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The Roots of America's "War on Terror: " a War That Never Ends

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THE ROOTS OF AMERICA’S “WAR ON TERROR:” A WAR THAT NEVER ENDS

By

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... v

Chapter One: Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
  Literature Review ........................................................................................................................ 4
  Sources and Methodology ......................................................................................................... 7
  Theoretical Approach ............................................................................................................... 9
  Chapter Overview ..................................................................................................................... 10

Chapter Two: Warranted Violence: The Genealogy of U.S. Counterinsurgency Tactics ............ 12
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 12
  Roots of U.S. Counterterrorism Tactics: The French Connection ............................................ 15
  The Latin American Laboratory ............................................................................................. 21
  Justifying Murder: The Phoenix Program in Vietnam .............................................................. 25
  Crackdown in Chile .................................................................................................................. 28

Chapter Three: “The War on Terror” ............................................................................................ 32
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 32
  “Disappearances” .................................................................................................................... 33
  Illegal Imprisonment ............................................................................................................... 38
  Extrajudicial Assassinations .................................................................................................... 42

Chapter Four: Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 46

References ..................................................................................................................................... 52

Biographical Sketch .................................................................................................................... 63
ABSTRACT

Based on primary and secondary sources that include declassified documents and eyewitness accounts, and using a theoretical approach informed by the works of Slavoj Žižek and Hannah Arendt, this thesis represents a profound examination of how the U.S. fights alleged terror. I argue that U.S. anticommunism strategies have metamorphosed into practices that characterize the so-called “War on Terror.” I delineate U.S. counterterrorism tactics and strategies developed in Algeria to the Americas, to Vietnam and ultimately to the post-9/11 era. The thesis traces the dark side of policies developed during President George W. Bush counterterrorism efforts to President Barack Obama’s secret wars in distant lands, one set of strategies and tactics violently, but seamlessly exceeding the other. I argue that the U.S., acting as an unrestrained empire, conducts an endless “War on Terror” that not only incites hate and anger around the world but that also provides an effective disguise to a systematic erosion of domestic civil liberties.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Is the United States an empire? U.S. government personnel vehemently deny such a claim. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the U.S. National Intelligence Council, and professor at Harvard University, Joseph Nye, claims the term is an old epithet of the “radical left.” Recently, he continues, the metaphor has reemerged. Analysts on both left and right now habitually use it to explain, if not guide U.S. foreign policy. Nye dismisses the phrase. “The term ‘imperial’ is not only inaccurate but misleading in absence of formal U.S. political control.” For public consumption, Nye’s pitch is persuading. But it isn’t true. The United States has more than 737 military installations in over 130 countries, the U.S. exercise vast influence over financial powerhouses, transnational, and political institutions, and the U.S. continues to invade and occupy foreign land. Still, Nye asserts, that it is a mistake to confuse “empire with primacy” (2004, para 2 & 3).

Not so, writes Nial Ferguson in Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire (2005). Ferguson argues that the United States, politically, militarily, and economically, is the most powerful empire the world has ever seen. But the U.S. empire, says Ferguson, is an empire for good. My research deviates not only from Nye’s dismissal of empire, but also Ferguson’s claims. This begs the question of what constitutes a modern empire. For a working definition I borrow from the influential book Empire (2003) by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. As opposed to Roman, British, and Soviet imperialism distinguished by large political structures with a single political center, the postmodern empire argues Hardt and Negri, “establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered
and _deterritorializing_ apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm” (p. xii). Hardt and Negri’s empire is composed of a series of national and transnational institutions (e.g. United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the U.S. Federal Reserve) with the capability to undermine any local system of state centered control. A modern empire, as noted by Immanuel Wallerstein’s *The Modern World System* (2011) controls capital and financial markets and possesses advanced military technologies that allow it to dominate the ruling global system. In the case of the U.S., to effectively ensure authority, these institutions are backed by Washington’s core product, i.e., alleged “defense and security.” Washington’s foreign foothold is therefore maintained by permanent U.S. military bases dotting the globe. If some country attempts to break rank with the global system dominated by the U.S., the military is there, with force if necessary. It is by this understanding, conceptualized by Hardt, Negri, and Wallerstein, I refer to as the U.S. empire.

I argue that the U.S. empire is the sole planetary hegemon, a description of a nation-state that exerts enormous influence, but also unfortunately, vast destruction and oppression. The permanent genealogy of interminable nation building campaigns, covert operations, regime-change quagmires, secret armies, out of control armed corporations, staggering military spending, wars by fleets of robots, extrajudicial assassinations, and consistent preemptive military action and occupation of foreign soil conclusively demonstrate the fluid nature of the destructive U.S. empire. Yet, Washington maintains their stance. “We don’t seek empires” insists former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. “We’re not imperialistic. We never have been” (Boot, 2003, para 2).

If Rumsfeld’s self-absorbed denial holds any truth, why is anti-American sentiment on the rise? A unique survey of world opinion undertaken by Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes in
America against the World (2006) blames the glorifying notion of American Exceptionalism, the idea of U.S. superiority and unique place in the world. As opposed to other nations, past and present, America was born as an idea, a “city upon a hill” initially coined by Governor John Winthrop in 1630 and later quoted by President Ronald Reagan. On the day of 9/11 Bush described the U.S. as a “beacon of light” for the world to follow, a nation with a “transcendent purpose ordained by God,” a standard view developed by realist international relation theorist Hans Morgenthau. For this reason, many U.S. leaders believe that they are on a special mission to bring liberty to the world, by violence if necessary. In turn, writes New York Times columnist Roger Cohen (as cited in Chomsky, 2009), America’s crimes are only “unfortunate lapses,” and not continuing practices. At best, they are justified exceptions.

There is an inherit flaw in Cohen’s argument. Although his view is shared by several government officials, to label America’s crimes as exceptions is false. Indeed, the historical record is radically inconsistent with America’s “transcendent purpose.” The historical record speaks for itself. Unfortunately, crimes conducted by U.S. military personnel overseas are passed over as insignificant or at worst denied. This tradition of violent denial has formed the essence U.S. foreign policy conduct. The U.S. currently acts as the last bastion in this chronology of empires.

The general argument I present is very concise. Based on substantial research my thesis departs from the understanding that the United States constitutes and act like an empire, whether or not its government leaders or its citizenry accept or recognize their imperial attitude and actions. My research doesn’t focus on the question of American Exceptionalism. That topic has been explored elsewhere. Nor does my study seek to dwell on the question of empire. An exhaustive body of literature discusses this matter. Yet, empire and Exceptionalism help
establish the twofold interplay that has shaped violent U.S. foreign policy actions. By violent actions I refer to counterinsurgency and counterterror tactics, state sanctioned policies to stifle perceived threats in areas where U.S. interests prevail. I use these two terms interchangeably to describe terror. These actions conducted in covert operations are what Chalmers Johnson accurately predicts in his *Blowback* series, the unintended consequences of foreign operations concealed from public view. To understand this complicated process my thesis untangles how the U.S. experience in the Global South, understood as a collection of nations historically affected by empire, has shaped the way the U.S. fights terrorism, how the U.S. reacts to threats of terrorist dangers, whether real or imagined, and how the threat of terrorism is used as an expansive strategy that allows the U.S. to continue its imperial ambitions. To facilitate a general understanding, the thesis builds on a foundation of historical information. The history documented in an avalanche of sources unearth that contemporary U.S. policies to confront a threat is far from new, but rather a continuation of long-established imperial practices conceived in areas such as for example Latin America.

**Literature Review**

Terror takes various forms. A sudden car bomb, improvised explosive devices, a commercial airliner slammed into a building, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, torture, drone attacks, and extrajudicial executions. Anything goes. Terror is a state tactic as well as an insurgency tactic. As opposed to conventional warfare it produces results quicker and faster. The primary difference is that non-state actions are typically condemned by the law and while state-actions, especially allied with an empire, acts with the law’s protection. Throughout the world, the U.S. often relies on terror to impose unpopular policies. In Latin America, the U.S. relied on
terror time and time again of rightwing allies’ efforts to quell popular opposition against pro
corporate policies that did nothing than advance the interests of the ruling elite.

The history of the U.S. in Latin America is muddled with mass violence and terror. During the 1950s and 1960s United States Presidencies stretched the concept of “national crisis” to justify a series of military interventions writes Greg Grandin in his provocative but lucid analysis Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the Unites States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism (2006). By citing Communism as a threat to America, expansion became synonymous with “security.” Washington consequently replaced Europe with Latin America as the primary recipient of security and aid, first the Second World War, then the Cold War to win a monopoly that either helped create or fortify the region’s intelligence agencies notes Martha Huggins in her Political Policing: The United States and Latin America (1998) and Greg Grandin in A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent during Latin America’s Long Cold War (2010). Indeed, by the mid-1950s, mutual defense assistance clauses coupled the United States’ military with virtually every Latin American country. By subverting Latin America governments, verified by the pioneering work of Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in their After the Cataclysm: The Political Economy of Human Rights (1979), the U.S. with the help of complicit Latin American elites created a climate in which violent military regimes ruled and terror roamed the streets. Latin America became a laboratory for U.S. counterinsurgency tactics that directly rehabilitated U.S. counterterrorism tactics after 9/11.

An essential component of the U.S. counterinsurgency narrative is the infamous U.S. School of the Americas (S-O-A). The institution situated in Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, has trained more than sixty thousand military and police from across the hemisphere in coercion since its inception in 1946 claims Lesley Gill in The School of the Americas: Military Training
and Political Violence in the Americas (2004). S-O-A applicants had to meet strict admission requirements, attend seminars, and even “graduate” writes Huggins, Fatouros, and Zimbardo in Cecilia Menjivar’s and Nestor Rodriguez’s study When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror (2005, p. 18). President of Panama Jorge Illueca called the S-O-A “the biggest base for de-stabilization in Latin America,” and a major Panamanian newspaper dubbed the institution “The School of Assassins.” With financial, military, and ideological support from Washington, S-O-A graduates subdued the voices of dissent, crushed protest, and terrorized their own citizens into silence. It is at the S-O-A (The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation since 2001) the inception of U.S. counterinsurgency policies can be found.

A vital lesson in the narrative of U.S. counterinsurgency practices is disclosed in Naomi Klein’s revelatory account The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (2008). Under the “pressure” of the Cold War, Klein reveals how the CIA, U.S.’ right hand support in the region, developed torture techniques through basic research into human psychology in the 1950s. CIA’s research led by Ewen Cameron and Donald Hebb at McGill University developed methods to be used not only for the purpose of inflicting severe physical and physiological pain but also for deleting structured personalities. The patients were shocked into psychological infancy or empty slates which researchers thought would allow for dramatic reconditioning. The program evolved into psychological torture which fused tactics of sensory deprivation, stress positions, white noise, temperature extremes, and prolonged isolation, a range of tactics unveiled in Alfred W. McCoy’s revelatory account A Question of Torture (2006). According to Darios Rejali’s groundbreaking study Torture and Democracy (2009) it did not take long before the CIA’s secrets were adopted by U.S.’ Latin American military allies. Particularly popular were the use of electro wires and electro shock devices in combination with “stealth violence,” a tactic
that left few physical marks. Many of the same techniques resurfaced and were authorized by the highest levels of government for interrogation purposes on foreign nationals’ in U.S. detention after 9/11.

In the absence of a fully holistic history of U.S. counterinsurgency practices it has been tempting to embrace Noam Chomsky’s “universal distributor hypothesis” (Rejali, 2009, p. 379). Chomsky (1988) argues that that the United States unilaterally spread terror around the world. Because of its fragmented history, the discussion on U.S. counterinsurgency policies from the second half of the 1950s must be discussed within a more detailed theoretical framework. Unfortunately, due to the scope of study my work does not permit for this analysis. However, I do illustrate that the U.S took important lessons from other colonial powers, but primarily pursued their own violent doctrines. I suggest that the devastating counterinsurgency policies honed by U.S. aligned Latin American military dictatorships to counter “Communism” forms the backbone of contemporary U.S. counterterrorism measures. Indeed, the same methods of “disappearances,” torture, and targeted executions continue and form essential components of the U.S.’ post-9/11 tactics.

**Sources and Methodology**

This thesis relies on an array of sources. Among them are declassified files dug out at the National Security Archive and leaked evidence leaked to the public by WikiLeaks. Detainees’ assessments, transcripts, autopsy reports, executive orders, official memorandums, government letters, and top secret intelligence documents also form part of the original documentation consulted. The sources help illuminate how the U.S. government continues to systematically and systemically terrorize prisoners. I also investigate newspaper publications, reports, films,
documentaries, and even relevant material on various video sharing sites. Finally, books by investigative journalists Jane Mayer’s *The Dark Side* (2008) and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Steven Coll’s *Ghost Wars* (2004) are among the sources used to uncover information on the alarming practices used on foreign and U.S. citizens after 9/11.

I read the documents against the grain to discern important meaning often hidden in discursive language. The Detainees Assessment Briefs (DABs) and related classified documents compiled by the Department of Defense and released by Wikileaks in April, 2011, are memoranda that assesses the alleged terrorist threat a particular detainee pose to U.S. national security. Yet, “extreme caution is required” when working with the documents as they often contain questionable information about detainees alleged links with terrorist organizations (Gitmo files, n.d., para 7). According to Wikileaks’s analysis, inconclusive evidence, opinion based “facts,” false witness testimony in trade for better treatment, innocent men detained by mistake, or forced confessions through coercion demonstrate the importance to approach the documents cautiously. Indeed, a rising tide of unsettled legal issues emerges in the deliberate suppression or destruction of photographs, interrogation logs, and tapes. Many documents released contain heavily redacted or blacked out sections that obscure key evidence. This lack of a coherent version of the government alleged “facts” and the substantial documentation presented by a series of human rights organizations is so inconsistent that it is not difficult to conclude that the government story is completely false. I consequently make informed deductions, a method that permits the unraveling of hidden meaning.

I also examine the legal justifications for “torture” outlined in the memoirs by the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Council (OLC). The rationale behind the “enhanced” interrogation methods, a synonym for torture, is so blunt that they entirely disregard David Galula’s advice for
“Plausible Deniability.” The nature of the presidential memoirs’ political language and moral ambiguity on the other hand, forces me to mine important information that escapes a superficial reading. I therefore read between the lines. Based on this method I safely arrive at the conclusion that Cheney in close cahoots with Bush as the final authority not only bent, but violated the law, authorizing torture covered as “enhanced interrogations.”

**Theoretical Approach**

I interrogate the sources of evidence with theories developed by philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek and political theorist Hanna Arendt. Žižek describes himself as a - “Communist” - in a qualified sense, in 2009 he insisted on being a “radical leftist.” He’s persistently anti-capitalist and sees capitalism as fundamentally violent (Žižek’, 2008). Unlike Žižek Arendt doesn’t self-identify as belonging to any particular political group. In her own words, “I am nowhere. I am really, not in the mainstream of present or any other political thought” (Arendt, n.d., as cited in Beiner, 2007, p. 1). In fact, in *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (1951) she describes the two currents more or less equivalent, rather than opposing philosophies of left and right.

Generally, I track Žižek’s notion of violence and Arendt’s construction of terror. Žižek’s argues that violence is inherent to capitalist system, the natural outcome of the status quo “fortified” by an “overarching system concerned with maintaining and reproducing a particular political and economic framework” (Menjívar & Rodríguez (2005, p. 6). To maintain this system, but most importantly justify its imperial role, Žižek (2012) assert that the U.S. relies on a complex economic mechanism, a permanent state of war. The U.S. therefore invented the “War on Terror,” another one in a long series of tenuous “wars” which allowed the U.S. to use “terror”
as a potent ideological weapon to further its global reach. Resistance against the imperial power who invades and occupies is considered “terrorism.” The “enemy,” generally an innocent and defenseless individual, is criminalized for defending himself from a violent intruder or occupier. The “unlawful enemy combatant,” an appalling term made up by a small cluster of White House officials, is neither a common criminal nor an enemy soldier. The “enemy combatant” therefore falls outside of the political spectrum and is denied his basic rights. By denying a person his basic human rights, the government is free to orchestrate a range of dreadful assaults on individuals they deem as a “national security” threat. This has led the government to develop a pattern of arbitrary arrests, indefinite detention, torture, and targeted killings.

But terror, adds Arendt, has ceased to be a mere means of suppressing dissent, though it is indeed being used for such purposes, “terror is an instrument to rule masses who are perfectly “obedient” (1951, p. 6). Žižek and Arendt consequently allow an analysis of how the U.S. uses terror not only against enemies, whether real or perceived, but also in unprovoked ways. Terror, as used by the U.S., is often not a reaction but an unprovoked action. The recipients of the U.S.’ unprovoked terror are often innocent. Although Arendt focused on two forms of genuine totalitarian governments in our time – Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia – I apply her theoretical constructs to U.S. foreign policy after 9/11. The evidence gleaned from my research support Žižek and Arendt’s ideas which largely explain the basis for the U.S.’ violent behavior.

**Chapter Overview**

Chapter One serves as a general introduction and Chapter Four provides a summary of the findings. Chapter Two sketches out the dark history of modern U.S. counterinsurgency tactics and strategies with its initial lessons learned from the French counterrevolutionary
experience in Algeria, to Vietnam, to U.S. support of Dirty Wars in the Americas. I pay special attention to Algeria, Guatemala, Vietnam, Argentina, and Chile. The fact that I do not embark on other countries do not imply that U.S. involvement in the atrocities are confined to the latter. Quite on the contrary, a host of countries were testing grounds of U.S. Yet, due to the scope of study I restrict myself to cite these in passing. My ultimate point is that Dirty Wars, death squads, covert operations, and political “disappearances,” which enjoyed a sudden revival after 9/11, were first field tested by the U.S. on foreign soil decades earlier.

Chapter Three uncovers U.S. role in disappearances, illegal imprisonment, and assassinations after 9/11. The global CIA abduction program is at the center of my research interests. The chapter is categorized into three sections where one counterterror policy violently exceeds the other. I then turn to the Conclusion where I briefly introduce the chilling consequences of the “War on Terror” and how it is currently being used as a pretext to crack down on all sorts of dissent.
CHAPTER TWO

WARRANTED VIOLENCE: THE GENEALOGY OF U.S. COUNTERINSURGENCY TACTICS

“They have one fundamental principle for this type of war which we also perhaps used: one can only fight terror by instilling a greater terror in the enemy....and here we probably had to embark on that uncommon course that hurt and disgusted us all” – Argentine Brigadier Carlos Echeverria Martinez on the Argentine junta’s adoption of “Dirty Tactics” (Robben, 2007, p. 278).

Introduction

On May 8, 2002, American citizen José Padilla was seized by U.S Marshalls as he entered O’Hare International Airport in Chicago. The arrest was based on charges that allegedly linked him to a planned Al-Qaeda terrorist plot to detonate a radiological dirty bomb on U.S. soil (Alvarez, 2011). After being held for four weeks as a material witness, a memorandum from the U.S. Department of Justice gave President George W. Bush, through Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, full authority to classify Padilla an “unlawful enemy combatant” (The U.S. Department of Justice, 2002, p. 1). In direct violation of the U.S. Constitution and the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act, which specifically prohibits U.S. military personnel from enforcing the law against American citizens, Padilla was stripped of all rights and taken into military custody (Uygur, 2005). For 1307 days Padilla was held in isolation and denied contact with his family, an attorney, courts, and legal counsel (Klein, 2007, para 2). He was locked up in a black hole, secluded from the world in a grimy-9ft by 7ft cell without a wristwatch, and consequently completely deprived him of a sense of time. A video released by defense lawyers acting on behalf of Padilla shows masked guards in camouflage and riot gear forcibly shackling Padilla’s hands and legs, strapping his head with black-out goggles, and shutting off his hearing with
noise-blocking earphones (Bridgeman, Freiman & Metcalf, 2008). Padilla’s extreme incarceration was reinforced with a complete absence of human contact (Monbiot, 2006). Long periods of isolation were punctured by allegedly subjecting Padilla to prolonged sleep deprivation, shackling, stress positions, bombardment with bright lights and eardrum shattering sounds for extended period of times, temperature extremes, and with guards shouting death threats and administering beatings (Klein, 2007). There is also evidence to suggest that Padilla was - without consent - drugged with the dangerous hallucinogenic medication LSD and so-called “truth serum” PCP (Anderson, 2011, para 14). Padilla’s incarceration, argues Angela Hegarty, was so brutal that medical examinations reveal that he was left mentally impaired. In an interview with Amy Goodman for Democracy Now! Hegarty states that [Padilla’s] “personality was deconstructed and reformed,” a systematic “destruction of a human being’s mind” (José Padilla’s attorney calls guilty verdict “huge Tragedy,” 2007, para 4). Padilla’s brutal abuse during his illegal imprisonment left him so traumatized and physiologically shattered that according to his lawyers and two mental health specialists, it hindered his ability to assist in his own defense (Sontag, 2006). Despite abuses suffered by José Padilla, his lawsuit for illegal detention and torture was dismissed by a Federal Court on the grounds that he had no right to sue for “Constitutional violations” (Suit in terror case is thrown out, 2011, para 3). On January 22, 2008, José Padilla was sentenced to seventeen years and four months in prison for conspiracy charges with no evidence linking him to “specific acts of terrorism” (José Padilla, 2011, para 6).

José Padilla’s case only begins the critical analysis of the issues that must be explored to better understand the U.S. “War on Terror.” In fact, Padilla’s incarceration is only a small sample of the abuses committed by the U.S. after 9/11. Released U.S. military documents show that Padilla’s treatment is not an anomaly. José Padilla’s extreme incarceration is in reality only...
one in thousands of similar incidents that details terrorist suspects’ terrifying face-to-face encounter with U.S. authorities. Multiple sources show that some suspects have simply “disappeared.” According to released autopsies and death reports over two dozen foreign citizens have been tortured to death. Thousands of others, documents suggest, have been snatched off the street in broad daylight, transported around the world, and handed over to third party jurisdictions in countries known to practice torture. American foreign prisons such as Abu Ghraib or other off-shore black prison sites controlled by U.S. allies, holds terrorist suspects, euphemistically “rendered,” a word used to make palatable the kidnappings practiced by the U.S., where captives are dumped and tortured in hellholes. Those who manage to escape spend the rest of their days trying to mend their shattered lives.

The U.S. did not invent the process of illegal detentions in the contemporary era, rather the practices developed during a long history of using terror as a tool to silence alleged enemies. I argue that there exist a close link between U.S. counterinsurgency tactics and contemporary U.S. counterterrorism tactics, indeed, the two are so tightly and inextricably linked that it becomes nearly impossible to conduct a separate analysis. Departing from this argument the case of José Padilla illustrates that far from a creation of exigent circumstances, illegal imprisonment and torture are part and parcel of well-established methods of social control developed during the long and brutal history of U.S. counterinsurgency strategies in its Cold War endeavors. U.S. policies, however, did not develop autonomously or in a vacuum free from outside influences. Counterinsurgency tactics grew from attempts by European nations to maintain power of their colonial holdings. Thus, to understand U.S. tactics, it’s imperative to first analyze one of its most lasting influences, the French experience in its colonial wars.
Roots of U.S. Counterterrorism Tactics: The French Connection

The insurgency and the counterinsurgency war between Algerian nationalists and French authorities, which culminated in agreement providing for a cease fire and ultimately Algerian independence in 1962 is a violent era that began with a series of armed terrorist assaults on the night of November 1, 1954. The insurrection spread throughout Algeria in the form of an armed resistance movement calling for the “restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic and social within the framework and principles of Islam” (Behr, 1962). The revolutionary movement, Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), carried out a number of attacks and bombings, where civilian were blown to pieces in cafes and restaurants and police officers shot at point blank range. French authorities, refusing to give up its colony, nor acknowledge a state of war, referred to an - “insurrection,” - “rebellion,” - “terrorism” - or acts of - “outlaws” - responded with radical measures to crush the resistance. The crackdown on the FLN commonly perceived in French military circles as a “just war” had no constraints on the application of force. It was a so-called” new war” that demanded a new military doctrine. As one of the first conflicts in this “new war” the battle of Algiers has consequently aided as a textbook model for the fight against “Communist” subversion and “terrorism” in subsequent conflicts (Branche, 2007).

In the waning months of 1957 the capital of Algeria ran red with the blood of innocent victims of terror bombings, political assassinations, and indiscriminate murders. Violence escalated on both sides and the colonial authorities proved incapable of protecting civilians from the terror. Indeed, the French Algeria government failed to protect the safety of Europeans and Muslims alike. By mid-December 1958 the violence had reached crisis proportions. Fear in the European quarters dominated the streets. European vigilantes took revenge for FLN terrorism against innocent Muslims. Civil authority verged on total collapse. The French Minister of
Interior declared a state of emergency, and through local authorities, granted the military command to use extraordinary measures to end the reign of terror by ordering the French army to fight the counterterrorist battle for Algeria.

In direct violation of article II in the Geneva Conventions, which France had ratified in 1951, the French Algeria government suspended its binding commitment to international law. This unshackled the French military from ethical conduct and moral obligations and permitted the troops to use extreme measures to end the resistance. Greatly informed about their former experience as fighters for the French resistance movement against Nazi Germany and later in Viet Minh Indochina, France’s last major exercise in counterinsurgency warfare, General Jacques Émile Massu, the Commander of the French armed forces in Algeria, and General Paul Assuresses, former Director of the French Secret Service, adapted themselves in equal measure to the terrorist methods initiated by the FLN. The tactics entailed pulverizing suspected FLN strongholds, abductions, extreme psychological and physical torture, and summary executions. The combination of these tactics is well documented as standard counterinsurgency tactics by Colonel Trinquier’s 1961 *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (2005), a famous reference for military theorists of counterrevolutionary and psychological warfare alike.

The architects of France’s brutal counterinsurgency campaign unapologetically defend what they perceive as successful tactics. General Aussaresess’s recent memoir *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-terrorism in Algeria 1955-1957* (2006) argues that torture and murder were an integral part of France’s war policy. Aussaresess asserts the efficacy of summary executions, which circumvented the backlogged legal system, torture to gather speedy and life altering intelligence, and that three thousand prisoners considered to have disappeared in reality was executed. Indeed, he boasts that the methods that were employed were not covered by the
Geneva protocols, that “he had given his subordinates orders to kill and had personally liquidated 24 FLN members, telling Le Monde, ‘I do not regret it’” (Arens & Thull, 2001, para 2). Despite an attempt by a French court to try Aussaresses for his crimes, the French statute of limitations on war crimes had already elapsed (Shatz, 2001). As punishments for his human rights violations he was only stripped for his rank and heavily fined (French veteran fined for-excusing torture, 2002).

Torture was not only massively employed, but also ordered by the French government. The evidence is not only corroborated by Aussaresses. The revelation followed testimony from a brutalized left-wing political activist and journalist, Henri Alleg, described in his autobiography The Question (1958). Alleg testified that over the course of three months he was water tortured with a wet napkin (waterboarding), a form of torture that causes a terrifying sensation of drowning (Mayer, 2008), continually jolted with electric circuits (la gégène, human powered electric generators) and as with José Padilla brutally beaten, threatened with death, and injected with “truth serum” and other medical ministrations by prison doctors. Others suffered their own horrendous treatment. One traumatized young man claimed the French army tore his testicles (Lazreg, 2007) and a woman who endured outright sexual abuse wrote about being raped and left to die in a “pool of excrement and blood” (General Marcel Bigeard, 2010, para 7). In one prison alone it is estimated that sixty to one hundred rapes occurred, with gang rapes the most common (Rejali, 2007, p. 486). Yet, unopened files most likely contain testimony of thousands of additional torture victims in which many did not make it out alive. Estimates from Rejali’s study suggests that “3,024” people officially “disappeared” were killed in prison or under torture (2009, p. 482).
Was torture necessary for victory on the battleground? Absolutely, according to Edward Behr, the author of *The Algerian Problem* (1962, p. 256), who perhaps correctly asserts that it had a decisive role in the battle; however, the value of torture was of intimidation, not that of speedy intelligence purposes. In retrospect, torture in Algeria did not occur because lives were in danger. Contrary to Aussaresses’s claims that torture helped save lives, numerous studies suggests that as a means of extracting information torture is notoriously unreliable, yet, as means of “terrorizing and controlling populations, nothing is quite as effective” (Klein, 2008, p. 156). In Algeria, beyond a vast network of French working informants, torture was used because it facilitated control of the civil population. It was an effective tool to intimidate and frighten people into silence. In many instances, Rejali suggests, torture transformed detained captives into cowed, miserable, and dependent individuals. The terror generated a general feeling of profound fear. Above all, it demonstrated “who wielded power” (2009, p. 487).

The counterinsurgency violence and bloodshed unleashed in the narrow streets and alleyways of the Casbah did not end with France’s domination of Algeria. Far from it, the French model echoes some of the most gruesome counterterror policies employed by other states to terrorize their citizens. Indeed, Aussaresses notes that the French tactics particularly aroused the interest of the Argentine military junta. According to *Escadrons de la mort: L’école Française* (2003) by Marie Marie-Monique Robin Argentine military cadets were shown Gillo Pontecorvo’s award winning film *The Battle of Algiers* (1966). Long before the showing of Pontecorvo’s film, however, Argentine Colonel Carlos Jorge Rosas allegedly introduced the French example to Argentina. Two French officers, Lieutenant Colonel’s Patricio de Naurois and Francois Pierre Badie, who were both connected to the French hit squads in Algeria, provided the Argentine military with instructional advice (Robben, 2007).
Aside from inspiring the Argentine military dictatorship, French counterinsurgency theorist Trinquier’s work appears to have influenced planners in the U.S. Under the cover of the heightened Communist threat, the United States trained Latin American officers and police in general counterinsurgency tactics at various institutions inside the U.S (Robben, 2007). Yet, the French-inspired crusade did not prevail. It had to be altered due to its “defeatist” undertone (Robben, 2007, p. 182). The French setback in Algeria and the devastating blow suffered by the U.S in Vietnam were based on unsuccessful military operations deployed on foreign soil. As a consequence, the Argentine military decided to design their own dreadful doctrine, one of the most ruthless repression crusades the world has ever seen. Once its military strategists had designed its ideological framework, U.S. helped Argentine graduates returned home with an altered French/American counterinsurgency combo (Robben, 2007).

The “witch-hunt” against the left-wing opposition in Argentina unleashed brutal terror on the nation’s population. With passive support of the U.S (Memorandum of conversation, 1977, p .13) the junta that took power in 1976, acted with impunity. Not until decades later did justice finally move against those who brazenly used terror against their own people. A landmark ruling passed down by a Federal court in Buenos Aires in 2005 convicted Rafael Jorge Videla, one of the architects behind the Dirty War, and seventeen additional former military officers under his command for arbitrary detention, torture, and unlawful murder of alleged “Marxists, left-wing activists, journalists, and trade unionists” from 1976-1982 (Argentina to sentence ex-leader, 2010, para 3). Seventeen of the tried received life sentence, four received twenty-five years and one was pardoned. Human rights groups says that the violence undertaken by the military tortured, killed, and “disappeared” over thirty thousand passively involved but unarmed civilian “dissidents” including women and children. According to Robben’s (2007) estimate,
nearly 250 young boys and girls between the age of thirteen and eighteen “disappeared” (p. 225). Over five hundred babies, notes Barrionuevo (2011, para 8), were stolen from detained parents and raised in military families. Over three thousands sedated captives according to forensic anthropologists were dumped from aircrafts at sea (p. 269). Of the “disappeared”, 62% were snatched from their homes in early morning raids (p. 209). Of the thousands that did not meet their fate in the death flights “vanished” into the many concentration camps where they were machine-gunned and dumped while gagged and blindfolded in mass graves (p. 237).

The intensified Argentine counterinsurgency offensive theorized by French military strategists in Indo-China and the Casbah continued to spread wherever states sought to cow their populations through the use of fear as a tool of social domination. Pontecorvo’s film The Battle of Algiers, intended as a warning against France’s brutal tactics, became a favorite didactic tool to spread the very strategies that Pontecorvo criticized. Until the late 1960s, Pontecorvo’s film was required viewing in the American military (Kaufman, 2003). After 2001, the U.S. military once again began showing the film. The screenings were met with harsh criticism. The critique, however, did not stop the U.S. armed forces to reuse it as a tool, which is why a similar counterinsurgency strategy was applied in Afghanistan and Iraq. My investigation illustrates that, as with France in Algeria, renditions, secret arrests, torture, and assassination squads are tactics that shaped U.S. efforts, although not successfully, to quash the rural insurgency.

Four star U.S. Army General David Petraeus, the former commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the recently resigned Director of the CIA, has strongly endorsed French combat veteran David Gaula’s ideas (Marlowe, 2010). Galula served as a former Captain in Algeria and developed strategies based on his experiences for the French military in North Africa. He later attended graduate school in the U.S. and conducted an in-depth study about
counterinsurgency warfare for the RAND Corporation. His ideas, written several decades ago, became undeniably relevant for the U.S. in Iraq and aided as the basis for the “new” U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine. The model inspired by Galula’s heirs, Lieutenant Colonel David John KilCullen and General Stanley McChrystal, previous counterterror official for the second Bush administration, have attracted a range of critics with its “renewed attention” to the French counterrevolutionary model. Their strategy has embraced the concept of merging “crackdown with seduction,” a marriage of tactics ignored in Algeria (From Galula to Petraeus, n.d., p. 8.) The tactical essence, writes Galula (1964), is centered on a more “human terrain.”

Despite Petraeus’s implementation of a softer variant of the French example, there is ample evidence to suggest that the U.S.’ efforts to end the resistance in the Middle East failed. The Bush administration, consumed with countless crises, devoted little time to prepare for such consequences. Although Bush’s hardline has been slightly altered by the succeeding administration, French tactics in its former colonies has been instrumental in influencing U.S. strategies after 9/11.

The Latin American Laboratory

In addition to French influence on its counterinsurgency strategies, the United States developed its own methods through illegal interventions in Latin America. In June 1954, the U.S. ousted Jacobo Árbenz Guzman, the constitutionally and popularly elected President of Guatemala (CIA’s role in overthrowing Arbenz, 1975). In turn, the U.S. installed a murderous terrorist state. The U.S. maintenance of the Guatemalan police state blocked democratic elections, oppressed, and massacred. The atrocities reached its peak in the first of many scorched earth campaigns between 1966-and 1967 (Higonnet, 2009, p. 7) reaching a death toll of 200,000
in the following three decades (Grandin, 2005, p. 74). To this day the U.S. experiment in Guatemala remains in history archives as one of the most lethal in the world.

The U.S. policies conducive to private investment, foreign capital in particular, to repatriate a reasonable return to U.S. investors had little appeal to Guatemala’s rural poor and to the country’s indigenous populations. As recognized, the opposition, fragmented, but growing in cohesion and strength, forced the U.S. to call for an apparatus to “discipline” the threat. Under the cover of Cold War ideologies with appeals to anticommunism the United States pushed for a continent-wide counterinsurgency program that sought to install violent tactics of state repression. Central to the process was U.S. aid of arms, vehicles, communications equipment, and most importantly, training (Schirmer, 1998). In the late 1950s the first wave of U.S. advisors was sent to train local security forces in Guatemala. Among them was U.S. Public Safety Advisor John P. Longan.

Declassified U.S. Latin American documents released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by the administration of President Bill Clinton in the 1990s detail how in 1966 Longan reported in assisting Guatemalan authorities with overt and covert tactics and methods, to counter “terrorists, kidnapping and extortion tactics” (United States Agency for International Development, 1966, p.1). Overtly, the details of the plan entailed sealing areas for police raids, and setting up permanent and “surprise roadblocks” to force alleged Communist out of “hiding into police hands” (p. 1). On the covert side, Longan immediately pressed for a - ”safe house” - (to) be immediately set up” (p. 1), an undercover nerve-center tasked with gathering intelligence inside the presidential palace in downtown Guatemala City. The information would then be deployed to organize more concentrated raids which in turn would provide more intelligence to be used for “larger dragnets” (Grandin, 2005, p. 97). Parry (2011) argues that Longan’s
brainchild within the presidential compound became the starting point for the notorious “Archivos” intelligence component that evolved into a clearinghouse for the Guatemalan government’s rampant political assassinations.

Shortly after Logan filed his report the revamped apparatus was put to a lethal test. Within three months in 1966 the squad, acting under the code name Operación Limpieza (Operation Cleanup), the precise same codename used to take on the left-wing insurgency in Brazil, executed over eighty raids and committed several extrajudicial assassinations, including a joint effort by the national, judiciary, and military security forces which during four days in March abducted, tortured, and executed thirty so-called left-wing insurgents (Defense Intelligence Agency, 1971). The military used U.S. helicopters to dump their bodies into the Pacific Ocean while the government “denied any knowledge of their whereabouts” (Grandin, 2005, p. 73). Some of “their remains” notes Higonet, “washed back to the shore” (2009, p. 6).

Among those killed in March 1966 were Victor Manuel Gutiérrez and Leonardo Castillo Flores, the respective leaders of Guatemala’s labor and peasant federation during Árbenz’ tenure (Cullather, 2006). In reality, the alleged insurgents were in fact political organizers and other leaders who dared contest the power of the puppet state established after Árbenz’ overthrow. Despite the numerous pleas and over five-hundred writs of Habeas Corpus from relatives of those abducted in 1966, the U.S. Embassy remained silent (Grandin, 2005, p. 74). Limpieza, asserts a declassified U.S. cable, consequently resulted in the first “successful” incident of forced mass disappearances in Guatemala’s history, carried out by a unit created and directly supervised by American security advisors (Central Intelligence Agency, 1966). It was in Guatemala “the oft stated U.S. goal of effective use of intelligence and coordinated operations between police and military and between the countryside and the city became a dark reality (Grandin, 2005, p. 74).
Throughout the 1960’s, explains Grandin, Guatemala and Southeast Asia functioned as the two main laboratories for U.S. counterinsurgency planners. American officials moved back and forth between regions “applying insights” and refining tactics (2006, p. 97). John Longan, Grandin continues, “hopscotched“ to other Cold War trouble spots. On temporary loan from his post in Venezuela, Longan traveled from Guatemala to Brazil to Thailand to the Dominican Republic before he once again returned to Guatemala where he was tasked with teaching the local paramilitary forces the essential tenets of counterinsurgency tactics. U.S. Army Lieutenant General William Yarborough for example, expanded the Green Beret’s specialty from rural anti-guerilla to urban counterinsurgency warfare (Bernstein, 2005). The Green Berets headed by Yaraborough, suggests Rempe (2007), pioneered U.S. assistance for death squads in Latin American by advising the Colombian government to establish a unit trained to conduct acts of sabotage and terrorism against alleged Communist militants. Later, Yaraborough and the Green Berets advanced to Vietnam where many of the same tactics became a standard counterinsurgency practice against the Viet Cong.’

By the late 1960s, death squad killings were a common feature in the arsenal of U.S. counterinsurgency strategies. It was also within this context that such “artifacts of counterinsurgency war as semi-official death squads (based in security forces) and ‘disappearances’ of civilian opposition were introduced to Latin America” (Walker & Armony, 2001, p. 7). It bolstered an intelligence system that professionalized the anti-Communist army into a modern, disciplined, and ruthless counterinsurgency force. The grim reality of indiscriminate counterinsurgency slaughter and repression as part of the government’s effort to pacify the enemy were soon harnessed and consolidated into the infamous Phoenix Program in Vietnam.
Justifying Murder: The Phoenix Program in Vietnam

While the death squads continued to rape, kidnap, and maim “Communists” in rural Guatemala the United States was already deeply enmeshed in Vietnam’s internal affairs. Developed in late 1967, the CIA conceived the infamous Phoenix Program, a covert anti-Communist assassination program that used existing counterinsurgency measures in a concentrated effort to eliminate the revolutionary Viet Cong’s infrastructure (VC). The Phoenix Program, Phung Hoang as it was called in Vietnamese, was initially designed for intelligence gathering but instead it evolved into a cloak of vast targeted abductions, assassinations, and “disappearances” (Valentine, 1990). Distinct to the Phoenix Program was the routinization of targeted blows. Both American and Vietnamese action squads executed raids on vast intelligence information, performing “snatch and grab” operations or selective killings (Rejali, 2007, p. 470). After midnight, U.S. Green Berets, Navy Seals, and South Vietnamese Special Forces soldiers typically sneaked into the enemy’s home and struck a deadly stab to the sleeping victim. Instead of winning heart of minds, the U.S. used the threat of assassination to defeat the enemy. The Phoenix Program was therefore a highly intensive psychological counterinsurgency tactic where the entire population was terrorized into a state of submission.

Similar to France in Algeria, which abandoned their binding commitment to international, law Phoenix operators in Vietnam suspended due process. Anyone’s name that appeared on computerized blacklists faced the risk of assassination, “disappearance,” and torture. Phoenix called for a staggering quota of monthly assassinations. Faulty intelligence therefore led to the killing, death, and imprisonment of innocent civilians. Thousands of Viet Cong suspects’ disappeared into secret detention centers and were never heard from again. Many of the “disappeared” were summarily executed. Thousands of alleged “Communists” were killed in
their homes along with their families or in front of their neighbors. Others were swiftly executed after being snatched out of hiding. Assassination squads deposited the severed heads of beheaded victims in villages, and more commonly their ears and eyeballs were nailed to walls for fellow villagers to see. Grandin (2006, p. 97) claims the technique was called “phrasing the threat” and its use started roughly at the same time in Guatemala “where it took the form of a ‘white hand’ left on the body of the victim or the door of a potential victim” Still, Phoenix counterinsurgency tactics echoed exhortation tactics prevalently employed by the Viet Cong. It was a war where both sides targeted civilians and otherwise used brutal tactics as means to an end. According to a study by counterinsurgency expert General Edward Lansdale (as cited in Tovy, 2009) the local population consequently had no other choice than to support the Viet Cong because of their terror tactics. With similar tactics countered by Phoenix operators, the civilian Vietnamese population was trapped in the crosshair of terror. Struck by fear, this passionate violent fight got caught up in Žižek’s accurate description of violence, a vicious cycle where each side helps generate the very opposite it tries to combat.

The endless killings plaguing Vietnam eventually aroused the interest of the U.S. Senate. Former CIA Director, William Colby, one of the architects behind the Phoenix Program, testified before the Senate Church Committee in 1970 that Phoenix operations killed 6,187, captured 8,515, and rallied 4,832 (1970, p. 318), figures that stand in strong contrast to the staggering 40,000 killed reported by the South Vietnamese government (Thomas, 2007, p. 55). While Phoenix hit squad killings according to Colby were roughly 6,000, unconfirmed rumors alleges the Viet Cong assassinated 36,000 thousand with over 55,000 thousand abducted. The Senate condemned the operations. Yet, the insidious Phoenix activities continued until the U.S. pulled out of Saigon in 1975.
As the war dragged on and the death toll in Vietnam mounted more and more Americans turned against the war. Images of the killings dominated the news broadcasts and domestic newspapers. *Gallup* polls from the early 1970s show soaring U.S. public discontent that with time continued to rise (Newport & Carroll, 2005). Despite mounting evidence of U.S. atrocities, Washington continued to boast that it forays into Vietnam was to spread freedom and democracy (Allen, 2008). Although the war in and of itself requires a more in-depth analysis, there is, however, little evidence to suggest that the U.S. had more to offer than guns and bombs. President Lyndon Johnson’s remark to Eugene McCarthy in February 1966 “I just can’t be the architect of surrender” broadly encapsulates this view (Coleman & Selverstone, n.d., para 35).

The Phoenix Program in Vietnam stands as one of the most important strategies used against alleged enemies of U.S. policies. Yet, the bitter backdraft generated by defeat in Vietnam did not repress U.S. impulses that propelled its interventions in the first place. After withdrawing its forces from Vietnam, the U.S. looked elsewhere to expand its influence. Nowhere, writes Valentine, “is this more evident than in El Salvador” (1990, p. 422). In El-Salvador, the CIA recycled many of the same CIA officers who had run the war in Vietnam. Unlike Vietnam, however, where they could act unchecked, in El-Salvador Phoenix veterans had to implement their policies through allied proxies taught by Israeli and Taiwanese intelligence agents due to vast reduction in aid ordered by the administration of President Jimmy Carter (Klein, 2008). Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter’s successor, had no such compunctions against supporting barbaric regimes as long as they served U.S. interests. The ghost of Vietnam haunted the popular imagination during Reagan’s terms. “El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam” read a bumper sticker spread by opponents of Reagan’s policies in Latin America (Grandin, 2006, p. 100). Military strategists did not disagree. Vietnam, notwithstanding its catastrophic outcome, provided proven
counterinsurgency techniques that could be used elsewhere. While Washington attempted to conceal its involvement, practicing Galula’s - “plausible deniability,” - the CIA linked death squads in El-Salvador, much like in Southeast Asia and Guatemala, left “horrendously mutilated corpses, sometimes decapitated” in full public view (Gibb, 2011, para 18). Entirely consistent with well-established counterinsurgency tactics designed to keep people in a state of anxiety and fear, the policy efficiently succeeded in preventing the opposition from increasing its civilian support.

Satisfied with the results of violent intervention, U.S. policy makers transported and implemented similar programs of terror to other Latin American countries. Indeed, some authors suggest that the same U.S. officials responsible for the bloody reign in Vietnam and El-Salvador played a major role in organizing the violent ousting of Chile’s democratically elected President, Salvador Allende, on September 11, 1973.

**Crackdown in Chile**

The U.S. overthrow of socialist-leaning democratically elected Allende, twenty-eight years before the anniversary of the terrorist plot on 9/11, was yet another watershed event in U.S. strategic thinking. After months of rising tension the Chilean military bombed the La Moneda Palace and army troops stormed the Presidential compound. Allende was killed and thousands others were left dead. Rightwing Chilean Army General and U.S. puppet, Augusto Pinochet, took power.

The election of Allende sent shockwaves across Washington. In fear of the financial impact on the bottom line of U.S. corporations the Administration of President Richard Nixon ordered a sweeping destabilization campaign plotted to make the Chilean economy
“scream” (Central Intelligence Agency, 1970). Once Allende’s dream of a socialist state was neutralized, Washington installed a junta that declared martial law, turned the national soccer stadium in the capital Santiago into a “vast execution hall,” and sealed off the entire country from outside observers including the Red Cross (Palermo, 2006, para 3). The military dictatorship of Pinochet was ultimately responsible for the killing, “disappearance,” and suicide of more than three thousand people (Chile remembers its 9/11, 2011, para 1).

Although Augusto Pinochet was not a graduate from the U.S. Pentagon S-O-A, one out seven command staff from his deadly police, Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA), were (Notorious graduates from Chile, 2009, para 2). The U.S. was not the only post-colonial nation responsible for bolstering DINA. Similar to their influence on the Argentine and U.S. military strategists, there is circumstantial evidence that connects the French with Chilean hit squad operatives as well. According to James D. Le Sueur the French counterintelligence agency, Direction du surveillance du territoire (DST), directly helped DINA with planning and executing Operation Condor (2006, para 10). While there are minor fragments of evidence that suggests additional French involvement, their participation in Condor ends there.

France involvement aside, the scale of the atrocity under Operation Condor soon became apparent. In 1992, five tons of abandoned reports and photos detailing the arrest, torture, and disappearance of political prisoners during General Alfredo Stroessner’s 35-year dictatorial rule in Paraguay were discovered (Centro de documentación y archivo, n.d.). The Paraguayan’s dubbed the files the “Archives of Terror.” A substantial amount of the documents unmasks the terror carried out under Operation Condor.

Operation Condor was founded in secret, a six country alliance charged with eliminating left-wing political dissent. Condor “specialized” in targeted abductions, disappearances, torture,
and transfers of person across country border. The operation’s key members were Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay (Dinges, 2004). To snuff out any opposition to the status quo, operatives had to work across country borders. A joint intelligence center was established by DINA in Santiago. As a result many enemies who had fled the country found themselves hunted down in exile. Transnational Latin American action squads hunted “dissidents” across the Americas, Europe, and even the United States (Robin, 2003). The operation was particularly known for its devastating plots on political leaders.

In September 1973, former Ambassador to the U.S. under Allende Orlando Letelier and his American colleague twenty-six year journalist old Ronni Moffitt were killed by a car bomb in downtown D.C. Evidence obtained by John Dinge’s *Condor Years* (2004) shows that the plot was linked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to a six country alliance organized out by Chilean operatives. According to McSherry (2002, p. 39) Operation Condor also killed the Chilean Vice President under Allende Carlos Prats in Buenos Aires, the former President of Bolivia Juan Jose Torres, also in Buenos Aires, and the Chilean Christian Democrat leader Bernardo Leighton in Rome. Given U.S. role in augmenting Latin American military and intelligence agencies, recently declassified documents adds weight to the notion that the U.S. secretly condoned, assisted, and encouraged Condor operations. Either way, Operation Condor remains as a carefully crafted anti-Communist crusade, a transnational system of state terror. It marks a dreadful chapter in the U.S. Latin America counterinsurgency history.

“coercive” (euphemism for torture) “techniques” with particular emphasis on employing effective and efficient ”Arrests” (p. 88), “Detention” (p 89), “Stimuli deprivation” (p. 90), “Threats and fear” (p. 93), “Debility” (p. 95), and “Pain” (p. 96). Blanton and Kornbluh (2004, para 5) from the National Security Archive suggest that related material were integrated into several Spanish language training guides. In addition to their use at S-O-A between 1987 and 1991, a trove of copies were “distributed for use” in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru (2004, para 5). After 9/11, the very same methods aided as a “blueprint” on illegal “enemy combatants” in the “War on Terror.”
CHAPTER 3

“THE WAR ON TERROR”

“The power of the Executive to cast a man into prison without formulating any charge known to the law, and particularly to deny him the judgment of his peers, is in the highest degree odious and is the foundation of all totalitarian government whether Nazi or Communist.” - Winston Churchill.

Introduction

“That wasn’t American Union leader Eugene Debs speaking that was Winston Churchill.” John Cusack says in his Truthout telephone interview with Law Professor Jonathan Turley (2012, para 37). The interview basically summarizes the shared concern on executive privilege. “In a sense”, continues Cusack describing President Obama’s policies “he’s actually expanded the power of the executive branch.” ”That is exactly right” replies Turley, “President Obama has not only maintained the position of George W. Bush, he’s actually “expanded” on them.

Cusack’s exchange with Turley accurately captures the current state of U.S. policies. I argue that the very policies alleged to safeguard civil liberties instead assaults them.

The modern state has unilaterally arrogated itself as the ultimate protector, it has insisted on the role of an overprotecting nanny. The U.S role as an all protective force is an illusion, however. Americans have lost faith. They have rejected the state writes David Graeber in Fragments of Anarchist Anthropology (2004). It is not without reason. Since the tragedy of 9/11, the U.S. government has notably, - engaged - in an unprecedented public spectacle. Since Bush set foot in the White House in January 2001 the U.S. has massively expanded the CIA’s
counterterror practices. Enforced disappearances, illegal imprisonment, murder, each more scandalous than the other, has become official U.S. policy. According to U.S. officials all of their actions are perfectly legal.

This chapter illuminates illegal U.S. actions and their relationship to the unchecked power of the state. Using terror to fight terror, which in essence is what the U.S. policies amount to, often achieves nothing but human suffering. In Argentina, where the military dictatorships also employed terror to combat alleged acts of terror, the survivors were too traumatized to speak out. They were haunted by terror and fear (Robben, 2007). If they spoke, they risked being thrown back into the torture chamber. Victims of U.S. torture practices share the same fate. History has repeated itself. “But it can’t happen here…not in America.” But it is happening. It happened to José Padilla, James Yee, and Anwar al Awlaki. They all paid the ultimate price and suffered different forms of state imposed terror. They were not simply Muslims, they were U.S. citizens. The three represent examples of what Slavoj Žižek’s identifies as ideological and systemic violence, violence that has come to characterize U.S. policies. By categorizing the ways U.S. fights terror into a stratified hierarchy of events I start off with the dreaded disappearances. I subsequently move on to illegal imprisonment, and ultimately, Obama’s mechanized extrajudicial assassinations.

“Disappearances”

“Dan, a generic description of the process” reads the cover sheet of a secret fax sent to the acting head of the Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel, Dan Devin (2004). The fax, that intentionally has the name of the sender, a CIA employee, redacted to protect his identity, represent a step-by-step manual on “extraordinary renditions,” “the sending of terrorist suspects
to prisons of other countries that torture” (McCoy, 2012 para 2). The fax looks like an otherwise quotidian document if not for the horrific process that it methodically outlines.

The process commences with a sudden “capture shock” (p. 2). The detainee is subsequently thrown into a waiting van, beaten, rushed to an airport, medically examined, boarded on a gulf streamer “securely shackled, “deprived of sight and sound through the use of “blindfolds, earmuffs, and hoods” (p. 3). The detainee is flown to a “Black Site” (p. 4). On arrival he is “stripped naked,” “shaved,” and photographed (p. 5).

According to Scott Hurton at the Huffington Post (2009, para 5) these practices are carefully planned to expedite the interrogation process. “Nudity, sleep deprivation, and dietary manipulation” are used as standard preliminary steps. The secret document then details the standard “corrective” interrogation techniques (p. 7). They are a series of physical assaults labeled with innocent titles such as “insult slap”, “abdominal slap,” “facial hold” and “attention grasp” (p. 8). “Coercive” techniques include “wallowing, “water dousing,” stress positions,” “wall standing,” and “cramped confinement” (p. 9). Because of substantial redactions to the document, it is likely the list of brutalities is incomplete. The purpose of the process is supposedly to force the detainee to provide timely intelligence that allows the U.S. to intercept imminent terrorist plots.

This revelatory information was initially justified by the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC). The techniques are more than controversial. It is illegal. The report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) describes the process of “extraordinary rendition” with the appropriate legal term “torture.” The totality of circumstances, says the damning report, is a rather classic example of “enforced disappearances.” A press release by the European Parliament of CIA Activities in Europe (2007, para 9) reveals that “at least 1,245” flights operated by the
CIA flew into European airspace or stopped over at European airports between 2001 and 2005. Although the report emphasizes, not all flights were used for “extraordinary rendition,” the Parliament concluded that a majority of the cases investigated involved ruthless human rights violations. A series of private U.S. front companies and aviation contractors tied to the CIA rendition flights are still at risk of being shut down or investigated.

In early November 2005 the dirty secrets of the CIA detention centers were exposed by Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Washington Post and ABC News. HRW shed particular light on possible clandestine prisons in Poland and Romania. Two years later the existence of the prisons was confirmed. “Today’s report confirms that Poland and Romania helped the CIA operate illegal detention sites on their territory in violation of international law,” said Joanne Mariner, Terrorism and Counterterrorism Director at HRW. It is evident, continued Mariner, that “U.S. officials illegally conspired with intelligence officials in several European countries to ‘disappear,’ interrogate and illegally transfer terrorism suspects, flouting basic human rights norms” (Council of Europe: Secret CIA prisons confirmed, 2007, para 4).

In spite of HRW’s exposure many terror suspects snatched by the CIA remain missing. A week before HRW lifted the lid on the agency’s black sites in Europe the organization produced an extensive list of foreign nationals whose fate and whereabouts remains unknown (Off the record: U.S. responsibility for enforced disappearances in the “war on terror,” 2007). According to research by Amnesty International, Cageprisoners, The Center for Constitutional Rights, The Center for Human Rights, Global Justice at NYU School of Law; HRW, and Reprieve at least thirty-nine detainees have disappeared. Five years after the human rights groups issued the details on their findings the U.S. government closed two homicide investigations against the CIA for torturing Gul Rahman and Manadel al-Jamadi to death in 2002 and 2003 respectively (U.S
acquits CIA of killing and torturing of prisoners, 2012, para 5). Rahman reportedly froze to death after being tied to wall in “near freezing temperatures” while Jamadi apparently died as a result of compromised respiration and brute force trauma from head to torso (Mayer, 2004). In 2011, President Barack Obama announced he would shut down an additional 99 investigations into the death of foreign nationals in U.S. custody (Gamage, 2012, para 5).

The death of suspected terrorist suspects in U.S. custody aside, others made it out alive. The enforced disappearances of Khaled El-Masri, Abu Omar, Maher Arar, Binyam Mohamed, and most notably Abdel Hakim Belhaj and his pregnant wife Fatima Boucher are perhaps the best documented cases of the kidnappings orchestrated by the U.S. As “enemy combatants,” they, much like José Padilla, were denied the legal protection under the Geneva Conventions. Despite numerous promises of humane treatment from authorities in Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, and Libya respectively (where victims of U.S. disappearances were sent) the testimony of freed captives contains allegations of extreme torture. Sleep deprivation, forced nudity, exposure to extremes of hot and cold, sensory deprivation, bright lights and eardrum shattering sounds, close confinements, electroshocks, threats and beatings. “I have been through an experience that I never thought to encounter in my darkest nightmares” stated Binyam Mohamed in the Guardian on his return to the U.K (Binyam Mohamed statement in full, 2009, para 2). “It is still difficult for me to believe that I was abducted, hauled from one country to the next, and tortured in medieval ways.” Mohamed’s years in hell were met with a quiet indifference. Due to grave intelligence lapses it turned out that El-Masri, Omar, Arar, Mohammed, Hakim and Boucher’s extraordinary rendition and detention were entirely baseless. They were released, told to keep quiet, and abandoned in the dark night.
U.S. mistakes had adverse consequences for the relations with some of its allies. In 2007, a German court issued arrest warrants on thirteen CIA agents for the abduction of Khaled El-Masri in Macedonia in 2003. In 2010, Spanish prosecutors handed down indictments for the same thirteen CIA agents. In 2007, Maher Arar received an official apology and $11, 5 million dollars in compensation from the Canadian government (Arar gratefully accepts apology, still on U.S. list, 2007, para 1). In November 2009, an Italian judge sentenced twenty-three CIA agents to five and eight years in jail in absentia for the disappearance of Abu Omar in Milan in 2003 (Italy convicts CIA rendition agents, 2009, para 4). In September 2012, reported Al Jazeera, the court reordered the trial (Italian court uphold CIA rendition verdict, 2012). Despite U.S. diplomatic pressure, refusal to cooperate, and political opposition, the verdicts still stand. The CIA operatives are considered fugitives under international law.

These incidents are far from confined to six innocent individuals. Investigations into the program have produced an extensive list of logs and flight plans that involve many more disappearances. Publicly released records of the program have been made available due to the efforts of investigative journalists. Stephen Grey’s Ghost Plane: The True Story of the CIA Rendition and Torture Program (2007) contains harrowing details by victims of crimes pertaining to renditions. To save its own skin, the CIA destroyed essential records that could render the agency guilty for violating the Geneva protocols. In 2010, a decision was made not to prosecute the CIA for destroying 92 videos showing waterboarding of terrorist suspects (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009, p. 2). Former CIA Official José Rodríguez writes in his newly published book Hard Measures (2012, p. 105) that the destruction of the tapes got rid of “some ugly visuals” that allegedly put the lives of his people at risk. The annihilation of evidence merely suggests that the few cases forced into the public light portray only a portion of people
“tortured” by mistake. Despite President Barack Obama’s promise to end torture, the administration has continued the Bush rendition policy in utter secrecy (Wang, 2011). The cloak of secrecy used in the past, present, and likely into the future evidences the U.S. reliance on torture for dubious intelligence purposes. By operating covertly U.S. continues to act with impunity. Torture and secrecy, states Stephen Grey, goes hand in hand (Extraordinary rendition, 2010).

Illegal Imprisonment

While the nightmares of kidnappings still haunts victims of the covert program, the U.S. government has been forced to confront another set of scandals, the indefinite detention of foreign terrorist suspects without charge. The presence of illegal black holes, allegedly now closed, beyond the reach of the law has not only been unearthed by HRW. An interactive map produced by PBS Frontline World shows six CIA black sites and twelve confirmed foreign prisons (Mapping the black sites, n.d.). Craig Murray, former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, charges that the U.S. and Britain collaborated with Uzbekistan to elicit information, which often proved false, through torture (UK/USA made use of Uzbek torture, 2009). According to The Nation a so called death camp was found in the abandoned desert in the Northwest of Uzbekistan, a “vast vault of human misery” that has earned its reputation as the country’s worst political prison (Khatchadourian, 2004, para 1). Between 1998 and 2003, at least six inmates died from abuse. One was allegedly boiled to death. Taking into account U.S. practice of enforced disappearances and sending assumed terrorists to secret sites it is not unrealistic that at least some of these victims met their fate in the Central Asian landlocked country.
In addition to the “God forsaken” place in Uzbekistan, three sites were discovered in Pakistan, one in Karachi and two on the Northwestern border of Afghanistan. It was in Karachi Binyam Mohamed were interrogated by the FBI and the British MI5. Apart from Pakistan, seven additional sites were located in Gambia, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Syria. It was in Damascus Maher Arar was reportedly tortured and dumped in a confined section known as “The Grave.” CIA covert black sites stretch from Romania to Poland, from Iraq to Morocco, and from Afghanistan to Thailand. Evidence indicates that Udon Thani Royal Thai Air Force Base was used as the first stop immediately after Abdel Hakim Belhaj and Fatima Boucher’s capture.

“In early 2002 the world saw photos of hooded, goggled, and shackled men in bright orange jumpsuits kneeling before a wire mesh fence, their postures a grotesque parody of common Muslim prayer position” (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2006, p 3). Based on the report some men had been rounded up on the battlefield in Afghanistan. Others were handed over to U.S. forces from places far from any battlefield. They were at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba, in a place called Camp X-Ray. “You are in a place where there is no law, we are the law” said a U.S. army intelligence officer. Since the dark days after 9/11Guantanamo Bay in Cuba has been the flagship prison in the U.S. global “War on Terror.” The Guardian, the Washington Post, and Amnesty International report that Guantanamo Bay are designed to hold up to 2000 long term terrorist suspects. 800 prisoners have been sent there and 20 are currently held in isolation. Today the facility holds between 150 and 169 suspects (Savage, Glaberson & Lehren 2011, para 4; Hope, Winnett, Watt & Blake, 2011, para 1).

A trove of classified military documents released by Wikileaks details the accounts of men who are locked up in Guantanamo. What began as an executive order to create a prison to hold alleged terrorists beyond the reach of U.S. law has become a controversial public spectacle.
Of the 169 detainees still stuck behind bars 87 have for years been approved for release (Innocent but still locked-up, 2012, para 2). Donald Rumsfeld’s claims that Guantanamo prisoners are hardened terrorists - “the worst of the worst” - is “belied” by mounting evidence (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2006 p. 6). The Telegraph and the Washington Post charge that instead of terrorists, most prisoners were chefs, farmers, and drivers either rounded up or sold to U.S. forces when bounties averaged $5,000 per head for Al-Qaeda members. The details of the prisoners are described in the thousands of pages of documents made public by Wikileaks. According to the files the detainees fall into one of four categories. They have a meaningful connection to Al-Qaeda, they pose some kind of threat to U.S. national security, they are of intelligence value, or they are recommended for continued detention. In other words, the detainees are with minor variance allegedly dangerous international terrorists (Gitmo files, n.d.). As cases of freed detainees demonstrate these categories are capricious and based on flimsy evidence.

U.S. secret files don’t reveal the techniques used to obtain information from captives, however. Both present and former prisoners have persistently reported that they’ve been subject to systematic torture. According to a 51 page long report by the Center of Constitutional Rights (2006) terrorist suspects at Guantanamo have suffered sexual harassment, rape or threats of rape, prolonged temperature extremes, deprived of medical treatment and sleep, exploitation of phobias, and solitary confinement. Sergeant Eric Saar, a former military intelligence linguist, corroborates accounts of torture in his book Inside the Wire: A Military Intelligence Soldier’s Eyewitness Account of Life at Guantanamo (2005). Additional corroboration is also found in the book For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism under Fire (2005) authored by James Yee, a former Muslim Chaplain at Guantanamo who was falsely accused of spying for Al-Qaeda and
later exonerated. Glenn Greenwald in the *Guardian* (2012) writes that nine prisoners have died at the camp since its opening and four since Obama’s inauguration. The deaths of detainees still remain under a cloud of unexplained suspicion.

Still, many detainees, perhaps fearful that nobody would believe them, have yet to contest the accusations against them (Extraordinary rendition, 2010). To compensate for substantial international pressure the U.S has copied the traditions of Stalin and Hitler and established kangaroo military courts inside the camp. “Kangaroo courts are an unauthorized trial conducted by individuals who have taken the law into their own hands, an unfair, biased, or hasty judicial proceeding that ends in a harsh punishment.” (Kangaroo court, 2010). As a result many men in Guantanamo remain wrongfully imprisoned with no hope of escape except by death. It is precisely this manifestation of U.S. policies Hanna Arendt envisioned. Terror strikes, without provocation, even after its victims are cowed into submission.

In line with this tyrannical practice the U.S., rather than downsizing, has escalated its unlawful “War on Terror.” While the bellicose language has been abandoned its practices haven’t. In sharp contrast to his promise to develop a counterterror policy consistent with the legal and moral obligations set forth in international law, Obama has left Bush’s counterterrorism efforts intact. Obama continues the rendition program. He has claimed the executive privilege to indefinitely detain alleged terrorists under the Defense National Authorization Act (NDAA). And finally, he wages war without Congressional approval. In spite of these similarities there is an eminent variance between Bush’s and Obama’s counterterrorism preference, Obama has publicly embraced extrajudicial killings - state sanctioned murder.
Extrajudicial Assassinations

On May 1, 2011, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, was reported killed in a hideout in Pakistan by the U.S. Navy SEALS. The Operation code-named Operation Neptune-Spear was ordered by Barack Obama. Senior officials at the time said bin Laden was killed in an “intense gun battle” (Baker, Cooper, Azetti, 2011, para 6) Three days later news reports revealed that bin Laden was unarmed. The killing of an unarmed man, said U.S. officials, was “justified.” The order from the White House reported the NY Daily News, was not to capture bin Laden, the very “face of terror,” dead or alive but “to kill” (Gendar & Kennedy, 2011, para 7).

“American citizenship alone doesn’t protect individuals from being killed.” Due process and judicial process are not one and the same. According to the Obama administration the Constitution guarantees due process, not judicial process (Attorney General Eric Holder speaks at Northwestern University School of Law 2012, para 57). In front of a group of law students at Northwestern Holder broadly described the guidelines of the Obama administration’s National Security strategy. The U.S. has the authorization to kill foreign and domestic nationals, without a court order. The Operation that killed bin Laden was no different. The Obama administration has consequently given itself the authority to kill anyone deemed an enemy of the state, be they U.S. citizens or not.

While the Obama administration repudiates Bush’s legal advisor John Yoo’s torture memoirs they engage in the actions Yoo describes but on a far more public and bloodier scale. Whereas José Padilla was the first U.S. citizen to suffer torture and illegal imprisonment since post 9/11, Anwar Al-Awlaki was the first American to be placed on a so called CIA “kill list.”
On the morning of Friday September 30, 2011, two hovering Predator drones fired two Hellfire missiles killing Awlaki and four others in Yemen. Two weeks later Al-Awlaki’s teenage son and six others, all suspected Al-Qaeda propagandists, were killed in a separate strike. The decision, Obama allegedly told his colleagues, “was an easy one” (Becker & Shane, 2012, para 10).

The targeted killing of terrorist suspects by U.S. drones, Holder insists, does not represent a violation of America’s founding principles. “This is an indicator of our times, “Holder said, “not a departure from our laws and our values” (2012, para 62). Quite legitimately, Awlaki’s killing was condemned by many among former Presidential Candidate and Congressman Ron Paul (Williamson, 2011). The U.S responded to the criticism with its typical national security rhetoric. The death of the others was simply an unfortunate consequence of collateral damage. The administration apparently arrogated itself the right to commit illegal acts under its own laws.

Awlaki’s killing is far from unique. The extrajudicial assassinations, a legalistic way of describing murder, have quite literally become the focus of advanced U.S. counterterrorism operations. According to Junod in Esquire magazine (Junod, 2012, para 4) at least two thousand people have been killed by U.S. drones, by some arguments, strikes occurring as often as once every three days under Obama’s command. In Pakistan alone over 193 drones strikes have been reported, quadrupling the number of attacks Bush authorized during his two terms (New America foundation, n.d., as cited in McKelvey, 2011, para 5). Obama, reports Reuters (2012), has placed himself in the nomination seat on the “death panel” charged with the task to designate terrorists for murder in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. And while Obama has pledged against Bush’s secret prisons and torture practices he has simultaneously insisted on an ever expanding “kill list” that renders previous presidential records of murder unimpressive. U.S. unmanned flying predators have killed women, children, and men at weddings, birthday parties,
and legitimate political rallies. The killing of innocent people has rarely aroused the interest of the mainstream media.

Under the banner of “terrorism” Obama has not only continued U.S. forays, he has expanded them. The ridiculous exaggerated concerns of international terror have permitted Obama to establish provisions to enlarge U.S. presence in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Indian Ocean (Turse, 2012). From the fringes of Sahara to jungle terrain along equator, the U.S. has set up a small network of airbases for the purpose of spying on terrorist hideouts (Whitlock, 2012). Tom Dispatch’s Associate Editor Nick Turse writes in his recent series *Changing Faces of Empire* that U.S. Special Forces, regular troops, private contractors, and drones are spreading across the world. By the end of Obama’s first term the lethality of the U.S. empire now comprise mechanized global assassination squads ready to carry out preemptive executions authorized with a simple presidential nod.

“He is determined that he will make these decisions about how far and wide these operations will go,” said Thomas E. Donilon, Obama’s national security adviser. Nothing in Obama’s first term has puzzled his political opponents more than his aggressive counterterrorism policies. The article from the *New York Times* (Becker & Shane, 2012, para 6) illustrates the murderous underside of the Obama Presidency. Since Bush reopened the ballet with black CIA snatch teams, secret prisons, and torture, Obama has claimed the “license to kill.”

Obama’s mechanized hit squads indicate that the U.S. has no immediate plans to bring the “War on Terror” to an end. Understood as a part of a longer historical process with roots deep in U.S. counterinsurgency tactics, current U.S. policies demonstrate that far from unique or designed specifically to combat alleged terrorists, the U.S. has simply brought its nefarious policies home. Designed and implemented in foreign lands, U.S. citizens on U.S. territory will
begin to face the terrors that foreign nationals have experienced in their country for decades. The terror has come home
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In 2008 Wikileaks released a sensitive 219 page U.S. military counterinsurgency manual. The manual, Foreign Internal Defense Tactics Techniques and Procedures for Special Forces (1994, 2004), may be critically described as “what we learned about running death squads and propping up corrupt government in Latin America and how to apply it to other places” explained its founder, Julian Assange. I argue that its contents are vital to grasp the full picture of the Latin American laboratory and the continued role of the U.S. in countering terror in the Middle East.

To understand modern counterterrorism efforts one must first understand well established counterinsurgency doctrines. This is because the latter feeds the former. Julian Assange’s public leak broadly encapsulates the bulk of this thesis. Kidnappings, disappearances, torture, and murder, a trademark attribute of U.S.-Latin America counterinsurgency practices, form the backbone of modern day counterterrorism efforts.

With a rich body of literature, secondary, and primary evidence, I have established the connection of counterinsurgency to counterterrorism and the development of the latter under the guise of the so called “War on Terror.” I have disclosed the evolution of U.S. counterinsurgency operations from the French war in Algeria to its reliance on police states in the Americas, to modern day counterterrorism practices in the Middle East. Yet the questions remain as to rationale, motivations, and consequences of these policies. What drives the inhumane tactics and the ideology of using terror to fight alleged terrorism?

The arms or “security” industry is the largest industry in the world, and a “multibillion dollar international repression trade” flourishes in providing not just arms but a whole range of
technology, hardware and software, of population control to client dictatorship and other authoritarian states notes Jeffrey Sluka in *Deathsquad: State Terror and Anthropology* (2000, p. 8). By 2007, there were over 200,000 private contractors deployed in Iraq, making the “war on terror” a financial safe haven for a few unaccountable companies (Scahill, 2012, para 3). Aside from Blackwater, Lockheed Martin, Halliburton, DynCorp, and the Carlyle Group, four industry leaders in global arms trade, are just a few enterprises that has reaped substantial returns on the global “War on Terror” (Berrebi & Klor, 2008).

U.S. corporations also lead in the production, sale, and distribution of weapons. According to figures published by the *U.S. Congressional Research Center*, the U.S. represents 39% or $170.764 billion dollars of worldwide arms sales (Grimmet, 2011). I recite Žižek (2012) who accuses the U.S. for relying on a complex economic mechanism. I contend that this mechanism which thrives on a constant stream of wars allows the U.S. to trade terror with terror.

From decades of fighting alleged global Communism, to the billion dollars wasteland in the war on drugs, also known as Plan Colombia, to the more recent drone wars to rid the earth of alleged terror, the U.S. has been engaged in an endless succession of interminable wars. Around the world, from Guatemala, to Colombia, to Iraq, the U.S. empire has pursued multiple fronts, one war seamlessly replacing the other. As 2012 comes to a close, Africa and the Indian Ocean is the latest advance of the U.S. empire’s pursuit for global territory. Unknown to most Americans, Washington’s garrisoning of the planet is on an unprecedented rise. While the U.S. is designing the contours for its global power overseas the “War on Terror” with heavy domestic political support has taken on a life of its own. The fight against dangerous international terrorism is no longer confined to the pathetic rhetoric of “psychos” that hate the U.S. for its “freedom” and
“values,” to justify staggering spending on defense and security, but has also become a rationale to justify a massive attack on civil liberties.

On Sunday August 5, 2012 a lonely gunman entered the Sikh Temple of gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. He opened fire killing six people and wounding three. The suspect was killed outside the temple from a shot wound to the head. The killer was identified as white and bald with a 9/11 tattoo. The incident was reported as hate crime and an instance of domestic terror. According to Al Jazeera the incident serves as the latest account of the pervasive “harassment, discrimination, and murder” that plagues people of color in the U.S. today (Bindra, 2012, para 1).

As the mainstream politicians continue to play on public fear of international terror the “war” continues to attack Muslims and Arabs. Consequently, communities of color remain under tremendous siege. The fear shot into the national bloodstream of suspicious men with turbans and long beards not only justifies wars abroad, it also escalates violence at home. More specifically, it targets minorities. In July 2012 the Associated Press first revealed that the NYPD, with the help of the CIA, over a six year period arbitrarily spied on American Muslims without criminal records. The police reportedly spied neighborhoods, eavesdropped conversations, and infiltrated mosques. A comprehensive database was assembled to store information about where Muslims lived, shopped, and worked. The police hoped the information would serve as an early warning for terrorism. The public scandal is more or less a classic example of George Orwell’s 1984 (1949). “Big brother is watching you” wrote Orwell. While the year 1984 may have passed and gone, the novel continues to have a chilling currency. It is not only Muslims in the U.S. that have had their civil liberties shredded. A dangerous wave of intrusive policing on all American based on the antiterrorist principle is unfolding.
“It is disturbing”, wrote former President Jimmy Carter in a damning piece in the New York Times (2012, para 4 & 5), that the U.S. government’s counterterror policies are now “clearly violating at least 10 of the 30” principles laid out in the Declaration for Human Rights. “In addition to American citizens’ being targeted for assassinations or indefinite detention,” continues Carter, “recent laws have cancelled the restraints in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 to allow unprecedented violations of our right to privacy through warrantless wiretapping and government mining of our electronic communications.” In line with James Peck’s Ideal Illusions: How the U.S. Government Co-opted Human Rights (2011) I argue that the U.S., under the banner of antiterrorism, has openly dropped the pretense of being the world’s human rights advocate and instead has flagrantly embarked on the road towards becoming a domestic police state.

Since its inception in 2001, reports Jennifer Abel in the Guardian (2012, para 1), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has “been lashing out” against the very citizens it claims to protect. Under the apparent antiterrorism principle U.S. travelers are being groped, sexually harassed, and intimidated at U.S. airports. TSA apologists cite that they “protect us from terrorists.” This argument can hardly be taken seriously. In the last year alone TSA VIPR (Visual Intermodal Prevention and Response) teams has moved into bus and train stations, even running checkpoints on highways. It is obvious that this is not a response to a terrorist threat, but more in attempts to live up to the motto displayed at the air marshal training center: “Dominate. Intimidate. Control” (Bovard, 2004, para 1).

In December 2011, Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a bill that was passed without public debate and behind closed doors. The NDAA effectively allows the U.S. military to declare the U.S. nation as a battleground enabling the military forces
to operate with impunity overriding Posse Comitatus and granting the U.S. government the unchecked power to arrest, detain, torture, and assassinate U.S. citizens without a court rule. It is based on these and an array of other disturbing developments I suspect that the U.S. is making a decisive mark in becoming a domestic police state.

Not once in the U.S. 60 year record of co-opting human rights has the U.S. so blatantly violated its own laws. If the criminal justice system was functioning the U.S.’ would not only be forced to abandon its violent actions, their elected officials would be lined up in court charged with war crimes, and the U.S., due to its actions, would be described as a terrorist state. Why else send terrorists suspects, generally innocent people, to places where they would be beyond the reach of the law? Why else would the U.S. shelve its effort to endorse a universal definition of state terrorism? And why else would the U.S. exclude itself and threaten to use its veto in the Security Council to block itself from the International Criminal Court? The answers are rather self-explanatory.

Fighting terror with terror, which U.S. actions in the last sixty years so vehemently demonstrates, has done nothing but engender world-wide enmity. This is supported by mounting evidence. Still, the corporate owned media strangles the debate by luring the general public into believing that a simple video is instigating the latest hostility against the U.S. in the Middle East. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is U.S. foreign policy aggression which angers local populations, stoke anti-American sentiment, and prompt acts of violent revenge. And while it might be accurate to claim that a contagious anti-Islam video triggered the latest round of protests in the Middle East which ultimately led to the killing of the U.S. ambassador in Libya, it is the violence unleashed on innocent people under the mask of fighting terrorism that created the situation. This continuous cycle of corporate warfareism is destined to end.
Sadly, Washington endorses force in their efforts to protect their interests. As new problems arise more force is necessary as the alleged solution. The end result is an institutionalized monopoly on government initiated violence. This unsustainable development will ultimately leave fourth amendment rights in flames and push the U.S. down a steady path toward totalitarian government. As a final caution I invoke Ron Paul’s farewell speech to Congress (2012). “Sacrificing a little liberty for imaginative safety,” in this context against terrorism, “always ends badly. Only a revolutionary spirit can reverse the process and deny the government this arbitrary use of aggression.”
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54


Håkon Ringstad earned his Bachelor’s degree in International Hospitality Management from the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management in Dubai, UAE, in 2010. He received his Master’s degree in International Affairs from Florida State University in 2012. His academic interests in the dark side of the U.S. government response to international terrorism emerged when he was enrolled in Introduction to Terrorism and Advanced Topics: Terrorism instructed by Dr. Audrey C. Heffron respectively. Håkon Ringstad excavated deeper into his passion by undertaking a Directed Individual Study (DIS) in Terror and Conflict in Latin America and Latin American Dirty Wars taught by Dr. Robinson A. Herrera. The culmination of this knowledge ultimately led to his final project: “The Roots of America’s “War on Terror:” A War That Never Ends.”
America’s war on terror across the globe (from the Costs of War Project). Click on the map to see a larger version. A glance at the map tells you that the war on terror, an increasingly complex set of intertwined conflicts, is now a remarkably global phenomenon. It stretches from the Philippines (with its own ISIS-branded group that just fought an almost five-month-long campaign that devastated Marawi, a city of 300,000) through South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and deep into West Africa where, only recently, four Green Berets died in an ambush in Niger. While acknowledging this long “never-ending” war spans many executive administrations, much was carried out and expanded upon under Obama with Clinton playing her role. The War on Terror, also known as the Global War on Terrorism, is an international military campaign launched by the United States government after the September 11 attacks. The targets of the campaign are primarily Sunni Islamist fundamentalist armed groups located throughout the Muslim world, with the most prominent groups being Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, the Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, and the various franchise groups of the former two organizations. The naming of the campaign uses a