain for systematizing Russian, French, and Italian revolutionary thought into a "revolutionary conspiracy."[23] But it is one that can be questioned, not least by Carr's own discussion. Carr accepts for instance that the fanatical figure of Sergei Nechaev, author with Bakunin of *The Revolutionary Catechism*, was rather untypical of his generation of revolutionaries and that it was Sergei Kravchinsky, the main propagandist of *Narodnaya Volyana* (the Peoples Will) who was as far more influential especially in popularizing the movement's cause to an external audience under the *nom de plume* "Stepniak."[24]

There is some evidence to support the thesis of the export in the late nineteenth century of a distinct Russian model, but it needs to be assessed cautiously. The concept of the "propaganda of the deed" for instance was not in its origins a Russian concept but

one developed by the Austrian terrorist Johann Most. But Most was also careful, as his biographer points out, to warn revolutionary anarchists not to divorce "propaganda of the deed" from "propaganda of the word" since otherwise terrorist activity risked alienating the people it was supposed to be mobilizing if it was directed at things the masses disliked.[25] Most did eventually end up admiring Russian revolutionaries by the early twentieth century but this was largely due to the failure of many of the attempts at anarchist terrorism in Europe and the United States by this time.[26]

Russia by the early twentieth century came to be seen as the main laboratory for models of revolution and the Marxist revolutionary Victor Serge recollected of his childhood before 1914 that "The Idea of 'good laboratories' was of Russian origin. From Russia, swarming through the whole world, came men and women who had been formed in ruthless battle, who had but one aim in life, who drew their breath from danger. The comfort, peace and amiability of the West seemed stale to them, and angered them all the more since they had learned to see the naked operations of a social machinery which no one thought of in these privileged lands."[27] The Russian model undoubtedly fortified or reinforced existing anarchist groups who would go on to commit various acts of assassination in a range of countries. In the long run though their influence would probably be felt most in the lesser developed areas of Europe such as Italy and Spain as in the case of the attempt at revolt in Italy from 1874 onward. The last main flourishing of this form of revolutionary anarchism would be in the Spanish civil war of 1936–39.

In other cases, however, it is clear that when a more detailed study occurs of anarchist violence in Western societies it is hard to see much evidence of the supposed Russian model. In the case of the Chicago anarchists in the early 1880s, before the dramatic Haymarket bombing of May 1886 a major influence appears to have come from Most. Revolutionary activity in Russia was quiet at this time and the most important bombing campaign of the period was that of the Irish *Clan-na-Gael* in London, which had been favorably reported in the Irish press in the United States.[28] However, it is also clear that many of the Chicago anarchists had little commitment to the ideas of Bakunin or the Russian anarchists since they were mainly concerned with developing a revolutionary unionism (known as the "Chicago Idea"), which was anchored in the working-class communities in the city and was also socialist. Indeed many Chicago anarchists drew as much inspiration from Tom Paine as any European movement.[29]

The assessment of the Russian "terrorist model" also needs to be seen alongside the enormously disruptive counterterrorism strategy of the Tsarist regime. As the recent wide-ranging study by Alex Butterworth shows, the Russian secret police or *Okhrana* operated by the mercurial figure of Alex Rachkovsky was very successful in the years before 1914 in penetrating exile Russian revolutionary organizations and in some cases turning some of their members. From 1878 to his eventual dismissal in 1906 Rachkovsky proved eminently successful in penetrating both the *Narodnaya Volyana* as well as many exile terrorist organizations. Under Rachkovsky's direction the Okhrana constructed a detailed diagrammatic representation of the web of revolutionaries outside its borders and it was able to trace links deep into the revolutionary underworld.[30] The actual size of the tsarist police was always small; Norman Stone has pointed out that before Alexander II's assassination there were only some 5,000 policeman in all Russia and even when the "security police" were established it still led to some six officials in Moscow with a budget of £5000. Nevertheless the creation of the *Okhrana* set a pattern different to those of western European states who had largely relinquished such a form of police before 1850.[31] The *Okhrana* set a pattern that would be repeated on a grander scale after the First World War, not least by the Soviet secret police as well as Western police forces and the same methods would be later exported to new states emerging after 1945.

For all its historical weaknesses Carr's book is an imaginative and significant addition to the historiography of terrorism, especially in its discussion of the wider literary and media focus on terrorism and anarchism. Such as approach was suggested over thirty years ago by Walter Lacquer in a path-breaking article on the depictions of terrorism in modern literature, as he felt increasingly doubtful of the value of much of the research in mainstream political science in explaining terrorist activities. Lacquer argued that more could be gained by a careful study of fiction and imaginative literature than quantitative research methods into understanding what really motivated terrorists. He warned though that this should not be some "leisurely stroll" and any conclusions should be "stated in an orderly, unequivocal fashion as befitting a scientific discipline."[32]

Carr's book is in some senses a belated response to the challenge set by Lacquer. It is a rather more successful attempt at a cultural history of terrorism than the recent book by Michael Burleigh, which largely belies its title by focusing on yet another historical rehash of the well-worn ground of terrorist movements since the Fenians of the middle nineteenth century.[33] Carr by contrast shows how literature and later films became an essential vehicle for the spreading of an awareness of terrorism among mass audiences. In the case of violent anarchism at the end of the nineteenth century he cites a range of literary texts, which can be seen as forming the first modern doomsday conception of spectacular terrorist attacks on Western cities. This was in part a product of a more general cultural fascination with science and technology and the increasing interest in the idea of air travel. In some cases this become linked to a fascination with the technology of bombmaking so that in E. Douglass Fawcett's 1893 novel *Hartmann the Anarchist*, a band of anarchists attack London from an airship loaded with "infernal machines."

Many of the responses to these anarchist bombings depicted the terrorists as some form of sub-human species acting outside the pale of "civilization." In a more recent study of literary depictions of terrorism, Alex Houen has pointed to the way this is graphically depicted by H. G. Wells in his novel *The War of the Worlds* in 1898 where the terror unleashed on London is by alien Martian invaders from outer space.[34] The trope has stayed with us in a variety of metaphorical forms: not least in Steven Spielberg's post-9/11 remake of *The War of the Worlds* (2005), which sets the story in New York where the Martians, standing in for terrorists, invade following a carefully prepared set of underground support mechanisms—appearing to replicate the terrorist underground that supported the 9/11 attacks.

Restoring the humanity of the terrorist by investigating the literary depictions of terrorist activity and the moral questions this raises is an immense long-term project. In this regard Carr's volume makes its own distinctive contribution to the integration of fiction into the broader cultural understanding of terrorist activity. The focus on novels raises acute questions about the criteria for selection and the overall importance of the works in question. One problem is the marginal quality of much of the literature although it may have had a degree of popularity at the time it was published. The literary works that have endured and are most often cited in histories of terrorism—Dostoyevsky's *The Devils* and Joseph Conrad's great novels *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911)—stand out on their own and were not really followed up in any systematic manner over the succeeding years of the twentieth century: a question that is itself worth much more detailed examination. Carr for instance points to the silence of the French writer Albert Camus on the general issues raised by the Algerian War in the 1950s despite his criticism of intellectuals such as Sartre who were prepared to condone "comfortable murder" from the safety of their studies. It proved impossible to translate such an outlook into a fuller and more complex work of fiction. By the time of his death in 1960 many Algerians attacked Camus as a covert apologist for French rule in Algeria even though he had condemned terrorism by both sides in the war.

Carr's book is also useful for introducing readers to a range of neglected authors, some of whose works remain buried in the static world of colonial literature, which more or less died with colonial independence struggles in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We learn of Han Suyin's work on the Malayan "Emergency" of the 1950s, *And the Rain My Drink* (1956) as well as Richard Ruark's novel on Mau Mau *Something of Value* (1955). Suyin's book attempted in fiction on Malaya what Camus avoided in the Algerian War by attempting to portray the failings of both sides in the Malayan jungle war. The work though became far less known than Leslie Thomas's potboiler *The Virgin Soldiers* (1966), which dealt with the colonial insurgency in Malaya through the exploits of young squaddies on national service (the book obtained a wider audience when it was transferred into a fairly successful film in 1969 directed by Tom Dexter and starring the actress Lynn Redgrave).

In the period after 1945, it is really films rather than novels, which prove to be most decisive in shaping popular perceptions of terrorism and the resulting ethical and moral implications of counterterrorism, counterintelligence (COIN), and the use of torture. Here Carr's volume is useful for pointing the way toward much more detailed research by media studies specialists as even light-weight action thrillers need to be taken far more seriously in unravelling the way they helped shape a public perception of terrorist activity in the years before 9/11. Many of the stereotypes of terrorism in America, Carr points out, are really latter-day reinventions of earlier depictions of anarchist bombers in the late nineteenth century, or McCarthyite fears of communist sleeper cells in the 1950s. By the 1990s "Islamic" terrorists became an increasingly important theme in Hollywood action movies, especially as the traditional Red enemy had now effectively disappeared with the end of the Cold War. In some respects this contrasted with the actual incidences of terrorism at the time since the most severe terrorist outrage was the bombing of the Alfred Murrah Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 by Timothy McVeigh.

However, the Hollywood movies of the period did, for all their obvious weakness and stilted dialogue, point forward in time to a serious long-term threat to American homeland security: in 1994, for instance, *True Lies* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, has a Palestinian terrorist group, bizarrely called "Crimson Jihad," attempting to destroy New York with nuclear warheads while in the 1996 film *Executive Decision* a group of Palestinian terrorists (again) seek to wipe out the entire Eastern Sea Board with a nerve gas attack. One of the most disturbing images to come out of this period of action movies does not concern Islamic terrorists at all but a deranged Austrian Nazi in the film *The Sum of All Fears* (2002 directed by Phil Alden). The Nazi (played by Alan Bates) seeks to use the explosion of a nuclear weapon in the city of Baltimore (destroying large parts of the city) to foment a new global conflict between the United States and Russia. From this film at least it appears that the old Cold War conflict between the United States and Russia had some life in it yet and the actual nuclear attack on Baltimore is still shocking to watch.

It is clear that in some of these films the supposed threat is not meant to be taken too seriously: *True Lies* for instance employs absurdist spectacle such as a chase through a hotel and up a lift on horseback and the rescue of the Schwarzenegger's teenage daughter from a skyscraper onto the top of a Harrier jump jet. This sub–James Bond approach indicates a rather more relaxed attitude toward terrorism in the years prior to 9/11 although perhaps, at a deeper level, it can be seen as preparing American audiences for the prospect of "new" and more virulent forms of international terrorism markedly different to those of previous decades. By contrast the more recent film *Cloverfield* (2008) directed by Drew Goddard linked depictions of terrorism (involving the collapse of skyscrapers in a near-future New York after invasion by alien monsters) with the sub-genre of Sci Fi horror. With a hand-held camera presenting one view point (as in the film *The Blair Witch Project*) from

a world that has now disappeared the film took a profoundly apocalyptic take on the terror threat, although the wide range of evil forms and shapes that the "terrorists" took in the film (again resurrecting monsters largely of *Jurassic Park* vintage) ended up blunting the message through sheer overkill as well as a finale of desolating despair.

Cloverfield was in this sense one *terminus ad quem* in the graphic media response to 9/11, although others have emerged, especially with attempts to resurrect the depiction of terrorists in the more light-hearted genre of dark comedy. Philip Morel's trashy action thriller *From Paris with Love* (2010), starring an aging John Travolta as a CIA agent, is in this vein. The second half of the film inexplicably shifts from a campaign against Chinese drug dealers to wiping out a Pakistani terror gang whose members include the girl friend of Travolta's partner James Reese (Jonathan Rhys Meyers). The "terrorists" pop up almost everywhere without number and could easily be replaced by vampires to make this into a teenage vampire movie. The film illustrates how generalized the depiction of terrorists have now become; "terrorists"—no matter who they are—appear to act almost without motive as the ultimate evil "other" of the Western imagination.

This popular media depiction of terrorism needs to be alongside more sophisticated artistic depictions of terror. A detailed examination of this cultural response in film, painting, and literature still awaits full scholarly study but some of the essays by Alex Danchev in his collection *On Art and War and Terror* raise some of the issues that need to be considered in any such project of this kind. The first essay in particular examines the controversial series of fifteen paintings by the German artist Gerhard Richter entitled *18 October 1977* and completed in 1988. The title of the paintings was the date that many of the leaders of the Red Army faction (RAF) otherwise known as the Baader Meinhof Group in West Germany committed suicide in Stammheim Prison in Stuttgart. The date also records the famous painting of Goya *Third of May 1808*, which recalled the wave of repression and executions after the failure of Spanish resistance to the initial Napoleonic invasion of Spain. The paintings provoked deep controversy in Germany and are still unsettling, especially after the whole issue of the RAF was resurrected with Udi Edel's 2008 film *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*. Some art critics have judged them to be among the most important works of art in the second half of the twentieth century.

Richter is a deeply philosophical and postmodernist painter in revolt against modernist ideas of form shaping painting. Coming of age in the postwar period Richter's painting was shaped by a world dominated by images presented in flattened formats through advertising, TV, and cinema. In this confusing world he took up painting from photographs on the grounds that "the photograph is the only picture that tells the absolute truth"—although many critics might find this rather extraordinary given the way that photographs have been manipulated by many twentieth-century regimes such as Stalin's Soviet Union to conceal rather than reveal any truthful reality.[35]

The aesthetic underpinnings behind Richter's work can be viewed as of major importance in postwar European art. Works such as *18 October 1977* are black and white paintings based on original photographs; they are political in the sense that they challenge conventional stereotypes of terrorists as in some manner sub-human or unnatural human beings. Richter has stated that he chose photographs to paint as this avoided what he saw as the modernist dilemma of having to choose one himself. One example of the paintings is that of Ulrike Meinhof as a young girl and it is interesting for the way it disturbs far more **as a painting** than **as a photograph,** which could be slotted into a wider category of apparent youthful innocence that might include, for instance, the well-known photograph of Adolph Hitler as a baby (see Figures 1 and 2). While the painting of Hitler is apparently one of an angelic baby because we **know** it is Hitler we tend to link it with all the other

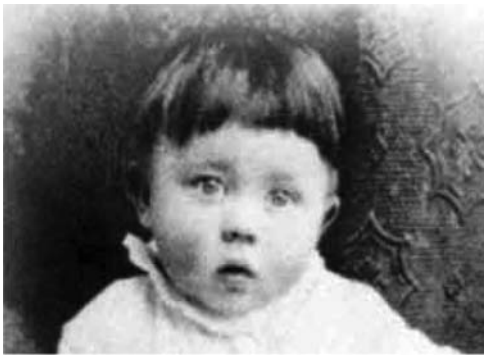

Figure 1. Young Adolph Hitler.

huge photographs and film footage with which we are familiar—the ranting speaker at the Nuremberg rallies, the scenes with Eva Braun at Bertchesgarten, the shambling figure shaking the hands of young Germans in the last days before the final downfall. Danchev points out that the paintings continue to disturb at a time when the terrorist "haunts our imagination" (p. 23). But, is this the case with the contrasting painting of Ulrike Meinhof? As a painting, it has to some degree escaped from the automatic linkages we might make with the range of photos available of her both before and during her involvement with the RAF. It also reveals a certain haunted look of a teenager experiencing some form of emotional disturbance. But **on its own** this might not seem especially abnormal—the painter may just happened to have captured the figure at a certain moment.

Clearly, background knowledge and linkage to other media representations are crucial for the way we choose to interpret photographs, but perhaps less so with paintings, which exist at one extra step, removed from actual "reality." This issue is also seen in an equally

Figure 2. Gerhard Richter: Young Ulrike Meinhof.

Figure 3. Private Lynndie England with "Gus." (Color figure available online).

provocative later essay in the collection "Like a Dog, or, Animal House on the Night Shift: Kafka and Abu Ghraib" where Danchev examines what he sees as the Kafkaesque quality to the GWOT. The life and death of detainees has, he argues, "become one of the defining issues of our age" although in the case of Abu Ghraib it has had something of the nightmare quality of Kafka's novel *The Trial* (1925). The treatment of the inmates amounted in fact to nothing short of systematic humiliation, as well as simple torture per se. Danchev points out that just as humiliation in Kafka's masterpiece took on a canine form so too did it in the abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison, most famously in the photograph of Private Lynndie England with "Gus" dated 24 October 2003 (see Figure 3). Of course other methods of humiliation were employed as well, including the wearing of women's clothes, male detainees forced to stand naked before a female interrogator and continuous strip searches (the later though being a general feature of the U.S. prison system). Danchev goes on to explore how such a series of practices could be condoned and finds a range of explorations including a simple case of misinformation: one Military Intelligence Officer with experience of Guantanamo admitted that at first it was thought all the detainees were in some sense masterminds rather than being much lower-level terrorist recruits.

Ultimately the need for absolute control and the breaking down of the detainees necessitated, Danchev shows, their reduction to animal status. He cites MG Geoffrey Miller, U.S. Army, who arrived at Abu Ghraib with a team of specialists and a simple message to military intelligence: "You have to treat the prisoners like dogs" since "If you treat them or if they believe that they're different than dogs, you have effectively lost control of your interrogation from the very start" (p. 183). The "War on Terror" has, Danchev concludes, moved into the interrogation room, which has become the "paradigm of the new normal. The interrogation is the fundamental engagement of the war on terror. The bare life of the detainee has come to define the Western way in warfare" (p. 187).

Some critics might take issue with this conclusion as a gross exaggeration: torture and the forcible extraction of intelligence have always in some sense been a feature of warfare and torture has always been a dominant feature of counterinsurgency—as the graphic torture scenes in Gillo Pentecorvo's 1965 film *The Battle of Algiers* illustrate. The widespread use of torture can be seen as a "cancer of democracy" and it is the dubious legality of the Abu Ghraib procedures, which are particularly disturbing.[36] Lynndie England was sentenced to three years in a military prison but released after 521 days in 2005. Danchev refers in his essay to the 2008 film *Standard Operating Procedure* directed by Errol Morris that examines the Abu Ghraib issue through a series of revealing interviews with many of those involved including the by-now disenchanted Lynndie England. The interviews conducted for the film in turn led to a book written by Philip Gourevitch. Morris's film points out that no-one above the rank of sergeant was convicted of any offense although the entire affair can be seen as an example of very poor management and control. Equally importantly it shows—in a manner that Danchev does not fully acknowledge—that the prison was in the middle of a war zone where the prison guards felt under threat not only outside the prison but within it as weapons were smuggled into inmates.

Moreover, the picture of Lynndie England holding the leash of "Gus," who is crawling like a dog, is also somewhat misleading. Another female warder, Megan Ambruhl, was present on the left of the picture but was cropped out of the shot that was printed in the global media. In her defense England has pointed out that "Gus" was a very "uncooperative" detainee and was covered in sores, which no one wanted to touch—hence the use of the leash. There are important questions raised here about the nature of pictorial evidence and what this shows or does not show—although in a general sense it is clear that a catalog of abuse took place with many prisoners shackled in "stress positions," wearing women's panties and standing in pools of urine.[37]

The abuses of the prisoners were an extension of wider U.S. counterinsurgency at this time in Iraq as well as being a product of a breakdown of proper systems of military command: as one senior U.S. intelligence official was to tell Seymour Hersch, "We've got some hillybilly kids out of control."[38] Abu Ghraib raises serious military and strategic questions about the way U.S. COIN was fought in Iraq. The failure to secure any senior accountability for the abuses at Abu Ghraib relate to this wider COIN strategy: the prison was reopened in the first place to implant in Iraq the Guantanamo model so as to secure high value military intelligence. The commander at Guantanamo, General Geoffrey Miller, was brought to Iraq with a team of experts as part of a Special Action Programme favored by Donald Rumsfeld in order to circumvent the CIA. Miller wanted to "Gitmoize" the Iraq prison system in order to focus it on interrogation and make it a center of intelligence-led counterterrorism. The implementation of this process led to the recruitment of many untrained personnel such as those uncovered in the Abu Ghraib scandal.[39] It was in the end a rushed and poorly conceived strategy, revealing in the end perhaps less a Kafkaesque all-pervasive totalitarian state but one at odds with itself and plagued by internal turf wars and poor systems of command and control.

Turning to Neville Bolt's *The Violent Image*, we are confronted by a detailed examination of insurgent propaganda formed by what he terms the "new revolutionaries." The book can be seen as in part a product of discussions in the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) stretching back to a landmark conference in January 2008 in which "Propaganda of the Deed" (POTD) was seen as a way forward from the mainstream language of "terrorism" as a means to understand the security dilemmas facing Western states post-9/11. POTD was not seen as a "single act of terror" but as "part of a process of narrative construction, reinforcement and confirmation through deeds." Moreover it was a "symbolic and rhetorical

tool for insurgents in a repertoire of 'political marketing' and as a way of encouraging the 'formation of support-communities.' "[40] At the same time, although, it was acknowledged that POTD is "fraught with contradictions" since it is "deployed by non-state and state actors alike." In a tone of some defensiveness it argued that "To dismiss it with undue haste as mere pathology is to overlook its undisputed success in knitting together often disparate groups with a common, rational cause."[41]

The RUSI debate does not appear to have that much impact on thinking on terrorism outside the United Kingdom and perhaps reflects the mood among some British analysts anxious to explain the disturbingly high level of support among Muslim communities in the United Kingdom for terrorist activities such as the 2005 London bombings by the Luton bombers. In addition the RUSI focus on POTD moved the study of modern international terrorism into an age of "fourth generation warfare" in which terrorist activities have taken an increasingly transnational networked form and has leaned many of the lessons global business: hence the emphasis on news form of "political marketing" and "strategic communications."

In *The Violent Image* Bolt seeks to elaborate on the concepts developed in 2008, though the earlier acknowledgment on the role of POTD in state activities is largely lost in a focus on sub-state groups. The reader is also left wondering how far he has really broken away from the language of conventional terrorism analysis. Bolt accepts that there is a still a political focus on the state in modern terrorist strategies since POTD is an "act of political violence with the objective of creating a media event capable of energising populations to bring about state revolution or social transformation" (p. 2). POTD may have a military dimension in the first place, but also acquires a symbolic importance beyond any strictly military significance—providing of course there are wider viewers of the event: "A tank that explodes under insurgent fire is a military tactical strike. But place a camera before it and it becomes a strategic POTD" (p. 3). Really? It might just as well be seen as nothing more than a short-term tactical victory.

The processes of "globalization" are also crucial to the effect of POTD in the modern political arena. While Bolt sees the earlier anarchist attempts to deploy POTD failing in the period before the First World War, the advent of a more deeply penetrating global media ensures that modern POTD in the era of fourth-generation networked warfare is far more deadly. Moreover, this ensures a new lease of lease to Maoist type insurgency in the modern world in a new and virtual "post-Maoist form":

> Integral to the Maoist theory of insurgency is the notion of space which buys insurrectionist forces time to out-run the enemy. Space and time were traditionally confined to the terrestrial domain. Now the virtual offers post-Maoist fighters a new cognitive space which is as wide as the internet is infinite. (p. 8)

However, while the Internet ensures connection to a huge population it ensures a loss of command and control such that "Virtual space in 2012 is given to sudden surges of communication beyond the reach of restraint or both states and insurgent" (p. 8).

These arguments are by no means new and in some respects refer back to the earlier debates among Thornton, Wilkinson, and Price. They also develop out of long- standing debates of the 1980s and 1990s over whether there is now a "new era" of terrorism driven by some form of symbiotic relationship with the media. This has prompted suggestions that terrorist leaderships are driven to a high degree by a "calculus of violence" defined by the likely impact on media representations.[42] The emphasis on POTD is to some degree a new departure although it perhaps reflects the general tendency of subject areas to intellectual

fragmentation where the central concept remains both heavily contested and hard to define with any exactitude. Mary Favret has noted what she terms a "synedochic movement" in the general discussion of war in the nineteenth century whereby parts became substituted for wholes. This meant that war ended up being defined in terms of its parts such that war became a "state" between two or more states.[43] A similar pattern can be seen here whereby what has been normally seen as a controversial tactic ("propaganda of the deed") employed by some terrorist movements has now come to form the central organizing concept of modern terrorism, which is itself a term often linked to a simple means to deploy force and violence to secure political objectives.

The central focus on POTD thus reflects what Guelke in particular has seen as the general poverty of theoretical explanations at the heart of terrorism studies.[44] The central thesis is moreover open to challenge on a number of accounts. POTD assumes that terrorist leaderships are mainly motivated by media publicity or at least select targets with a strong media impact in mind in order to ensure a major propaganda message is delivered to key audiences. Obviously there are a number of examples that can be used to support this: the 9/11 attacks, and subsequent attacks in Bali, Spain, and in London that have often been accompanied by final video communiqués by the suicide bombers concerned. All these operate at a spectacular level and feed off a series of images that have been well entrenched in the mindsets of Western and "Islamic" audiences familiar with terrorism or disaster movies.

However, at a more general level it is hard to see the mass of continuing terrorist actions as prompted by POTD, which is likely to have decreasing impact on audiences increasingly familiar with the strategies and tactics of terrorist groupings. The focus on the media impact of terrorist activity ignores a wide range of factors behind the emergence of modern terrorism, not least what Guelke has termed the "democratisation of violence" in the post-Communist world where societies have seen traditional structures of deference undermined and local groupings empowered by easy access to an arms market awash with cheap weapons.[45] Bolt's analysis is weakened by an absence of any detailed investigation of audience responses in preference for a more theoretical investigation of semiotics in the form of what he terms an "archipelago of memories." These are "the relationship between memory and narrative that recurs separately and contiguously, at levels of individual, group and media." The purpose of research on these three levels is to reveal the degree of politicization that occurs with revolutionary terrorist organizations. Adopting a broadly Gramscian approach popular in media studies Bolt suggests that "ultimately, any revolutionary cell's memory of and narrative must perforce contest hegemonic memories disseminated by media organisations" (p. 54).

Apart from the huge difficulties of finding reliable enough evidence to buttress such a research enterprise there is additional difficulty of Bolt's use of an essentially Western Marxist model of revolutionary mobilization to try and explain contemporary terrorist groupings in the aftermath of 9/11. The book fails to develop any well-researched case studies and glides superficially over a range of examples. The one operating concept that holds the book together is that of POTD, which Bolt suggests has the double aim of creating an "archipelago of violent deeds that trigger associations of grievance and injustice in the target population, and to transcend individual violent events to sublimate in the spectacular" (p. 151). This sort of language continually operates at the level of the metaphorical and remains continually weakened by a general failure to provide any real supporting evidence, which might have come from the careful perusal of court cases of terror suspects, the memoirs of individual activists, or detailed interviews.

What we do get after the thesis is outlined is a potted survey of the past to try and buttress the claims with some sort of historical support. Here Bolt might have examined

the actual historical work on the concept of "propaganda of the deed," which suggests that it was of relatively brief duration. In its earliest form it appears to have started out as a quixotic attempt by some anarchist idealists to start a sort of late-nineteenth-century peasant foco in some of the remoter areas of southern Europe once hopes for urban working-class insurrection has collapsed with the defeat of the Paris Commune. James Joll, for instance, describes the activities of the Italian anarchists led by Carlo Cafieri, Andrea Costa, and Errico Malatesta to promote rural insurrection in southern Italy in the 1874–77 and the hope that through the publicity of their activities the movement would acquire some form of momentum of its own.[46] But, as Ulrich Linse has suggested, the propaganda of the deed concept was destined really to have quite a short life in this form. It was an idea, he argues, that was followed by anarchist-inclined artisans during a transitional phase in European capitalism in the mid to late nineteenth century as their independent mode of work came under growing threat from large-scale industrial production. It was also accompanied by a widespread Bohemian aesthetic revolt although even at its height (as we have seen) it met with strong criticism from many figures within anarchist movements in both Europe and North America. The resort to terrorist actions led to massive repressive responses by states and in the process alienated mainstream working-class movements. Much anarchist movement by the early twentieth century drifted as a result toward a more defensive championing of utopian rural communes and schools and the promotion of a more pacific and anti-authoritarian culture.[47]

Bolt's brief historical survey ignores this debate and falls back on the opportunist use of historical myth by a variety of political groups and leaders, most of whom hardly fall under the rubric of "revolutionary." We hear of the mythology of the Anglo Boer War and the use by the British of concentration camps in the mobilization of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa; the celebration too by Slobodan Milosevic of the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo in 1989 to mobilize Serb nationalism as well as the mythology of Jewish resistance to Roman rule in Palestine at Masada in Zionist creation myths for the state of Israel.

However, a rather more detailed examination does occur of Irish republicanism and the Irish civil wars after the First World War. Here, Bolt sees the guerrilla tactics of the IRA under Michael Collins as an example of POTD, especially in the instance of the assassination of eleven British intelligence officers in Dublin (p. 99). But this is a grossly oversimplified explanation of IRA strategy and is an example of how bad history becomes when it is imprisoned within a preconceived theory. The mobilization of popular support for the IRA obviously owed something to the occasional use of spectacular attacks on the symbols of British power and authority—this was true from the Easter 1916 rebellion onward (although Irish opinion probably swung in a nationalist direction more as a result of the attempt by Britain to impose military conscription after 1916 than as a result of the rebellion as such). As Richard English has argued, IRA strategy was really quite a conventional one based on Clausewitzean logic of raising the costs of a British military presence in Ireland to the point where its effectiveness was paralyzed. At this point, a political leverage could be gained in order to secure a political settlement. This was helped by the fact that the challenge to the legitimacy of British rule was occurring in a range of non-military contexts such as the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association. It was helped on the constitutional front by the election of December 1918 in which Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, won a big majority of seats in Ireland and could proceed to establish its own independent Dail. Allied to this was the fact that a broad bulk of the Republican leadership came from the Catholic Brotherhood and were an example of a Catholic lower middle class resentful of the high social and economic status of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland.[48]

Moreover, even the claim that the assassination of the eleven British intelligence officers was a classic example of POTD can be contested. The murders came in the middle of what was really an intelligence war between the IRA and the British military in Ireland; Collins was able in the first part of the war to build up an effective intelligence arm capable of penetrating into the heart of British COIN. He was personally loath to use terrorist activities simply for revenge (although this was not an attitude shared by his followers). But revenge killings proved to be a trap into which the British military easily fell. Collins focused on paralyzing British military effectiveness rather than mobilizing popular Irish support, which was not really in any doubt by 1920. Revenge activities occurred at a more local level in the IRA but it was really British counterterrorism involving the deployment of the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans that was the best example of POTD in the sense that it helped galvanize popular support against itself by civilian population that had been politicized behind the symbols of a conservative Irish nationalism in the year after 1916.[49]

So POTD was at best a tactic to be used on occasions as part of a wider nationalist political and military struggle. The history of POTD does not really support its centrality and even Bolt acknowledges that POTD as a "technique of revolutionary communication" has its critics, especially when the obvious failure of a guerrilla strategy by the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa through its armed wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* is considered (pp. 102–103). Bolt fails to develop any really balanced historical assessment of the relative successes or failures of POTD and this leaves the POTD concept with an uncertain theoretical status by the time he turns to more contemporary conflicts. "POTD" has become so reified and objectified by this point it becomes in effect a fall back explanation once other attempts to explain the emergence of insurgent movements have become exhausted.

Bolt does attempt some form of political economy of global insurgency by looking at it in the context of efforts from the early 1980s onward at market deregulation and structural adjustment. With growing bodies of migrant populations spread around the globe, this insurgency has become part of a "long war" in which, he suggests, maneuver warfare had given way to a battle to impose rival political wills. Picking up the imagery of Iraqi prisoners tortured in Abu Ghraib, Bolt picks up the work of Colonel Hammes by suggesting that modern insurgency has become in some respects a "strategic communications campaign backed up by military action" (p. 236).

Starting out with such an assumption is bound to lead to this sort of conclusion since it effectively lets the analyst off the hook when it comes to a detailed examination of the military aspects of insurgent strategies. In the case of Afghanistan Bolt assumes a continuing and close "unholy alliance" between the Taliban and Al Qaeda as the insurgency there has been largely driven by a media-fixated pursuit of POTD. This means that the Taliban has propaganda as its main agenda and its "excursion into global politics remains rhetorical not military" (p. 245). He cites some evidence to support this contention by pointing to high-profile attacks on symbolic targets such as the Serena Hotel in Kabul in January 2008 and later the Justice Ministry and Presidential Palace. Taliban media spokesmen have also become much more "streamlined" in the course of the last ten years of insurgent warfare and a constant stream of messages goes to journalists via telephone, Short Message Service (SMS), and e-mail.

But what does this really prove? In the absence of a balanced assessment of the Taliban's overall strategy, it is not too difficult for Bolt to find evidence that the Taliban have become rather more media conscious and have sought to exploit this to their advantage. Does this mean that the Taliban's insurgency is now mainly driven by considerations of

the global media? There is no real evidence for this as the picture we do have of the Taliban's propaganda arm after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 is one of a gradual reformulation as the rural insurgent structure came to be rebuilt. In a society where Internet penetration was still low considerable use was made of *shabnamah* (night letters)—which were pamphlets or posters containing statements or threats. There was a plethora of self-proclaimed Taliban "spokesmen" and a general picture of weak central control of media relations despite claims that a Taliban "media bureau" had been established as early as 2002. Many such "spokesmen" telephoning and e-mailing journalists used aliases though the number and range of contracts grew significantly by 2007 as earlier strictures against new media like television and the Internet were removed. By 2008, the Taliban started to produce some videos along with online versions of magazines and many of the films made were typical of other *jihadist* propaganda aimed at recruiting new cohorts of young men with images of groups of men in the mountains, battle scenes, displays of captured booty as well as some suicide "wills."[50]

This hardly proves the centrality of "propaganda of the deed." It indicates a growing recognition by the Taliban of the need to make use of new media forms as part of a wider national insurgency that relies to a high degree on traditional nationalist Afghan symbols. As in other insurgent movements, "terrorist" activities are deployed as part of a wider military strategy aimed at convincing the enemy of the need to withdraw on terms favorable to the Taliban. It also exemplifies a model of modern insurgent warfare, which was first identified in the first Chechen War against Russia of 1994–96. Here small units of maneuver can have a major combat effectiveness against a large military machine when it is properly networked socially. Such a highly networked military formation through clan or kinship structures acts as a major force multiplier. Chechnya was already a highly networked society before it started to make use of modern global networked media and, in many respects, Afghan society exhibits some of the same features.[51]

Bolt's assumption, too, of a close Al Qaeda–Taliban relationship is questioned in the volume by Alix Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970–2010*. The study is a valuable piece of contemporary history that seeks to unravel the relationship of Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. This is a daunting task given what the authors term the "multi-layered identities and mergers of political, national, and religious ideas in Afghanistan" (p. 5). The research involved using a range of published and unpublished documents including six books published in Pushtun. In addition, the authors conducted a range of interviews with participants making this a path-breaking study in our understanding of how the rural insurgency of the Taliban has developed in Afghanistan over the last decade. This leads the authors to question whether the Taliban is a real enemy of Western interests—a theme that only a few figures in Western political establishments have been willing to engage with seriously in recent years, although one that stems from the work of several analysts who have shown the major political and doctrinal differences between the Taliban and Al Qaeda.[52]

There have been indicators for some years that the Taliban were by no means unanimously behind the activities of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Lawrence Wright for instance pointed out that Osama bin Laden felt betrayed both by Arab fighters when he was left in the Tora Bora mountains as well as the Taliban who had by this time apparently slipped away.[53] In 2003 a report by Hy Rothstein for the Defense Department's Office of Special Operations and Lowe Intensity Conflict (SOLIC) pointed to deep divisions within the Taliban that could have been exploited by a careful political–military effort, although by

this stage many U.S. intelligence officers who had come into the country in the wake of the 2001 invasion had been redeployed to Iraq.[54]

Linschoten and Kuehn also show that an "internal debate" within the Taliban had been going on since at least 1997 following bin Laden's return to the country from Sudan. A number of figures in the Taliban felt deep reservations over the creation in 1998 of a *World Islamic Front Urging Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders* fearing that it would focus international action against Afghanistan. But the Taliban's close linkage with Al Qaeda remained secured by the continuing determination of Mullah Omar to provide the movement with a safe haven. Linschoten and Kuehn cite one Taliban member, Omar Nasri, who felt at the time that Al Qaeda were "vicious, uncivilized. I was disgusted by the public executions and decapitations, and the way they held the country in fear" (cited on p. 153). Some meetings between Taliban leaders and U.S. officials were held as early as 1997 and the book hints that it was possible that—with more adroit diplomacy—the United States might have driven a wedge between the Taliban and Al Qaeda as the former sought to establish an effective government in Afghanistan. The authors acknowledge that there was a wide difference of understanding over terms like human rights and the meaning of terrorism but there were nevertheless deep reservations within the Taliban over the way that bin Laden appeared to be abusing Taliban hospitality (pp. 160–161).

These arguments can be tested more closely by a careful attention to U.S. diplomatic practice during this period and an examination of whether the United States did really lose such a window of opportunity. Any such window, though, was likely to have been very short lived given the reaction to the initial Al Qaeda attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa in August 2008. Significantly Mullah Omar called the U.S. State Department two days after the bombings saying he had no evidence that bin Laden was behind the attacks—Linschoten and Kuehn argue that this opened up the possibility for a channel of communication at this time although it was not treated seriously as the main priority in U.S. policy had now become the neutralization of bin Laden and Al Qaeda (p. 164).

It was the growing diplomatic and political isolation of Afghanistan in the years after 1998 that drove Mullah Omar and bin Laden closer together, especially as Al Qaeda could provide valuable military advice and assistance to the Taliban's military campaign in the north of the country. Bin Laden managed to create a new identity for himself as the elder figure to whom the Arabs in Afghanistan as well as the Taliban could look for advice. He was helped in this by the continuing diplomatic isolation that was aided after 2008 by growing international concern over the treatment of women in Afghanistan. Attacks by Diane Feinstein in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as well as Clare Short, Minister for International Development in the Labour Government of Tony Blair, on the Taliban's treatment of women reinforced this isolation leading to the EU freezing all humanitarian aid projects in Kabul.

The Taliban regime presented a deep challenge to Western foreign policy since any lurch towards idealism—or what the U.K. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in 1997 spelt out as an "ethical foreign policy"—risked severe blowback in the form of further entrenching Al Qaeda influence in Afghanistan. The dilemma was never properly understood before the actual attacks of 9/11 although Linschoten and Kuehn suggest that a further window of opportunity presented itself some two years after the U.S. invasion of 2001. Many senior Taliban commanders, they suggest, were by 2003 loath to restart an insurgency and it was largely the actions of the foreign interventionist force along with those of the Karzai government in Kabul that reignited guerrilla war (p. 250). Indeed, the problem unresolved by the 2001 invasion was effective government since the warlord nature of the Kabul regime ensured that at the local level a multitude of militias and criminal bands

prevailed. The Taliban were given a golden opportunity to fill in a vacuum of just and effective government by reinserting themselves through the operation of locally trusted Islamic courts. As Linschoten and Kuehn conclude "the strategic mistake of handing over the government to former strongmen and warlords . . . aided the Taliban's return" (p. 254).

This thesis can of course be criticized as being based on an unrealistic assumption, namely that there was some social formation waiting in the wings for Western policymakers to employ in opposition to the dominant warlords in Kabul. But there were none and the long run challenge to Western policy was always going to be one of "nation-building" and the long-term construction of a civil society that could sustain some form of pluralist regime that would at least minimize corruption. In the absence of any form of developed civil society Western policy was forced to work with various warlord factions who in turn were able to return to some areas of the country from which they had been evicted under Taliban rule.

One major example was Helmand, which Linschoten and Kuehn fail to explore in any detail in their volume although it has arguably been one of the areas where the insurgency has been most bitterly fought since 2001. In the period after 2001 some warlords returned to the area and the Taliban was able to restart the insurgency from 2005 onward based on close links with tribal leaders and an increasingly self-financing operation derived from profits in the drugs trade.[55] Linschoten and Kuehn acknowledge the devolved nature of the Taliban insurgency although they point to the importance of central leadership structures in the form of the *rahbari* or *shura* under Mullah Omar that provides, they suggest, overall strategic guidance for local commanders who command groups recruited through a friendship-based *andiwaal* system. There is little here to indicate that POTD as described by Bolt has much importance in local Taliban political mobilization.

Indeed, Linschoten and Kuehn portray a Taliban that is broadly Clausewitzean in its approach to military conflict with guerrilla attacks being used to enhance its claims, at least in the first instance, to participation in the Karzai government once Western forces have withdrawn (p. 273). For a brief period between 2005 and 2007 there was a departure from this general strategy in the form of Mullah Dadullah who did support the general objective of global *jihad*. Dadullah's death in May 2007 largely brought this phase of Taliban strategy to an end. Linschoten and Kuehn suggest, however, that Dadullah had a major impact in distorting Western perceptions of Taliban strategy given his numerous interviews, including one with *Al Jazeera* in 2004 (p. 277).

The one obvious example of the internationalization of the Taliban's insurgency was the reformation in 2007 of the *Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan*, although this movement had initially been established as far back as 1998. Interestingly, Linschoten and Kuehn show that the Pakistani Taliban did not emerge in the immediate aftermath of the siege of the Lal Masjid mosque in Islamabad in June 2007, but rather later and that Dadullah played a largely moderating role up to his death the same year. Dadullah certainly wanted the rival Pakistani militant factions to resolve their differences but he also urged them to scale down their activities in Pakistan in order to help the Taliban counter increasing U.S. forces in Afghanistan (p. 282).

Overall, Linschoten and Kuehn's book paints a picture of a complex series of Taliban strategies that need to be far more fully understood by Western policymakers if an easy exit from Afghanistan is to be secured. They question the Western strategic assumption that the Taliban should be forced to negotiate from a position that they suggest offers a "bleak prospect for peace" since it is more likely to lead to a prolonged civil war. They also suggest that Western diplomacy needs to take account of generational differences within the Taliban and that negotiators need to recognize the importance of the surviving older

generation of Taliban cadres in keeping some form of order within a movement that has always been wracked by internal differences. They even suggest that this older generation may in the end be the key to removing the international terrorists from Afghanistan in order to secure the consolidation of some form of new Afghan government of national unity. Much will depend on how far any such negotiations can produce a political package that can reach out toward meeting local grievances that have sustained the insurgency. However, unlike some Western commentators, they do not in the end think that simple "talks with the Taliban" represent any form of silver bullet. What is really needed the authors argue are multilevel negotiations that avoid a pacted agreement among elites. But this they recognize is an unlikely expectation and the book ends with a rather pessimistic forecast of escalating military conflict that picks up many of the threads of the conflict of the early 1990s.

Concluding Comments

The four works surveyed in this article indicate that the academic debate on the range and nature of terrorism remains a lively one, especially when informed by a strong historical base. The search for some form of general theory of "terrorism" is always likely to be a chimera given that terrorist activities are, as Bruce Hoffman has pointed out, essentially "instrumental" in nature and "planned, purposeful and premeditated."[56] But deeper historical study and research can reveal the range and diversity of terrorist activities planned by both states and sub-state movements. To this extent, it is important for scholars to avoid allowing analysis to be burdened by an abstract concept of "terrorism," which has often been the feature of many of the studies performed within the sub-discipline of "terrorology," and to examine the linkages between actions by states and those of sub-state terrorist movements.

Such an approach is likely to bring terrorism studies—or more simply the "study of political terror"—closer to other research areas dealing with social movements and political movements such as warlords and militias, ethnic and clan formations and the strategic logic of military and political decision makers. The abstract depiction of terrorist movements tends to reinforce a hardening of political boundaries and to undermine opportunities for diplomatic resolution of issues: evidenced, as we have seen in the case of the Taliban, when a possible opportunity for securing a diplomatic settlement and early military withdrawal from Afghanistan was missed in 2002–03.

"Terrorism" remains a valuable word in political analysis and to reject it completely would be futile since another term would then have to be invented. But it is a word that carries enormous emotional and symbolic baggage, stretching back as it does to well before the late nineteenth century and links between anarchist movements and terrorism in Europe and America. Unpacking the range and diversity of meaning of "terrorism" over this period is thus a fruitful one for historical research, as the work by Carr reviewed here shows, and adds to our understanding of the linkage between "terrorism" and "nihilism," which is on the whole rare and exceptional. Terrorists are driven less by a simple lust for destruction and killing than by various ideological constructs. The various forms of *jihadist* terrorist movements in the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia are examples of this phenomenon; the ideological drivers behind them, however, were rather underplayed in much Western analysis in the immediate post–Cold War years, perhaps as a result of "end of history" triumphalism in the 1990s and the belief that ideology was now dead.

Modern global terrorism remains a major strategic and political challenge to Western analysts, although its linkage to the media can be overplayed, as the analysis of the work by Neville Bolt here indicates. We have now rather moved beyond the period of seeing the media dominating all of modern life (as depicted in the satirical film *The Truman Show*)

and the global media does not offer any immediate propaganda of the deed for terrorist groupings. Indeed, it is the dissemination of images from within the Western media rather than terrorist activities per se that can on occasions mobilize significant sections of popular opinion in the Islamic world against the West, as the recent derogatory film on Mohammed in the United States led to widespread riots against U.S. and Western consulates and embassies throughout the Middle East.

Finally, the linkage between "terrorism" and "revolution" is a complex one that demands much more thorough historical research. The use of terror has been a central part of many revolutionary movements since at least the French revolution and has continued into the era of Marxist and "national liberation" movements in the twentieth century. For many of the analysts of "terrorology" in the 1970s and early 1980s, terrorism was more or less inextricably linked to various forms of Marxist revolutionary engagement, whether this be the Red Brigades and Baader Meinhof in Europe, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in South America, or the South African ANC. Since the end of the Cold War a new narrative has developed centered on the Middle East and various concepts of Islamic "revolution." The Iranian revolution of 1979 is a key moment in the development of this narrative although this is a revolution with a considerably different ideological trajectory. With its resistance to the emancipation of women, imposition of strict *Sharia* law and, in the case of Al Qaeda, to the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate it might almost be said to be mainly drawn from aspects of the counter-Enlightenment compared to the Enlightenment sources of both Western liberalism and Marxism-Leninism in the Cold War period. The meaning therefore of *jihadist* terrorism and its linkage to the idea of "revolution" is another major theme that needs to be examined much more closely by analysts in the years ahead.

Notes

1. Herman Rauschning, *Germany's Revolution of Destruction* (London: Heinemann, 1939).
2. Robert Payne, *Zero: The Story of Terrorism* (London and New York: Wingate, 1951), p. 256.
3. Ibid., p. 257.
4. Roland Gaucher, *The Terrorists* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1865), p. x.
5. For a general survey of the four "generations" of warfare see Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Bow: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004).
6. For a critical assessment of the thesis see Thomas Copeland, "Is the 'New Terrorism' Really New: An Analysis of the New Paradigm for Terrorism," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* (Winter 2001), pp. 7–23. For similar doubts see Antony Field, "The 'New Terrorism': Revolution or Evolution," *Political Studies Review* 7 (2009), pp. 195–207.
7. Thomas Perry Thornton, "Terror as a Weapon," in Harry Eckstein, ed., *Internal War* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 71–95.
8. Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism* (London: Macmillan 1976), p. 19.
9. H. Edward Price, "The Strategy and Tactics of Revolutionary Terrorism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19(1) (January 1977), p. 54.
10. Adrian Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism and the International Political System* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 13–14.
11. To this extent it bears some comparison with the parallel movement on the political left to dominate the debate on race and ethnic relations.
12. Robert Moss, *Urban Guerrillas* (London: Temple Smith, 1971), p. 32.
13. Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).
14. Randall D. Law, *Terrorism: A History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), p. 2.

15. Martha Crenshaw, "Introduction," in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995), p. 4.

16. Ibid., p. 5

17. Michel Wieviorka, "Terrorism in the Context of Academic Research," in ibid., pp. 598–599.

18. See for instance Ola Tunander, "The War on Terror and the Pax Americana," in David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott, eds., *9/11 and American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out* (Gloucestershire: Arris Books, 2007), pp. 149–167.

19. Fred Halliday, "The Confusion of Our Times." Available at http://www.opendemocracy.net/print/1865 (accessed 29 May 2012).

20. Peter Calvert, "Terror in the Theory of Revolution," in Noel O'Sullivan, ed., *Terrorism, Ideology and Revolution* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986), p. 27.

21. Ibid., pp. 38–39.

22. Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005 [1st ed. 1967]), pp. 87–88.

23. Steven G. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 13.

24. Many anarchist-inclined writers are keep to distinguish Bakunin from Nechaev—with the former being essentially libertarian and the later an authoritarian figure who acts as a precursor for more vanguardist and centrally controlled movements such as Lenin's Bolsheviks. See Paul Avrich, *Bakunin and Nechaev* (London: Freedom Press, 1977). During the Cold War Nechaev's conspiratorial ideas were seen by some analysts as shaping a tradition that continued with Lenin's Bolsheviks in the twentieth century. See Michael Frawdin, *The Unmentionable Nechaev* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961).

25. Frederic Trautmann, *The Voice of Terror: A Biography of Johann Most* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 99–100.

26. Cited in Alex Butterworth, *The World That Never Was* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 464.

27. Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1914–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 14.

28. James Green, *Death in the Haymarket* (New York: Random Books, 2006), pp. 140–143. Most favored the conspiratorial group rather than the mass movement so his influence on the Haymarket anarchists was never likely to be that significant. Woodcock has questioned Most's influence even in his native Austria where he has argued he was eclipsed by the Austrian anarchist Joseph Peukert. George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 406.

29. Ibid., pp. 128–131.

30. Butterworth, *The World That Never Was*, p. 357.

31. Norman Stone, *Europe Transformed, 1878–1919* (London: Fontana 1983), pp. 63, 201.

32. Walter Lacquer, "Interpretations of Terrorism: Fact, Fiction and Political Science," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1977), p. 16; *Terrorism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicoloson, 1977), pp. 164–212.

33. Michael Burleigh, *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (London: Harper Perennial 2008). It is hard to agree with the novelist Steven King in the blurb that Burleigh has "shone a powerful beam over a much neglected aspect of modern history."

34. Alex Houen, *Terrorism and Modern Literature: From Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 32.

35. Cited in Julian Bell, *What's Painting? Representation and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson 1999), p. 128.

36. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy: France and Algeria 1954–63* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1963).

37. See in particular the discussion of Morris's film in Stephen Price, *Firestorm: American Film in the Age of Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 218–222.

38. Cited in Seymour M. Hersch, *Chain of Command* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 362.

39. Ibid., esp. pp. 1–72.

40. Neville Bolt, David Betz, and Jaz Azari, *Propaganda of the Deed: Understanding the Phenomenon*, Whitehall Report 3–08 (2008), p. 2. Available at www.rusi.org (accessed 21 June 2012).

41. Ibid., p. 3.

42. For a summary of this debate see William E. Biernatzki, "Terrorism and Mass Media," *Communications Research Trends* 21 (2002), pp. 1–3.

43. Mary A. Favret, *War At a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Warfare* (Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 177.

44. Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism and the International Political System,* esp. pp. 35–51.

45. Ibid., pp. 44–46.

46. James Joll, *The Anarchists* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), pp. 119–122.

47. Ulrich Linse, "'Propaganda by Deed' and 'Direct Action:' Two Concepts of Anarchist Violence," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld, eds., *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), pp. 207–208.

48. Richard English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA* (London: Macmillan 2003), pp. 23–27.

49. For an illuminating—if on occasion rather biased—examination of Collins's strategy and tactics see James Mackay, *Michael Collins: A Life* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 1998). Ian Beckett has questioned the actual effectiveness of Collins's intelligence service although he acknowledges that IRA propaganda was much more successful than that of the British. Ian F.W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 16–17. It appears that by 1921 earlier British intelligence failures were being rectified under the strong hand of Colonel Winter—known by the IRA as the "Holy Terror" and the IRA was itself being penetrated by British agents.

50. Joanna Nathan, "Reading the Taliban," in Antonio Giustozzi, ed., *Decoding the Taliban* (London: Hurst and Co, 2009), pp. 25–31.

51. See in particular John Arquilla and Theodore Karasik, "Chechnya: A Glimpse of Future Conflict?," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 22 (1999), pp. 207–229.

52. For a questioning of Western policy toward the Taliban see especially Rory Stewart, "The Irresistible Illusion," *The London Review of Books* 31(13) (July 2009), pp. 3–6. Stewart is now a Conservative MP in the United Kingdom. One of the best studies examining the political and doctrinal differences between Al Qaeda and the Taliban is Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), esp. pp. 119–135, 184–185.

53. Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda's Road to 9/11* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 371.

54. Hersch, *Chain of Command*, pp. 147–150.

55. Tom Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History," in Giustozzi, *Decoding the Taliban*, p. 151.

56. Bruce Hoffman, "Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25(5) (2002), p. 313.