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**Image warfare in the war on terror: Image munitions and  
the continuation of war and politics by other means**

Nathan Philip Roger

Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy.

Swansea University

2010

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## Abstract

This thesis argues that the image as circulated within society has changed from what is broadly conceived of as a mass media society to that of an information society or a rhizomatic condition. This discontinuity is linked to changes that have taken place both within technology and the 'communications systems' that make up the media. This is theorized as a move from the 'mobilization of images' to the 'weaponization of images' and it takes the following form: the mobilization of images is connected to a twentieth century notion of propaganda and the rise of a mass society; whereas the weaponizing of images is understood as emerging through a networked/rhizomatic society connected with new media. It has also resulted in a paradigm shift from techno-war to image warfare. More specifically, this thesis is about exploring how American and British governments and militaries are failing to manage image warfare because they are operating with an outdated understanding that it is possible to 'control' images; whereas Al Qaeda appears to be understanding image warfare better. What I seek to show in this thesis is the disjuncture between this outdated idea of 'controlling' images (which Western governments and media continue to use) and a more dispersed or deterritorialized idea about how images operate in a rhizomatic condition. I explore this via my three conceptual terms: 'image munitions', 'counter-image munitions', 'remediation battles', with specific reference to the war on terror and specifically through four thematic case studies – political communications, suicides, executions and abuses – which allow exploration of different parts of this new theatre of war. In the conclusion I reflect on the implications of this analysis for understandings of contemporary and future warfare.

## Declarations and Statements

### DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date ..... 09/06/2010 .....

### STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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**For my late Mum, my Dad and Brother**

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

As this thesis will explore the journeys of some of the most powerful images in the war on terror, it makes sense to first give a general outline of the journey taken in the production of this thesis.

The images of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks – images of planes flying into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, images of people falling to their deaths from the WTC, images of the towers collapsing and more – were shocking. I was on a break from a summer maintenance job at my old school (earning some money before starting university) when someone came into the maintenance office and turned the television on. Almost two weeks later I enrolled as an Undergraduate in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Professor Ken Booth's welcome address was confirmation that 9/11 was going to be a dominant theme in the Interpol Department (and International Relations internationally) for the foreseeable future.

I watched the start of the war in Afghanistan, the airing of bin Laden videos, Western responses to these videos and the start of the 2003 Iraq War all unfold on my television in my student accommodation. I particularly remember the 'Saving of Jessica Lynch'; the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue in central Baghdad; President Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech; and the mediated images of the corpses of Uday and Qusay Hussein. During the Easter break of my first year I travelled to Zanzibar to teach English and Civics at a village school, whilst there I took a few of our students to Stone Town (the capital of Zanzibar) where we visited *The House of Wonders (Beit el Ajaib) Museum of History and Culture of Zanzibar and the Swahili Coast*.

The House of Wonders has had a varied history. In the nineteenth century it was the ceremonial palace of the Sultan Barghash. Today it is a museum. When I visited it was hosting a travelling exhibition of the American photographer Joel Meyerowitz's images from 'Ground Zero', one stop on a global tour of over sixty countries. *After*

*September 11: Images From Ground Zero*<sup>1</sup> was supported by the US State Department, local American consulates and embassies. This exhibition was part of Charlotte Beers', then Under-Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, drive to change public perceptions of America within the Muslim world. Liam Kennedy has noted that:

this exhibition is clearly intended to shape and maintain a public memory of the attacks on the World Trade Center and their aftermath. As such, it is a fascinating initiative in cultural diplomacy that both echoes structures of Cold War propagandizing and raises fresh questions about the role of visual culture in American foreign policy – and more particularly about the role of photography in the shadow war of representation that still ensues over the meaning of '9/11'.<sup>2</sup>

In the summer of my second year I was selected to partake in the House of Commons Placement Scheme from the Interpol Department in Aberystwyth. I worked as a Research Assistant to Annette Brooke, Liberal Democrat MP for Mid-Dorset and North Poole, in both her Westminster and Constituency offices. It was certainly a very interesting time to be at the Palace of Westminster. I was lucky to be able to attend the session of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's investigation into the decision to go to war in Iraq when Alastair Campbell, the former Director of Communication and Strategy to Prime Minister Tony Blair, gave (or performed) his evidence.

During my third year, Saddam Hussein was captured. Images of his "spider hole" and his humiliating medical examination circulated widely throughout the international media. Simultaneously, the true extent of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison facility was becoming recognised, *The Daily Mirror* published abuse images that were later proven to be fake and a series of gruesome hostage videos were being circulated and remediated and discussed within the international media along with a number of suicide bombing videos and suicide video wills. Whilst doing my Masters in the Interpol Department in Aberystwyth – and busy writing my dissertation – two more significant events unfolded on my

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.joelmeyerowitz.com/photography/after911.html](http://www.joelmeyerowitz.com/photography/after911.html). Accessed on 03 February 2009

<sup>2</sup> Liam Kennedy, 'Remembering September 11: Photography as Cultural Diplomacy'. *International Affairs* 79, no. 2 (2003), p. 315

television in my student accommodation: the suicide bombing of London on July 7, 2005 and the failure of a second attempt two weeks later.

Throughout my Undergraduate and Masters Degrees I was always struck by the lack of emphasis on the role of the 'media' and 'images' within International Relations. Cynthia Weber has crystallized this concern, writing in 2008:

[F]or the most part, mainstream IR fails to understand... the links between the linguistic and the visual. It fails to link the linguistic to the visual because while the linguistic is understood as the medium through which 'real' politics is communicated, the visual is often dismissed as merely popular.<sup>3</sup>

Critical International Relations and Critical Security Studies theorists are currently working to link the linguistic and the visual and my thesis further contributes to this area of academic inquiry.

In 2005, I moved to the Department of Political and Cultural Studies at Swansea University (then the Department of Politics and International Relations) to research the role of Al Jazeera in the war on terror. Central to my initial research application was the complex way in which Western governments were using Al Jazeera as a device to speak directly to Muslims worldwide, assuming that they could use it as a device for communicating directly with the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, and yet also complaining that Al Jazeera was an outlet for propaganda from fundamentalist terrorists. Initially I had supervision from the Department of Politics and International Relations and the Department of Media and Communication Studies. I was soon also invited to become a Research Associate on an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) New Security Challenges (NSC) Programme<sup>4</sup> project *Shifting Securities: News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003*.<sup>5</sup> At the end of my first year and after discussions with my supervisors I decided to broaden the scope of my research, shifting away from examining the role of Al Jazeera in the war on terror to researching image warfare itself.

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<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Weber, 'Popular Visual Language as Global Communication: The Remediation of United Airlines Flight 93'. *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 1 (2008), p. 138

<sup>4</sup> See [www.newsecurity.bham.ac.uk](http://www.newsecurity.bham.ac.uk). Accessed on 07 June 2009

<sup>5</sup> See [www.mediatingsecurity.com](http://www.mediatingsecurity.com). Accessed on 07 June 2009

In the journey taken to the completion of this thesis I have, as is apparent, found support in many places and from many people. I wish therefore to record my thanks to the staff at the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (2001-2005) for giving me a solid grounding in IR scholarship and to my fellow Undergraduate and Masters Students. Similarly, I thank my supervisors at Swansea University, Dr. Alan Finlayson, Dr. Lee Jarvis, Dr. Samuel A. Chambers and Dr. Andrew Hoskins, for their help, advice and patience in bringing this thesis to fruition, and also my PhD Examiners Dr. Debbie Lisle (Queen's University Belfast) and Dr. David M. Berry. Thanks to Professor Roland Axtmann, my Head of Department, for his help and support and for awarding me a travel bursary which enabled me to present part of my research at a conference on violence in Budapest, Hungary; to Dr. Mark Evans, the Director of the Graduate Centre in the School of Arts and Humanities, for guiding me through the different stages of my PhD; Professor Nikki Cooper, the Director of The Callaghan Centre for the Study of Conflict, Power and Empire, for allowing me time to do my PhD corrections before starting work as Research Assistant in The Callaghan Centre for the Study of Conflict, Power and Empire and Professor Helen Fulton, the Director of the Research Institute for Arts and Humanities, for making me an Honorary Research Associate of the Research Institute for Arts and Humanities. The academic staff past and present of the Department of Political and Cultural Studies – formerly the Departments of Politics and International Relations, Media and Communication Studies and American Studies – specifically Dr. Rebecca M. Brown (for introducing me to Visual Culture and Art History scholarship), Dr. Jonathan Bradbury, Dr. Helen Brocklehurst, Dr. Alan Collins, Dr. Columba Peoples, Professor Mike Sheehan and the administrative staff of the School of Arts and Humanities and the Department of Political and Cultural Studies – specifically Susan Lambert, Gabriella Wasiniak, Anne Edwards, Kat Jennings, S. Miraj Ansari and Kirstie Andrews. Thanks to my fellow PhD students past and present – specifically Eram Ashraf, Kevin Bannon, Dr. James Beard, Ramli Dollah, Jong Eop Kim, Regina Fritzsche, Dr. Liam McCarthy, Dr. Richard Murphy and Richard van der Watt – for all the lighthearted, sometimes heated, and always entertaining conversations. Thanks are also due to: Jed Chandler for organizing the programme of generic research training courses and to the Postgraduate Research Faculty; the librarians and staff of the Library and

Information Services at Swansea University for helping me to track down items for my research; the librarians at the Hugh Owen Library at Aberystwyth University and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth for similarly helping me to track down items for my research.

Thanks are also due to those who worked on the ESRC project *Shifting Securities: News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003* and specifically to Dr. Andrew Hoskins, Professor Marie Gillespie and Dr. Ben O'Loughlin for inviting me to become a Research Associate and to present a paper at the project conference. Thanks to Dr. Noureddine Miladi for organizing his Centre for Arab and Muslim Media (CAMMRO) conference series as this introduced me to a number of people either working in or pursuing research about Arab and Muslim media. The Callaghan Centre for the Study of Conflict, Power and Empire and The Centre for the Study of Culture and Politics (C-SCAP) at Swansea University both also gave me opportunities to present my research at seminars. I wish to thank all of the organizers, panel chairs, discussants, panel members and audiences who have attended such presentations and asked me questions or made suggestions. I also want to acknowledge the support of the British International Studies Association (BISA) and the Political Studies Association (PSA) for their bursary awards which allowed me to attend and present papers at their annual conferences at the University of Cambridge and the University of Bath.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends for all their support through the good and not so good times.

This thesis is the result of my own research and therefore any mistakes/misunderstandings are attributable solely to me.

## Abbreviations

9/11	September 11, 2001
7/7	July 7, 2005
21/7	July 21, 2005
ABC	American Broadcasting Company
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AK-47	Kalashnikov Assault Rifle
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCCF	Baghdad Central Confinement Facility
BDSM	Bondage Domination Sadism Masochism
BG	Brigadier General
BISA	British International Studies Association
C <sup>4</sup> I/BM	Command, Control, Communications, Computer Applications, Intelligence and Battle Management
CAMMRO	Centre for Arab and Muslim Media Research
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CD	Compact Disc
CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read-Only Memory
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
CONUS	Contiguous United States
Cpl.	Corporal
C-SCAP	The Centre for the Study of Culture and Politics
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency



DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DPP	Danish Peoples Party
DU	Depleted Uranium
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
ELS	Experience Learning System
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FOJM	Friends of John McCarthy Campaign
G2	The Guardian Newspaper Magazine
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GTE	General Telephone & Electronics Corporation
I/ITSEC	Interservice/Industrial Training System and Education Conference
ITC	Institute for Creative Technology
ID	Identification
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
IR	International Relations
ITN	Independent Television News
JIDC	Joint Intelligence and Debriefing Center
LA	Los Angeles
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel
Lt. Cpl.	Lieutenant Corporal
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MG	Major General
MI	Military Intelligence
MI5	Security Service
MIME-NET	Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Military Police

MSNBC	Microsoft National Broadcasting Corporation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NBC	National Broadcasting Corporation
NSC	New Security Challenges Programme
OPLAN 1003 VICTOR	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PGM	Precision Guided Munition
PLF	Palestinian Liberation Front
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PSA	Political Studies Association
Psyops	Psychological Operations
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
QLR	Queen's Lancashire Regiment
R&D	Research and Development
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
RMeA	Revolution in Media Affairs
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
Sgt.	Sergeant
SMS	Short Message Service
SPC	Specialist
STOW	Synthetic Theater of War
STRICOM	Simulation, Training and Implementation Command
TV	Television
TWA	Trans World Airlines
UAF93	United Airlines Flight 93
UK	United Kingdom
UGC	User Generated Content
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq

UNRWA	United National Relief and Work Agency
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USC	University of Southern California
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTC	World Trade Center
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWII	World War Two
Y2K	Year 2000

## Introduction

This thesis explores the nature of images in contemporary warfare, addressing the changing ways in which they circulate within society and the impact this has on the conduct of conflict. I argue that a significant shift has occurred in the relationship between images and the media system which makes possible their circulation and identify this as a shift from a mass communication system to a rhizomatic communication system. This shift is driven by changes in technology and in the ‘communications system’. Technological developments such as the internet, blogs, camera/video-phones and more – have fundamentally altered the ways in which governments, militaries, terrorists, Non-Government Organizations (NGO’s) and citizens engage with images. To employ Manuel Castells term: ‘a space of flows’<sup>6</sup> has opened up and so replaced the unidirectional flow of information and images with, in Daya Kishan Thussu’s language, ‘multi-directional flows’<sup>7</sup> of information and images. In the context of military action I theorize this as a move away from the ‘mobilization of images’ (attached to the twentieth century notion of propaganda and the mass media society) to the ‘weaponization of images’ (which is attached to the networked/information society connected with new media). The thesis then sets out to explore this via a number of case studies of events from the war on terror. Across these case studies I show how war has moved from techno-war to image warfare (thus opening up a new theatre of war) and also how the American and British governments and the militaries are failing to manage image warfare because they still believe that they can ‘control’ images in the rhizomatic condition, whereas Al Qaeda understands that images are uncontrollable and subject to unpredictable circulation and remediation in the war on terror.

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<sup>6</sup> See Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society*. 2nd eds. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 2: The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) and Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 3: End of Millennium*. 2nd eds. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000)

<sup>7</sup> Daya Kishan Thussu, 'Mapping Global Media Flow and Contra-Flow', in *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow*, ed. Daya K. Thussu (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 12

This idea of controlling the flow of images is, however, not just confined to the twentieth century notion of propaganda; it is also deeply embedded within theorisations of techno-war. Techno-war describes a theory of warfare which was developed, by the Pentagon, from the lessons learnt by the war in Vietnam. In the Vietnam War America had failed to deal effectively with the challenges of conducting war in the television age. The Pentagon allowed journalists to operate unilaterally within the theatre of war and so produce and disseminate news reports without information and images first being passed by military censors. Images, such as those documenting the My Lai Massacre or the photograph *Accidental Napalm*, proved very unpopular with the American public and so contributed towards a groundswell of support for the anti-war movement. Vietnam has since gone down in history as a deeply unpopular war. Techno-war was premiered during the 1991 Gulf War and showcased the supplementing – where possible – of military personnel with technologies, such as airpower and Precision Guided Munitions (PGM's). Also, during the 1991 Gulf War, the Pentagon instituted a press pool system to control the flow of information, images and the spectacle of war. Journalists would gather daily to be briefed by senior military personnel and their information and images would then be shared between journalists in the press pool and disseminated throughout the international media. The dominant features of techno-war are: a greater reliance on technology, soldiers no longer viewed as mere cannon fodder and a shift in the balance of the control of the dissemination of images away from the media and back to the military. This way of warfighting has since given rise to the development of a techno-war machine in America, as examined by James Der Derian.<sup>8</sup> This war machine dominated the 1990s; it was also adapted for internet war in Kosovo and was finally formalized – in 1999 – with the creation of the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) at the University of Southern California (USC).

In conventional wars and against conventional enemies, such as Iraqi and Serbian militaries, American techno-war has proven itself to be a dominant force. However, on September 11, 2001 a new kind of war – image warfare – crashed onto the scene with Al Qaeda's coordinated attacks against the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and its failed attack on The White House (the *United Airlines Flight 93* incident).

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<sup>8</sup> See James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*. 2nd eds. (London: Routledge, 2009)

Techno-war had immediately been replaced, however, the Bush administration's response was to quickly launch a spectacular techno-war attack against Afghanistan; thinking that they could regain control of the spectacle of war back from Al Qaeda. This was immediately overshadowed by Al Qaeda's release of a video or image munition to Al Jazeera on October 7, 2001, featuring Osama bin Laden. Proof indeed, in the words of Paul Virilio, that America '*are always one war behind...*'<sup>9</sup> whereas Al Qaeda appears to have a more sophisticated understanding of image warfare.

In this thesis, having taken on board Virilio's judgment that there are currently no experts in global terrorist warfare, or in what I term image warfare (given Al Qaeda's successful embracing of it), I offer an important reassessment of the war on terror. I explore the disjuncture between 'controlling' images and understanding the contemporary deterritorialized circulation of images in the rhizomatic condition. I also recognize that as war has now moved on from techno-war to image warfare so IR needs to do the same and respond to these new security challenges by embracing image warfare rather than merely unsuccessfully adapting techno-war for the challenges of global terrorist warfare. Mainstream IR continues to miss the significance of the shift from techno-war to image warfare. However, Critical International Relations, Critical Security Studies and post-positivist IR theorists have begun to recognize the important role played by images and popular culture in the war on terror. But even these fail sufficiently to challenge the dominance of techno-war or indeed engage with image warfare. I, however, in this thesis, identify how society has shifted from a mass media system to a rhizomatic media system and explore the implications for this shift on war (a paradigm shift from techno-war to image warfare). I also engage with literature in the cognate disciplines of Media Studies and Visual Culture and present IR with compelling evidence of the contemporary circulation of images and the implications for contemporary and future war. The rhizomatic media system is distinct from the mass media system which so dominated the twentieth century and as such the relationships between the institutional actors involved in media production, the complex objects they produce

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Virilio, *Ground Zero*. Translated by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2002), p. 35

and the varied subjects who consume has changed. It is to a discussion of these important differences that I now turn.

Media actors are the institutions that are dedicated to the refining of the raw materials of events; objects are produced by media actors and disseminated to audiences, the subjects that consume objects produced by media actors. Early communication theory saw communication as a somewhat simplistic and linear process and also subjects (audiences) were not accounted for. The development of this conception into one of a mass media system enabled a description of a situation in which a few dominant media actors produce a limited range of objects to be consumed by a largely homogeneous and passive audience. Transferred to the field of military conflict this top-down media model essentially encouraged the development of strategies for the mobilization of images as propaganda and privileged the activity of those, such as governments and militaries, who seek to control and censor information and images. However, within Media Studies theorists such as Stuart Hall challenged the simplicity of the mass communication model. Hall proposed his model of the encoding/decoding process which was significant for, firstly, stressing the agency of audiences in interpreting and responding to media products and, secondly, for giving a determinate role for the 'texts' of media, the genre and codes through which they became communicable, their history of production and development as significant in the history of both media production and consumption.<sup>10</sup> The importance of this re-theorisation for the conceptualising of images and information in warfare has become apparent only recently.

The 1990s saw the news media becoming dominated by the Cable News Network (CNN) which pioneered twenty-four hour satellite news broadcasting and the real-time reporting of war, during the 1991 Gulf War. CNN was also observed to be having an impact on foreign policy ('The CNN Effect'<sup>11</sup>). A key example of this was Somalia. In 1992, President George H. W. Bush partly as a reaction to the news coverage of humanitarian crisis ordered American military forces into Somalia. In 1993 The Battle of Mogadishu was covered by the media who also reported on how

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<sup>10</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding', in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 507-18

<sup>11</sup> Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention* (London: Routledge, 2002)

an American Black Hawk helicopter had been shot down over Mogadishu and footage was shown of a dead US Army Ranger being dragged through the streets. In response to the airing of this footage President Bill Clinton took the decision to withdraw American troops from Somalia. Despite this important shift in the military-media matrix CNN was still a part of the mass media system, a centralized media actor producing content for a mass audience.

James Der Derian in his travels through the contemporary American techno-war war machine has simultaneously also described the Pentagon's contemporary reimagining of the mass communication model: the military-industrial-media-entertainment network (MIME-NET).<sup>12</sup> The MIME-NET is the home of a number of collaborative projects – such as the development of new military technologies (weapons and communication systems), military simulations, the production of a war script for invading Afghanistan, the designing of a media centre in Doha, Qatar and the manufacture of a number of media spectacles. However, the MIME-NET assumes that information and images can still be centrally controlled and consequently it does not meet with the challenges of the new media age.

Another media actor – Al Jazeera – also emerged during the 1990s and in the twenty-first century it has spearheaded a media revolution, a Revolution in Media Affairs (RMeA), which has resulted in the shift from a mass media system to a rhizomatic media system and also a shift from techno-war to image warfare. Like CNN before it Al Jazeera has also had an important impact on the foreign policy process, however, what distinguishes Al Jazeera from CNN and what allows Al Jazeera to be considered a part of the rhizomatic media system rather than a part of the mass media system is the fact that as a new media actor it produces diverse content that other news networks would not air first, thus appealing to a diverse audience and also impacting on foreign policy. For example, Al Jazeera gained a formidable international reputation when it aired a bin Laden video on October 7, 2001. Since then Al Jazeera has aired more bin Laden tapes, suicide video wills, hostage execution videos and unofficial camera-phone footage showing Saddam Hussein's execution. If the 1990s was the decade of The CNN Effect then the first decade of

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<sup>12</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*. 2nd eds.



the twenty-first century was most certainly the decade of The Al Jazeera Effect. According to Philip Seib, '[s]atellite television channels continue to proliferate and their impact on politics and society generally continues to grow. As the satellites these channels use whirl through space, the Al Jazeera effect is also receiving a boost from the tools of cyberspace.'<sup>13</sup> Al Jazeera therefore represents all the different forms of new media which together have resulted in a shift from mass media to rhizomatic media, impacting on the circulation of images and also encouraging the paradigm shift from techno-war to image warfare.

The somewhat unpredictable nature of the rhizomatic media system has also impacted on civil society because content production can now take place anywhere. Images now float freely. This revolution in media production and dissemination now opens up new possibilities for new kinds of media, political and military actions. Instead of content being controlled by a few dominant media actors the balance has now shifted as new media actors can now produce and disseminate their own content. Anti-war movements and pro-war movements have similarly used the rhizomatic media to their advantage as they have interfered with the official media and so have become credible alternatives rivalling the official media. The uncontrollability of information and images in the internet age is also apparent given the fact that a number of new media actors – such as artists, advertisers and even a disenfranchised teenager in his bedroom – can also now pick up and deploy image munitions with subversive intentions that are totally distinct from those of the original producers intentions and so it is that remediating images keep popping up in surprising places in the new media environment. If Stuart Hall showed the circular nature of the 'encoding/decoding' process, and the potential for relative autonomy on the part of media audiences, then new technology pushes this model yet further making it possible for consumers to be simultaneously producers of media content which is in turn consumed by media producers. Similarly, media texts are no longer static or inviolable objects but resources open for access and reformulation as new kinds of media content on new platforms.

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Seib, *The Al-Jazeera Effect: How the New Global Media Are Reshaping World Politics* (Washington D. C. : Pontomac Books, Inc., 2008)

My engagement with literature found in cognate disciplines such as Media Studies and Visual Culture offers IR compelling insights about this changing media system and the contemporary circulation of images. However, to help bridge the gaps between the International Relations, Media Studies and Visual Culture literatures I introduce three conceptual terms to the lexicon of IR: 'image munitions', 'counter-image munitions' and 'remediation battles'. These are intended to help synthesise International Relations, Media Studies and Visual Culture and to break new ground in terms of the theorising of image warfare, rather than merely relying on updating a version of techno-war. Before outlining just what I mean by each of my conceptual terms it is important to note that image munitions are never launched indiscriminately into a news-cycle, an analogy exists here between them and Precision Guided Munitions (PGM's), but rather they are launched by actors with very specific intentions. This does not mean that image munitions never get misfired. As I will show in Chapter Five with the death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein and the capture/trial/execution images of Saddam Hussein, examples of image munitions being misfired. My conceptual terms also represent distinct moments in image warfare akin to the distinct moments in techno-war and other kinds of warfare. Once an image munition is deployed this is then followed by the release of a counter-image munition and so there unfolds a mimetic war of representation. This is then followed by intense remediation battles as image munitions and counter-image munitions get picked up and deployed in surprising contexts by new media actors with different political purposes.

Traditional war is fought with the aid of a diverse arsenal of munitions: bullets, bombs, missiles and mines. Image warfare is no different. It is fought with a diverse arsenal of image munitions: from real-time images to post-hoc images and images of diverse mediums of capture. However, it is important to note that image munitions do have distinct properties that distinguish them from bullets, bombs, missiles and mines. When traditional munitions are deployed successfully they detonate and get destroyed (obliterating all that is located in the blast site and the surrounding area) whereas when image munitions are launched successfully they do not get destroyed and they do not kill and injure people in the blast site and the surrounding area; rather they remain, as it were, perfect and ready for anyone to pick up and re-use.

Counter-image munitions are deployed with the specific intention of replacing image munitions in the news-cycle. They contain all of the same elements which go into producing image munitions only counter-image munitions are launched in response to the deployment of image munitions. This does not always have to be an immediate response; they can be deployed strategically at a time of some delay from when image munitions were launched. For example, as I will show in Chapter Four, suicide video wills are often released a long time after a suicide bombing has taken place. They are timed to either coincide with the anniversaries of a suicide bombing or to interrupt current political debates. Whenever counter-image munitions are released they get inserted into current news cycles and immediately draw attention away from the government or military and back to the terrorists cause. Counter-image munitions have similarly been produced by Britain and America in the war on terror. These include, for example and as I will show in Chapter Three, the appearance of Prime Minister Tony Blair, President George W. Bush and other politicians on Al Jazeera in response to the airing of bin Laden tapes. However, the Blair government and the Bush administration have failed to recognize that their appearances on Al Jazeera are in fact counter-productive as they engage Al Qaeda in a dangerous game of mimetic one-upmanship.

The concept of remediation battles describes how it is that image munitions and counter-image munitions get reproduced. It is necessary to highlight an important distinction here though between what is circulation and what constitutes remediation. Where reproduced images are merely direct copies of original image munitions (for example, bin Laden on CNN) this is representative of circulation. Where reproduced images are altered by new media actors and then inserted into new image contexts with a distinct political purpose (for example, bin Laden and the “Bert is Evil” poster) this is instead representative of remediation. Remediation battles ultimately play an important role in image warfare as the rhizomatic media system now allows more new media actors than ever before to pick up and deploy image munitions in new image contexts. I recognize that graffiti artists and anti-war protesters, with their placards, have already been remediating images for decades. However, today as new media technologies have been developed so too the number of ways for new media actors to disseminate their image remediations has proliferated and become increasingly sophisticated. This sets in motion a complex and unpredictable series of

chain reactions as image munitions continue to get relocated, redirected and remediated.

### **The Aesthetic Turn in International Relations**

This thesis is not only concerned with the contemporary rhizomatic and unpredictable flow of information and images and with theorising the shift from techno-war to image warfare; it also takes place against the backdrop of the 'aesthetic turn' – a new field of study in IR, as identified by Roland Bleiker in 2001. The 'aesthetic turn' is something which Strategic Studies and War Studies theorists need to embrace more forcefully if they are to properly engage with the new security challenges posed by image warfare. Bleiker called for a broadening of IR's concerns, noting that:

legitimising images, narratives and sounds as important sources for insight into world politics, aesthetic approaches have moved scholarship away from an exclusive and often very narrow reliance on diplomatic documents, statistical data, political speeches, academic treatises and other traditional sources of knowledge about the international.<sup>14</sup>

Diplomatic documents and other traditional information sources are not now irrelevant and have not somehow been made redundant by the aesthetic turn. But the information revolution – the development of twenty-four hour news and the internet – has led to an increasing visualisation of and in society, and the emergence of different information sources: digital images, video-blogs, camera-phones, none of which existed just a few years ago. This demands scholarly attention of new kinds and in new ways.

The political theorist William E. Connolly has called for 'every political theorist under the age of 35 to become as well-trained in the reading and analysis of visual culture – particularly television, film, and TV news – as they are in the interpretation of texts within the history of political thought.'<sup>15</sup> He asserts that 'the reading of

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<sup>14</sup> Roland Bleiker, 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory'. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 30, no. 3 (2001), p. 526

<sup>15</sup> Samuel A. Chambers, *The Queer Politics of Television* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), p. 1. See also William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002)

television shows [and images] will prove to be as important to politics in this century as the study of philosophical texts has been in the past.’<sup>16</sup> Cynthia Weber has also made a compelling argument for moving beyond the ‘linguistic turn’ to account for ‘popular visual language.’<sup>17</sup> Her point is both conceptual (she argues that the linguistic turn excluded alternative realms of inquiry), but also empirical (she draws attention to the centrality of new forms of knowledge in global political life). Weber calls upon the discipline of IR to react to these recent changes within society, and embrace this visual language. To ignore these information sources, she shows, is no longer a credible option. Weber writes:

More than a generation ago, the discipline of International Relations took the linguistic turn marked by the introduction of ‘discourse analysis’ to bear on core questions of international relations. Celebrated by some, resisted by others, and mainstreamed by still others, the linguistic turn reinvigorated IR scholarship. But it had its limitations. Practiced in IR as a primarily textually-based set of research techniques, discourse analysis took speech and particularly writing as its focus, often to the exclusion of other communicative practices, like hearing, feeling, and seeing – all of which are... vital for understanding global politics.<sup>18</sup>

But, Weber argues, today ‘popular visual language’

is increasingly circulated through wireless networks onto the digital screens of our daily lives (computers, telephones, and televisions). And it is experienced as much if not more by amateurs than it is by experts. All of this makes visual language the language of contemporary popular culture – the language that amateurs and experts increasingly rely upon in order to claim contemporary literacy... But for the most part, mainstream IR fails to understand... the links between the linguistic and the visual. It fails to link the linguistic to the visual because while the linguistic is understood as the medium through which ‘real’ politics is communicated, the visual is often dismissed as merely popular.<sup>19</sup>

Rachel Hughes supports this line of argument, noting that although traditionally ‘geopolitics’ and ‘visual culture’ have been seen as distinct areas of academic enquiry, contemporary debates collapse the invisible divisions between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘visual culture’:

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1

<sup>17</sup> Cynthia Weber, ‘Popular Visual Language’, p. 137

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 137-138

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 138

The two terms – ‘geopolitics’ and ‘visual culture’ – invoke quite different associations. ‘Geopolitics’ conjures up the sombre arena of international politics, populated by diplomats and world leaders and taken up with the conduct of international agreements, sanctions and conflicts. ‘Visual culture’ suggests all manner of images – as well as popular media forms like film and television that we utilise by virtue of a sense of sight. But think for a moment about how we come to know world events, or of the global and political nature of the major image producers of our time, and the necessity of thinking about geopolitics and visual cultures as related fields becomes more evident.<sup>20</sup>

Interest in visual culture is spreading within IR as is indicated by the spread of special issues and sections in journals.<sup>21</sup> Similarly the number of monographs, edited books and textbooks considering the important role of aesthetics and visuals within International Relations is also increasing markedly.<sup>22</sup> This demonstrates the importance of the ‘aesthetic turn’ in IR. It is hoped that this thesis can be a contribution to that turn and, in particular, to the recognition of its importance for researchers in War Studies and Strategic Studies. For, if they fail to take it, scholars of contemporary conflict will not only fail to grasp the significant role of images in contemporary warfare but, as a consequence, may endorse strategies that are not only ineffective but positively harmful.

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<sup>20</sup> Rachel Hughes, 'Through the Looking Blast: Geopolitics and Visual Culture'. *Geography Compass* 2 (2007), p. 976

<sup>21</sup> *Review of International Studies* special section on ‘Art, Politics, Purpose’ (edited by Alex Danchev and Debbie Lisle, 35(4) (October 2009)); *Review of International Studies* special section on ‘Culture and Politics of Global Communication’ (edited by Costas M. Constantinou, Oliver P. Richmond and Alison M. S. Watson, 34(S) (January 2008)); *Security Dialogue* special issue on ‘Securitization, Militarization and Visual Culture in the Worlds of Post-9/11’ (edited by David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, 38(2) (June 2007)) and *International Relations* special issue on ‘Images and Imaginings of Security’ (edited by Stuart Croft, 20(4) (December 2006))

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), François Debrix and Cynthia Weber, eds. *Rituals of Mediation: International Politics and Social Meaning* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Political Thought: Narrating Race, Nation and Gender* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2009), Michael C. Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security* (London: Routledge, 2007), Cynthia Weber, *Imagining America at War: Morality, Politics and Film* (London: Routledge, 2006), Robert W. Gregg, *International Relations Film* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publications, Inc., 1998), Christine Sylvester, *Art/Museums: International Relations Where We Least Expect It* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Jutta Weldes, ed. *To Seek out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics* (New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Marianne I. Franklin, *Resounding International Relations: On Music, Culture and Politics* (New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

## **Chapter Summary**

Chapter One, 'War/Images and International Relations Theory', explores the long-standing relationship between war and images, but stresses how in contemporary times this relationship has been fundamentally changed. I show how although International Relations recognizes the important role played by information and images in war it has ultimately failed to account for the recent significant changes in this relationship. America and Britain still believe that they can control the circulation of images in war when the reality is that the circulation of images is today increasingly unpredictable. I define this as a shift from a centralised mass media model to a deterritorialized rhizomatic media model and examine the recent history of media and war and highlight the structural changes in war coverage: the Vietnam War (the first television war), then moving on to discuss the 1991 Gulf War (the first real-time war), the Kosovo Conflict (the first internet war) and finally September 11, 2001/the war on terror (image warfare). I then place image warfare into an academic context by discussing the work of key IR theorists: François Debrix and his discussion of IR theorists and popular culture and the construction of a 'risk' or 'terror' discourse, Richard Jackson on official language and the construction of a war on terror discourse and Stuart Croft on the construction and maintenance of a war on terror discourse/meta-narrative via the study of images and popular culture. I also explore Milena Michalski and James Gow thesis that moving images are the key weapons of contemporary war; Michael J. Shapiro and his discussion of the new violent cartography and its counter-spaces, specifically international film festivals and finally James Der Derian's travelogue account of his journey through the American techno-war war machine (the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network or MIME-NET) which is currently outdated in the age of image warfare.

Chapter Two, 'Theorising Image Warfare', starts by further exploring the IR literature (specifically the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) literature) and reveals how media and images have been sidelined in discussions about contemporary war in favour of theorisations of technology. I argue that this reinforces the outdated idea that the circulation of information and images can still be controlled in the internet age. To get a better understanding of the contemporary role

of media and images in war I engage with literature in Media Studies. Exploring how society has moved away from a mass media system (of centralised propaganda, dominant in the twentieth century) to a networked/rhizomatic system (of deterritorialized flows of information, dominant today) and how new media technologies – such as the internet, blogs and mobile phones – play an important role. I also examine theories of ‘postmodern war’ as discussed by Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio. Baudrillard was initially critical of real-time communication, in his response to the 1991 Gulf War, but was forced to change his mind after the 9/11 attacks; Virilio offers a prophetic glimpse of the deterritorialised information age where new forms of activity and agency are now possible.

I turn from Media Studies to research from within Visual Culture, and specifically the work of Susan Sontag, W. J. T. Mitchell, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. This field also reveals the complex circulation and remediation of images. To help bridge the gaps between IR, Media Studies and Visual Culture I also develop three conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’ and test them against iconic historic images and their contemporary appropriations: *The Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* and *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)*. Finally, I discuss the methodology I employ in this thesis.

Chapter Three, ‘Political Communications’, explores a part of the new image warfare theatre of war. I examine political communications – understood as a form of image munition – discussing how the ‘official’ political communications made by leaders are an important instrument in disseminating information from the seat of power to the public in times of war and peace and I recognize the important role of new media technologies in their development. I specifically examine ‘official’ political communications made by American Presidents and British Prime Ministers – President Bush and Prime Minister Blair in the war on terror – and show how this style of address has now also been adopted by Al Qaeda with Osama bin Laden’s ‘unofficial’ political communications. I then discuss the role of ‘place’, ‘symbolism’ and ‘mimesis’ in these addresses, Andrew Hill’s Lacanian analysis of the bin Laden tapes, Binoy Kampmark’s commentary about the spectre of bin Laden and the circulation of bin Laden’s image munitions in the war on terror. Before drawing attention to a number of interventions which show how bin Laden’s image



munitions, since being originally deployed by Al Qaeda, have now been picked up and remediated by new media actors with intentions that are distinct from Al Qaeda. Thus proving just how unpredictable the flow of images actually are in the rhizomatic condition and how Al Qaeda indeed has a more sophisticated understanding of image warfare compared with either America or Britain.

Chapter Four, 'Suicides', discusses another important part of the image warfare theatre of war. I start by exploring how suicide terrorism is an effective tactic used by Al Qaeda to gain a military advantage against superior conventional militaries in the war on terror, but also how there is an important symbolic dimension to suicide terrorism. I examine this symbolic dimension, employed by terrorists specifically to produce image munitions about their suicide bombings and also suicide video wills that are important because they allow terrorists to keep control of their attacks for as long as possible. I discuss specifically the bombing of The Canal Hotel in Baghdad, on August 19, 2003; the September 11, 2001 terror attacks and the release of counter-image munitions over *United Airlines Flight 93* and the 9/11 suicide video wills; the triple suicide bombing of Firdos Square in Baghdad on October 24, 2005; the July 7, 2005 London Bombings and the July 21, 2005 Failed London Bombings. I also further discuss the circulation of image munitions and counter-image munitions about 7/7 with reference to stories of heroism (such as that of Paul Dadge, a London commuter) and the release of suicide video wills by Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, two of the 7/7 bombers. Finally, I examine a number of interventions produced by new media actors with divergent intentions from those of Al Qaeda, further evidence that the remediation of image munitions is now unpredictable and beyond the control of specific social groups.

Chapter Five, 'Executions', examines another important part of the image warfare theatre of war. To begin, I discuss three related and symbolically powerful terrorist tactics: hijackings, hostage-takings and hostage executions. I explore how hijackings and hostage-takings are conducted to produce a strong media presence, reinforce us versus them distinctions and maintain media interest for the duration of the crisis. I similarly explore how hostage executions are carried out for the same reasons as hijackings and hostage-takings but how they are also conducted with the intention of manufacturing and deploying powerful image munitions. I discuss these terrorist

tactics with specific reference to airplane hijackings pre-9/11, the hijacking of the cruise ship *Achille Lauro*, the Aldo Moro hostage-taking and execution and the Beirut hostage crisis from the 1980s. I then conceptualise and distinguish between two categories of hostage: ‘voluntary’ and ‘involuntary’ and also engage Jean Baudrillard on hostages and ‘symbolic exchange’, before turning to examine contemporary hostage-takings and executions in the war on terror, specifically: Daniel Pearl, Nick Berg, Kenneth Bigley and Alan Johnston. These hostage-takings and executions are all symbolically powerful; this is partly proven by the Johnston hostage-taking but also by the fact that a plot to kidnap and behead a British Muslim soldier in Birmingham has been foiled and the fact that writers and directors have also begun to appropriate this symbolism in their fictional depictions of the war on terror. Hostage execution image munitions have since also been picked up and deployed by new media actors with intentions that are entirely distinct from Al Qaeda, evidence of the uncontrollability of images in the current rhizomatic media system. I also explore how executions have been misjudged in the war on terror, especially by America but also by the new Iraqi government. I discuss how although death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein were released to the media in an attempt to win over the hearts and minds of Iraqis, they have instead been picked up and deployed by Al Qaeda against the Bush administration and also picked up and remediated by new media actors with intentions that are entirely distinct from both the Bush administration and Al Qaeda. The same mistakes were again made by the Bush administration, but also by the new Iraqi government, with the transformation of the capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein into a media spectacle. Again this was done to try and win the hearts and minds of Iraqis but instead it resulted in Al Qaeda picking up and deploying these damaging image munitions against the Bush administration and the new Iraqi government. Since, new media actors have also picked up and deployed these Saddam Hussein image munitions with intentions that are distinct from the Bush administration, the new Iraqi government or indeed Al Qaeda – proof, once again, that the spectacle of execution can no longer be controlled in the internet age.

Chapter Six, ‘Abuses’, discusses another part of the image warfare theatre of war. However, this case study is distinct from my previous case studies because rather than examining image munitions that were produced with the specific intention of

being weaponized and deployed in the war of images. Instead, I examine abuses in the war on terror that were not meant to be made public but which have since been picked up and weaponized in the war on terror against the Bush administration and the Blair government. I also discuss how war abuses have largely remained out of sight but how when they have been made public they have quickly been mobilized by anti-war protesters and popular culture and I also discuss Nicholas Mirzoeff's account of 'The Empire of Camps' – the so-called invisible war on terror – and its role in image warfare. This leads onto a discussion of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal and when the Abu Ghraib images were in fact transformed into damaging image munitions. I also illustrate this discussion with an examination of a selection of the Abu Ghraib image munitions and also image remediations – produced by new media actors who have picked up and deployed the Abu Ghraib image munitions with intentions that are distinct from either the American soldiers who originally shot them or anti-war protesters, NGO's and Al Qaeda who have deployed them; all evidence of the uncontrollable circulation of images in the information age. Attention then turns to both Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme – two other features of the invisible war on terror – and here I survey their circulation through witness testimony, reports and images and their remediation by new media actors; further evidence of the deterritorialised and unpredictable circulation of images in the internet age. I then discuss General Sir Michael Jackson's announcement of an investigation into the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by some British soldiers and how this was immediately followed by the publication of damaging faked prisoner abuse images in *The Daily Mirror*. This episode, I argue, has had major implications for discussions about the invisibility/visibility of abuse in the war on terror and about the relationship between real and faked abuse images. I also discuss how Britain eventually released image munitions featuring the real abuse of Iraqi prisoners by some British soldiers at Camp Breadbasket. This is further evidence that Britain misunderstands image warfare and still believes that it can control the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror. In conclusion, I consider the so-called 'own goal effect' of abuse image munitions in the war on terror and the early attempts by President Barack Obama to promote transparency, bring to an end the invisible war on terror and exorcise Bush's legacy.

Overall this thesis argues that the image circulates differently through contemporary society, identifying a transition from a mass communication system to a rhizomatic communication system, also that contemporary war has changed: shifting from techno-war to image warfare. I also show how in the first decade of the twenty-first century the American and British governments and militaries have failed to adapt to image warfare, instead fighting the war on terror with an outdated techno-war way of warfighting; whereas Al Qaeda has instead embraced image warfare. I argue that America and Britain needs to respond to these new security challenges by embracing image warfare if they wish to regain a strategic advantage back from Al Qaeda in the war on terror. Also, I show how an embracing of ideas found in Media Studies and Visual Culture can give International Relations theory a more sophisticated understanding of new media and images. This, I hope, will encourage more IR theorists to engage with literature in Media Studies, Visual Culture and beyond and properly theorise this new theatre of war rather than simply recycling techno-war.

## **Chapter One**

### **War/Images and International Relations Theory**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter surveys the study of the relationship between war and images within International Relations theory. That relationship, like propaganda, is perhaps as old as war itself. However, in the contemporary period, it has changed radically and in ways that IR theory does not always fully appreciate. As I will show, theories of conflict and strategy have come to recognise the importance in war of information, news and images and are preoccupied with trying to dominate this field as one might in the conventional battle theatre. But the challenge that theorists must rise to today is posed by the fact that information, news and images cannot now be dominated by anyone.

To make possible further consideration of these issues, this chapter begins by examining contemporary transformations of the production, distribution and reception of mediated information. I argue that this is best conceptualised as a shift from a “mass-media” model of communication to what I describe as a networked/rhizomatic model of communication. I then also consider the recent history of the relationship between media and war, drawing attention to the major changes in the structure and circulation of media coverage of conflict: exploring in turn the Vietnam War (the first television war), the 1991 Gulf War (the first real-time war), the Kosovo Conflict (the first internet war) and finally September 11, 2001 and the war on terror (which, as I will show, heralds the emergence of a full-blown image warfare). Once I have mapped these step-changes in media form and structure, and in the intersection of war and media, I turn to an examination of the work of key IR theorists with an interest in conceptualising and analysing ‘image warfare’. I first explore François Debrix’s theorisation of the construction of a ‘risk’ or ‘terror’ discourse. An important aspect of Debrix’s work is that he extends the reach of IR theory into a consideration of the impact and significance of representations from within popular culture. I then examine Richard Jackson’s work on the role of

language in the construction of the discourse of the war on terror showing how his approach opens up new and important terrain but, however, it is also limited by a conception of language that underplays the specific force and mobility of images. Stuart Croft has, perhaps more than anyone, contributed greatly to our capacity to theorise and analyse the construction of a war on terror meta-narrative and does so with reference to both visual and popular culture. In particular his conception of the 'crisis cycle' provides a useful framework for analysis. After examining Croft I go on to consider Milena Michalski and James Gow's argument that moving images are the key weapons in contemporary war. Theirs is, as I show, an important argument but – again – limited by attention to a single mode of media, the cinematic/televsual narrative, and thus unable to recognise important aspects of the power and mobility of the still image.

In exploring Michael J. Shapiro's work on what he refers to as a 'new violent cartography' and also his exploration of its counter-spaces – specifically international film festivals. I show how it is necessary to acknowledge the variety of spaces in and through which not only narratives but also images may flow. Finally, I explore the crucial work of James Der Derian who, in his journey through the American RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) war machine, the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network or MIME-NET, shows clearly how the Pentagon's RMA inspired way of warfighting has become outdated in an age of image warfare.

As I will show, IR theory has begun to make great advances towards appreciating and understanding the importance of images, their production, circulation, content and form, to contemporary ideologies and cultures of conflict. This has also made it possible to comprehend that the image is also a tool of war, a weapon deployed into distinct fields of battle. However, to fully understand that field it is also important to understand more about images themselves and, crucially, appreciate how the contemporary media landscape has changed to such an extent that traditional concepts of how to seize, control and retain a terrain can no longer be applied there. I now turn to a discussion of the changing form of media actors, their objects and subjects.

## Media Actors, Objects and Subjects

Concerning myself with media does not mean that my concern is restricted to a single phenomenon or activity but, rather, with relationships between parties to forms of communicative transfer. To understand the place of media in, for instance, the 'war on terror' I need, then, to attend to the relationship between a diverse range of institutions, persons, groups, things and so on. Perhaps the most straightforward way to begin grasping something of the (changing) quality and tone of these relationships is to think in terms of media actors, media objects and media subjects. Here, media 'actors' refers to both the persons and the institutions dedicated to the refining of the raw material of events and its conversion into 'news'. What they produce are 'objects' the texts (written, audio, visual and so on) that then circulate, are made available in some way, to the 'subjects' who consume them (also in various ways).

The actions of media actors are governed by a variety of forces. This includes of course the perceived interests of media institutions, which may also shape the information media actors produce. Media institutions are generally if not exclusively commercial and reliant on advertising revenue. They are therefore shaped to some extent by the need to meet market objectives, perhaps also by public relations advisors and advertisers. But media actors' behaviours are also shaped by their own internal routines and traditions: tacit as well as explicit rules which shape what information can and cannot be produced and shown by a media institution. In addition they are influenced by official, social as well as governmental regulations a breach of which may occasion censure.<sup>23</sup> Finally, media actors are also influenced by the kind of technology that is available. Without the aid of technology raw information about events taking place in the world cannot be reported. Marshall McLuhan captures this perfectly with his statement: *the medium is the message*.<sup>24</sup> Technology is therefore a vehicle of communication but not one that is entirely neutral in its effects. At its simplest the processes of media communication may be conceived as simply involving the formation of a message sent to a receiver. However, the history of media theory is the history of the increasing complexity of such a model of communication and as I will show the contemporary developments

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<sup>23</sup> Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding', pp. 507-18

<sup>24</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 19

in media and communication technologies have had a profound effect on who and what can be a 'media actor'.

Objects are the products produced by media actors and disseminated to audiences. The nature of these objects may be greatly shaped by some of the same forces that affect media actors including commercial interests, routines, traditions, regulations and technologies. For instance, famously, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky have identified five primary news filters which, they argue, shape the selection and presentation of news material: ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak and anti-communism.<sup>25</sup> But in addition to these ideological forces, what is important to note is the extent to which media outputs are packaged objects created in line with rules not only of institutions but also of genre and form that are then inserted into the news-cycle via a news broadcast and then circulated to audiences. Indeed, the news broadcast itself is a genre invented by media actors for the dissemination of objects to audiences but which now defines the ways in which actors make and produce news. But these are changing under the pressure of new technologies. News broadcasts appear on all media platforms and although the format of the news broadcast and the kind of objects used will vary depending on the platform and the technology at the disposal of the media actor what is consistent across all news broadcasts is the use of inserted objects to help convey messages to audiences. Objects can also be described as texts (and images) as they are all forms of communication. A news broadcast therefore is the product of a complex intertextuality of objects, becoming ever more complex with each new media technology, as audiences can now consume the news in varied ways and as the context of texts and objects continues to change.

Given the complex intertextuality and the range of forces that might shape the objects of media production, it is clear that communication models need to be more complex than those developed by early communication theorists such as Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver. Their 'information model' simply described the conversion of information into a message, passed through a transmitter which converts the message into a signal which, when received, can be turned back into a

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<sup>25</sup> Edward S. Herman, and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 2



consumable message.<sup>26</sup> As Stuart Hall demonstrated in his 'encoding/decoding' model of communication<sup>27</sup> codes and signs are contained within all media messages which are to be understood, and analysed, as distinct moments within the communicative process, their coding and the subtleties of their decoding are vital and complex parts of the overall process. According to Debbie Lisle, Hall's model challenges this position on two points:

First, [Hall] suggests that all media texts are *polysemic*; that is, each document – a television show, a photograph, a novel – contains a number of possible interpretations. What happens in the process of communication is that all these different interpretations are gathered up and squashed into a preferred meaning that serves dominant political agendas. Second, [Hall] suggests that there is no guarantee that the preferred meaning encoded into a media text by its producers will be read in the intended way by its consumers. Certainly many people will 'get the message', but many people will not – and some will deliberately refuse it.<sup>28</sup>

One effect of Hall's model then is to foreground the complexities of audience consumption of 'reading'. Hall's model shows that the audience is indeed diverse and unpredictable rather than simply being uniform and predictable. This brings us to the 'subjects' of media processes: the audiences that consume media objects and that are diverse and highly unpredictable to such an extent that media actors can never fully predict how such subjects will respond to objects. Furthermore, in the contemporary period the complexity of the relationship between media actors and subjects has increased dramatically, in ways that constitute a fundamental change and in ways that impact on media and war. Where the mass communication model describes a system characterised by a few dominant media actors, who produce a limited range of products for dissemination to a largely undifferentiated audience it is now clear that communication is not such a straightforward affair and there is not always a centralised, top-down flow of information. In the traditional model communication is a producer-led business with a privileged position also occupied by governments and militaries concerned to censor and control information. It is just this kind of domination that is made more complex as communication technologies

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<sup>26</sup> See Claude E. Shannon, and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois, 1998)

<sup>27</sup> Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding', pp. 507-18

<sup>28</sup> Debbie Lisle, 'How Do We Find out What's Going on in the World?' in *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, eds. Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 161

have become more affordable, and this has changed not only the media landscape but also the actors, objects and subjects that move within it. Today there are many kinds of media outlet that compete with each other for the attention of audiences who have access to an ever more diverse range of media content from an expanding number of devices.

The overall effect of this has been somewhat paradoxical. As media platforms, products and audiences have diversified so media conglomerates have become ever larger in an attempt to maintain their dominant position. Media conglomerates – such as *Time Warner*, *Disney* and *News Corporation* – have used their significant resources to proliferate and expand their ownership of a diverse range of different media. For example Rupert Murdoch's *News Corporation* has acquired companies concerned with: books, newspapers, magazines, music, radio, film studios and television broadcasting. In owning multiple companies across different media *News Corporation* is able to produce a more diverse range of media content. Yet, at the same time as this concentration of ownership there has also been a decentralising of media use and control, as a consequence of radical technological change that has had significant effects on audiences, or subjects, of media communication.

The development of satellite and cable broadcasting and twenty-four hour real-time news has revolutionized communication. It has significantly increased airspace, and made communication technologies increasingly accessible to new media actors, able to set up new channels, to produce and disseminate their own content ready to be consumed by new audiences. Cable News Network (CNN) pioneered twenty-four hour news broadcasting and by the time of the 1991 Gulf War had also pioneered real-time news coverage, presenting landmark coverage of the war as it was unfolding. This, as Lisle argues, began to alter the balance of power between state and media actors:

Such intense media saturation during the Gulf War increased the power of the media to determine how governments responded to international crises. Indeed, throughout the 1990s people identified the 'CNN effect', in which the military no longer works in a *pre-emptive* mode (that is, controlling and

censoring reporters during war), but now works in a *reactive* mode where it is forced to respond – sometimes militarily – to issues raised by the media.<sup>29</sup>

CNN, however, reinforces the dominant mass communication model. It is a centralised media actor that produces news content for dissemination to a mass audience. Although satellite and cable broadcasting offers increased choice for audiences, they are still largely owned and controlled by traditional media actors, such as *News Corporation* which owns *BSkyB*. However, the development of non-Western news channels has been important in changing the balance of media power. A twenty-four hour news network, Al Jazeera was set up by the Emir of Qatar, in 1996, as a direct challenge to CNN. Although Al Jazeera is a centralized media actor – like CNN – it challenges Western domination of the news media. It was not until after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks when Al Jazeera became true competition for CNN and other Western news channels. Following 9/11 Al Jazeera began airing bin Laden videos and from here these video messages were quickly picked up by Western news networks which circulated them internationally. Al Jazeera has since built a formidable international reputation for airing challenging content, such as suicide video wills and hostage videos, which other networks would not premier. However, the BBC and CNN have since routinely aired this challenging content second-hand via Al Jazeera.

Al Jazeera is therefore a significant new media actor. It produces diverse news content that previously would not have received airtime and allows it to circulate internationally. As Philip Seib observes, ‘[s]atellite television channels continue to proliferate and their impact on politics and society generally continues to grow’, but also, as he continues, ‘[a]s the satellites these channels use whirl through space, the Al Jazeera effect is also receiving a boost from the tools of cyberspace.’<sup>30</sup> Al Jazeera, then, has been very important in challenging Western domination of the news media. But, equally important in forcing governments and militaries into a ‘*reactive* mode’ where they have to respond to content being produced by new media actors, who have access to a range of other new media technologies that yet further

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 154

<sup>30</sup> Seib, *The Al-Jazeera Effect*, p. 45

complicate the relationship between media, objects and subjects and that do so in ways which make control of media much more challenging.

Although the internet and mobile phones have been around for some time it was not until the turn of the twenty-first century when these communication technologies became accessible to the masses. Content is now no longer solely controlled from the top-down by a few powerful media actors forming a centralised network. Rather, content can often bypass traditional media actors' altogether as new actors and subjects communicate directly with each other via the internet and through mobile phones. Today's new media environment is dominated by User Generated Content (UGC) and citizen journalism where audiences are now able to start creating, uploading and disseminating their own new media content for audiences to consume and where traditional media actors can also be found sourcing content.

Blogging, for example, has become an increasingly popular way to distribute content over the internet. It is immediate and direct. Once a message has been typed out by a new media actor and they have pressed the publish button then the content is immediately available for an international audience to read, comment on or indeed appropriate. In the war on terror the warblog has become popular with those journalists dissatisfied with the restrictions of mainstream publishing, with soldiers who want to put their thoughts and opinions about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq into the public domain and with citizens in the Afghanistan and Iraq theatres of conflict (something I will return to in Chapter Two).

*YouTube* is another popular way to distribute new media content. It too is immediate and direct. Once a user has finished uploading their video content they can then immediately publish it for others to view, comment on and appropriate. In the war on terror a number of soldiers have uploaded content to *YouTube*. Some of this content is innocent, showing soldiers during their down time playing football in the desert or re-enacting Peter Kay's charity video of Tony Christie's song: *Is This the Way to Amarillo*. But some of this content is of a more challenging nature, presenting soldiers discussing their number of 'kills' or showing somewhat gruesome scenes from battles (examples of what some have come to call war porn). This kind of footage has come under critical scrutiny not only for its bad taste but also as

potentially posing a significant challenge to operational security in the Afghanistan and Iraq theatres of operation. However, the British and American militaries have been unable to ban this kind of content from appearing on *YouTube* completely (see Chapters Three to Six).

Social Networking Sites, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, also facilitates the publication of new media content and its distribution via the internet. New media actors can use such sites to write messages, upload audio, image and video content and then to mobilize campaigns. Mobile phones also enable users to now take photos and videos, connect to the internet and publish directly and immediately without the intervention of news networks (see Chapters Two, Four and Five).

All of this amounts to an important, even a profound, shift in the balance between media actors, objects and subjects. Hall's model introduces the singular significance of media objects, requiring that they be attended to as a determinate moment in the communications process. In so doing, and in emphasising the complexity with which audiences may consume media objects, Hall greatly disturbed traditional media models, introducing into the circuit elements from the routines, traditions and contexts of media actors and institutions, audiences and media forms themselves. In showing the extent to which these were embedded in wider social and economic circuits he also showed how the expectations of media actors and the responses of media subjects could be connected, completing a closed circuit. However, new media technologies disturb such a model even more. As I have shown, such technologies do not merely enable a few new media actors but make it possible for audiences to become producers, responding to, commenting on and creating their own media objects. At the same time media actors are making use of citizen journalism or carrying the homemade productions of activists become audiences. Consequently, the environment in which media objects are produced, transmitted and received has become increasingly complex and unpredictable and the positions of audiences and actors unstable, even reversible. This has also changed, dramatically, the circulation of media objects between parties and, importantly as I will show shortly, made it possible for objects to be circulated, and recirculated between varied audiences and producers, making them simultaneously freer than ever before (images

for instance may pop up in all sorts of unexpected and incongruous contexts) yet they are also more dependent on context for intelligibility and meaning.

This is not to suggest that there has been any sort of destruction of mass broadcasting or media conglomerates or that state control and regulation of media has become impossible. James Der Derian has examined attempts to do so as part of investigating the Pentagon's contemporary reimagining of the mass communication model: the military-industrial-media-entertainment network (MIME-NET). He explores how the Pentagon has teamed up with the University of Southern California, with industry in the Silicon Valley, the media and Hollywood entertainment executives and established the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT).<sup>31</sup> The MIME-NET is positioned at the heart of the contemporary American war machine and is the home of a number of collaborative projects – such as the development of new military technologies (weapons and communication systems), military simulations, the production of a war script for invading Afghanistan, the designing of a media centre in Doha, Qatar and the manufacture of a number of media spectacles. However, the extent to which the MIME-NET assumes that information can still be controlled is yet to be established (see my discussion of the MIME-NET later in this Chapter) and as a result it fails to fully grasp the complexity and the challenges of the new media age. For the scope and scale of the transformation of the media environment is such as to require a development in the way I conceive of communication away from variants of mass communication to what I will call a 'rhizomatic' model of communication.

I take this term in part from Arjun Appadurai who writes of how, '[t]he world we live in now seems rhizomatic, even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation, and psychological distance between individuals and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other.'<sup>32</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari identify two specific examples of rhizomes within the plant kingdom: tubers and bulbs<sup>33</sup> and, from within the animal

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<sup>31</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*. 2nd eds.

<sup>32</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota, 1996), p. 29

<sup>33</sup> Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 6

kingdom, ants.<sup>34</sup> What they draw attention to is the way in which both spread out not through the building of a vertical hierarchy but horizontally, spreading out and establishing new kinds of connection. In contemporary society, they argue, the rhizome

ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not just linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialectics, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community.<sup>35</sup>

This description of a rhizomatic society perfectly encapsulates the shape and experience of the internet which facilitates the ceaseless opening up of connections with different semiotic chains, furthermore, like a tuber, if one node is cut off from the network then the connection is not fully broken – the node simply opens a new connection with another semiotic chain and so the network continues. That network includes, of course, not only the sites and modes of communication but the producers and consumers as well – with the precise location of each shifting depending on where – and when – they form part of the chain. As I have shown one mistake of traditional models of media communication was to assume that the audience is uniform and predictable. As Hall argues,<sup>36</sup> this is not the case. Rather the audience is diverse. Deleuze and Guattari take this further arguing that ‘there is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogenous linguistic community’. Theirs is a description of a complex, heterogeneous audience that may be active as well as passive: just the kind of audience that today populates and uses the internet and that creates and consumes new media content. In the rhizomatic communication model messages are subject to unpredictable circulation and as such the traditional relationship between media actors, objects and subjects is now also increasingly unpredictable. This is thanks in part to a greater diversity of media actors and subjects. Subjects now also have the ability to produce their own objects without

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7

<sup>36</sup> Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding', pp. 507-18

having to first engage with traditional media actors and subjects can now also dictate what kinds of objects traditional media actors' source and disseminate.

The utility of this kind of conception of media is well demonstrated by Patrick Fuery and Kelli Fuery who have adapted Deleuze's and Guattari's theory to help theorise images.<sup>37</sup> They have explored how defining images of key events become distributed and copied throughout society, like socially based rhizomes opening up new connections with 'semiotic chains.' They reveal that '[w]hat is perhaps of even greater significance, however, is that these connections are not just to other images. Instead the rhizomatic feature of connections extends across a vast array of subjects, and is in a constant state of production.'<sup>38</sup> The rhizomatic nature of images helps to explain the complex journeys of images in the war on terror and the ability of these powerful images to circulate throughout society. Images have the ability to transcend different media platforms and social contexts. Once an image crosses over from one medium to another or from one social group to another a new state of production immediately begins. Images, like rhizomes, are also resilient, according to Deleuze and Guattari: 'A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.'<sup>39</sup> This is a good description which also translates well to a conceptualisation of the weaponizing of images: once an original image has been released any attempts then made to censor or delete it will be futile. The image can immediately be copied appearing across multiple media platforms and different image contexts. A good example of this is the photomontage work by the polemic artists Peter Kennard and Martha Rosler. Both artists have made powerful political statements through their photomontage work and the remediation of iconic images. Peter Kennard has concisely described the motivation behind his art and it serves as a good description of the image as a rhizome in a constant new state of production:

The photojournalist goes out and takes the pictures; I sit in a room with the tools of my trade and try to pummel these pictures into revealing invisible connections, disconnecting them from direct representation into statement and argument. Although, compared to a photojournalist, I'm grounded and

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<sup>37</sup> Fuery and Fuery, *Visual Cultures*, p. 110

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113

<sup>39</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 9



stuck at my safe desk or in my darkroom under safelight, I still feel that my subject has to be made up from events from around the world.<sup>40</sup>

My point here is that no longer can a few powerful media actors control the flow of information or images; instead content production now takes place anywhere. Images now float freely. As a result, Appadurai believes ‘that the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes.’<sup>41</sup>

The importance of this for IR theory and Strategic Studies is that it makes possible new kinds of political, civil and potentially military actions. For example anti-war protest movements and pro-war movements both exploit the rhizomatic nature of the media to interfere with official media. A range of actions of varied motivations and forms are taking place which undermine and corrupt the format of images by reinserting them into unexpected parts of the media universe. Examples of this that I will explore in more detail later on include *YouTube* video parodies of hostage execution videos (see Chapter Five) or parodies of bin Laden in movie posters (see Chapter Three).

If International Relations theorists want to understand media/images in contemporary war then no longer can they think of the media in terms of media actors who produce information and disseminate it to passive audiences. IR theorists must instead realize that the relationship is now more complex: audiences are more diverse and the relationship between media actors and audiences is now a site and form of contestation. Communications of all kinds can be made directly over the internet rather than passing through central networks controlled by a few powerful media actors. This shift from a mass communication model to a rhizomatic communication model is singularly important to understanding why it is that governments and militaries can no longer control the spectacle of war.<sup>42</sup> In the age of mass

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<sup>40</sup> Peter Kennard, *Dispatches from an Unofficial War Artist* – Extract, Available at: [http://www.peterkennard.com/main/home\\_set.htm](http://www.peterkennard.com/main/home_set.htm). Accessed on 19 January 2008

<sup>41</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 31

<sup>42</sup> My understanding of the spectacle of war is adapted from Guy Debord’s description of a spectacle: ‘The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.’ See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p. 12. Paraphrasing Debord – the spectacle of war

communication governments and militaries were able to either censor the information leaving war zones – with information first having to pass through centrally controlled military censors – or control the information that journalists had access to – via press pools. However, in the rhizomatic age, information is increasingly sourced and disseminated via decentralised new media – such as the internet, mobile phones, blogs, *YouTube* and Social Networking Sites (like *Facebook* and *Twitter*). It therefore, lies beyond the immediate control of governments, militaries and media conglomerates and becomes instead not only a tool of political and military conflict but, as I will now see, one of its theatres.

### **War and Images**

The process of visualising war is almost as old as warfare itself: from ancient cave paintings and hieroglyphs in Egypt, to ancient Greek pottery, through Renaissance art, to early twentieth century propaganda, the television age and beyond.<sup>43</sup> What are consistently present in the background of historical wars are propaganda and the mass communication model. During the twentieth century (often characterized as the age of mass media) images and propaganda – a tool of persuasion used to gain public support – became more sophisticated. Nicholas Reeves describes the way in which, at the start of the century, the mass media were conceived of as ‘either a ‘magic bullet’, capable of inflicting propaganda wounds on the mass audience that was powerless to resist, or as an ‘hypodermic needle’ in which, once again, the masses could not resist the messages which were being injected into its body politic.’<sup>44</sup> However, as the century progressed, the conception of propaganda, and its use, became ever more sophisticated.

The Second World War saw the mass media enlisted in the war effort and was an important turning point in terms of war propaganda and public diplomacy. Prior to the declaration of war ‘the arts’ (including images) were already being mobilized, simultaneously with ‘the armies’ of both Britain and Germany and others. As an

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is not a collection of war images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by war images.

<sup>43</sup> See David D. Perlmutter, *Visions of War: Picturing Warfare from the Stone Age to the Cyber Age* (New York, NJ: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001)

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* (London: Cassell, 1999), p. 5

*arms-race* ensued, so a similar *arts-race* was also being conducted by the Propaganda Ministries of these countries. Artists, writers, directors, conductors and so forth were employed to produce, firstly, morale-boosting material and secondly material with the intention of striking fear into the hearts of their enemy. In Britain the *arts-race*, according to Reeves, 'saw unprecedented co-operation, both between the Ministry [of Information] and the [British film] industry and within the various constituent elements of the industry itself.'<sup>45</sup> Z. A. B. Zeman, in *Nazi Propaganda*, shows how Josef Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister of the Nazi Party during the Second World War, understood images and knew how to manufacture and release 'the right image at the right time.'<sup>46</sup>

Propaganda at this time was viewed in a very different way to today. Philip Hammond argues that whereas 'in the past propaganda generally played a secondary role, aimed at securing public support for a military venture,'<sup>47</sup> more recently 'the point of the missions undertaken by the Western military has often seemed to be primarily their propaganda value rather than, say, the acquisition of territory or the achievement of some strategic goal.'<sup>48</sup> What Hammond describes is a definite shift in the positioning of propaganda within contemporary warfare. Whereas in the past propaganda was essentially seen as playing a secondary role within war, today propaganda has assumed a primary position within it. That primacy of propaganda within war was confirmed when the media spectacle of September 11, 2001 was communicated globally as a declaration of war, by Al Qaeda, against the West. This has also resulted in the opening up of a new theatre of war: techno-war has given way to image warfare. According to Colin McInnes: 'In the previous decade, war had become something conducted at a safe distance. But on 11 September the attacks were at the heart of the West, against the capital of the United States and against one of its most famous and most visited cities.'<sup>49</sup> 'Distant suffering'<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 160

<sup>46</sup> Z. A. B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda* (New York, NJ: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 36

<sup>47</sup> Philip Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 41

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41

<sup>49</sup> Colin McInnes, 'A Different Kind of War? September 11 and the United States' Afghan War', *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003), p. 171

<sup>50</sup> See Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London Sage Publications, 2006)

collapsed and New York instead 'became the sufferer.'<sup>51</sup> In response President George W. Bush, with much international support, declared a war against terror.

The following four sections of this chapter discuss in more detail this changing relationship between images and war from the Vietnam War, through the First Gulf War, the Kosovo Conflict to September 11<sup>th</sup> and the war on terror. I will explore: the effect of the televising of war and the ways in which journalists were able to operate unilaterally from the war theatre; the effect of real-time communication on war and the ways in which the Pentagon sought to develop a new way of warfighting and also to control the flow of information to the news media. The impact of the internet on war and how this allowed the American military to have greater interoperability, but how it also allowed journalists to have greater access to information in the war theatre, and finally, how image warfare was realised with the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the war on terror. As I will show the American government and military have struggled to maintain control of the spectacle of war as society has moved away from a mass media system to a more rhizomatic and diverse media system which has in turn made information and images about war into more than a merely secondary element but a full-blown theatre of conflict. Furthermore, what has since become clear about this new age of warfare is the inability of Western militaries to respond effectively to these new image related challenges. Instead of having to deal once more with unilateral journalists (as in Vietnam) the challenge is how to deal effectively with unilateral terrorists who can deliver dangerous and damaging weaponized images directly to editors for immediate circulation. P. J. Crowley argues that America is currently losing the battle for hearts and minds in the Islamic world while the Al Qaeda brand has instead become increasingly popular.<sup>52</sup> So far Western techno-war strategists have failed to deal effectively with the new image warfare theatre of war.

### **Media and the Vietnam War**

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<sup>51</sup> Lillie Chouliaraki, 'Watching 11 September: The Politics of Pity'. *Discourse & Society* 15, no. 2-3 (2004), p. 186

<sup>52</sup> P. J. Crowley, 'The Battle of Narratives: The Real Central Front against Al Qaeda', in *The Impact of 9/11 on the Media, Arts and Entertainment*, ed. Matthew J. Morgan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 37

The Vietnam War is a clear example of the Pentagon attempting to dominate the media and finding it more of a challenge to do so than it had expected. When America went to war against Vietnam, in March 1965,<sup>53</sup> few could have guessed the significant long-term impact this war would eventually have. This was when postmodern war began.<sup>54</sup> Television enabled war, for the first time, to be beamed into people's living rooms. Since World War Two, the war in the Pacific and Korea, right up until Vietnam, war had largely been put to the back of the American public's mind. This distancing from the events of war was a coping mechanism but it was also due to the fact that war was no longer directly affecting society at home. There was no shortage of food, the draft had ended and minimal numbers of American soldiers were being killed. All of these factors meant that the hell of war was slowly being forgotten. War films about World War Two in both the Western and Pacific theatres, like *The Great Escape* and *Sands of Iwo Jima*, were helping to fictionalize the events of the Second World War. However, as the war in Vietnam went on, more and more American soldiers were being killed and yet more were returning home with horrific war wounds: burns, amputated limbs and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This reconnected families of military personnel and others with the horrors of war. As the war continued the draft was eventually reintroduced and unlike in World War II it proved very unpopular with some.

Another way in which the American public were reconnecting with war was through their televisions. Many homes in America had a television set sitting in the corner of the living room and every evening families right across America would sit down and tune in to watch the evening news, waiting to see and hear the latest about the war over in Vietnam. The nightly news showed the war in 'Technicolor' and reporters did not shy away from showing scenes of war which sometimes disturbed sections of the audience. The main concern of reporters was to communicate the realities of war

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<sup>53</sup> Much debate still takes place among historians over when the Vietnam War actually began. This is because no official declaration of war was ever actually made; it was more of a process towards all out war. Vietnam had been at war with itself since the 1950s, however, when the US Aircraft Carrier "Core" entered the region in December 1961 this moved the conflict away from merely being a regional dispute to an issue firmly on the American political agenda. The next major event, in terms of the escalation of war, came in March 1965 when the first US troops were posted into Vietnam. This signalled the start of the war proper as it was then that American soldiers began dying and this was when the war shifted from being merely a concept in the public's mind to actually being a reality in the minds of the public.

<sup>54</sup> See Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict* (London Routledge, 1997)

back home rather than getting too caught up with the sometimes delicate sensibilities of their audience. Many of the journalists reporting from the theatre of operations were operating unilaterally, reporting on events without fear of censorship from the Pentagon. Robin Andersen has recorded how:

[p]hotographers captured images of battles fought in the streets of Saigon, including wounded U.S. soldiers, and television brought those pictures into American living rooms during dinnertime. New satellite technology allowed immediate uplinks that made airtime with very little editing...One of the most disturbing sequences of the war was caught on film during Tet: the summary execution of a Vietcong officer by a South Vietnamese general. Though the final sequence of the soldier's death was edited for television, NBC producer Robert J. Northfield described the footage as "the strongest stuff American viewers had ever seen." Photojournalist Eddie Adams also took stills of the street execution, and the images became known as "the shot seen around the world."<sup>55</sup>

American military censors were ill-prepared to handle television in the warzone because they were still adhering to a mass communication model mindset. They responded by adapting press conferences for wartime and came up with daily military press briefings. These press briefings were an attempt by the military to try and regain control of the information and images leaving the war zone by providing journalists with ready packaged digests of information. However, these press briefings were not taken seriously by the media (and were nicknamed by them 'the five o'clock follies'). As a result many reports were sent back to editors without the approval of military censors.

Another method employed by the US military to try and regain control over the information leaving the conflict theatre, the deployment of American army photographers with military units. This was also not without its problems. Even though army photographers were loyal to the military they also had strong loyalties with the American public. A case in point would be the My Lai Massacre, from March 1968, where US army photographer Ronald L. Haeberle eventually released photographs of the massacre and its aftermath to the media. These images along with Nick Ut's *Accidental Napalm* image – of a naked girl with burning flesh running down a road towards the camera – and Eddie Adams's image showing the

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<sup>55</sup> Robin Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* (New York, NJ: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 49

execution of a Vietcong officer by a South Vietnamese general have become the icons of the Vietnam War.

From start to finish the entire military reaction to cameras and journalists in the theatre of operations was strategically wrong. According to Harry G. Summers Jr., the Pentagon had mistakenly tried to conceal the realities of war from the viewing public when they were all watching in 'living color' on a nightly basis.<sup>56</sup> As a result support for the war soon began to fall away and large numbers of American civilians took to the streets in protest against the war. These protests were also reported by the media and thus helped to further spread anti-war sentiment. With hindsight the Vietnam War should be considered a war between the media and the military where the media were more effective in exploiting the power of television to disseminate war information and where the military failed to respond to the new challenges of television and so let uncensored images leave the Vietnam theatre of operations.

During the Vietnam War the speed and context of war was such that reports were released at delayed intervals. However, the media proved they were better prepared for reporting the war than the military were in controlling its reporting. Consequently, after the war's conclusion the American military were forced into a period of self imposed international isolation and a major rethink regarding their way of warfighting. So began the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)<sup>57</sup> and a communications revolution, a Revolution in Media Affairs (RMeA), which would result in the development of real-time communications/war.

### **Media and the First Gulf War**

The contrast between Vietnam and the 1991 Gulf War was stark. Where the former was mediated through television and newspaper images and reports relayed at varied times, with official sources contrasting their version of events, the First Gulf War took place in real-time, 'live' and relayed by military command. The war in the Gulf represented a radical change in the military-media relationship. Officially the war

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<sup>56</sup> Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1995), p. 36

<sup>57</sup> See *The RMA Debate* online resource <http://www.comw.org/rma/index.html>

began on August 2, 1990 and concluded on February 28, 1991.<sup>58</sup> This war was also the first to be reported in real-time and it signified a massive watershed moment in terms of postmodern warfare. As Michael P. Clark has argued:

Along with the usual footage of troops marching, planes taking off and landing, and tanks rolling out on manoeuvres, the Gulf War also came home in exactly the same form that it appeared to many of the people fighting it, as an image on the video screen. Watching a blurry shape being framed by the electronic sight on a tank, the Iraqi landscape slide past the sighting screen on a fighter-bomber, or a bridge grow larger and larger as a smart bomb plunged toward its target, the viewer quite literally saw the same image of the war as the soldier and in fact *did* what the soldier did: looked.<sup>59</sup>

This left audiences feeling that they had actually witnessed the war. But it was mediated war, a simulacrum, a Baudrillardian hyperreality. The Pentagon selected and released a number of images to the world's press specifically with the intention of their being circulated and becoming the defining images of the conflict, the most iconic of which was the footage of PGM's hitting their targets with supreme accuracy. The war was concluded with a spectacular 100-hour ground offensive between February 24<sup>th</sup> and February 28<sup>th</sup> and all that was missing from it was a trumpeted fanfare as coalition forces entered Baghdad. This was indeed the pinnacle of 'spectator-sport war.'<sup>60</sup> While coalition forces were busy celebrating as they rolled into Baghdad, President George H. W. Bush was also busy celebrating and somewhat presumptively declaring that the Vietnam Syndrome had finally been "kicked".

Important lessons had indeed been learnt, by America, since the Vietnam War. The value of US soldiers' lives had changed; no longer were they seen as mere cannon fodder. The Pentagon realized that as news audiences watched wars unfolding on their television screens, and as the media were highlighting certain stories involving certain groups of military personnel it was only natural that audiences would feel an increased connection and be deeply affected when soldiers were killed in action. In

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<sup>58</sup> See Alastair Finlan, *The Gulf War 1991* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003)

<sup>59</sup> Michael P. Clark, 'The Work of War after the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *The Vietnam War and Postmodernity*, ed. Michael Bibby (Boston, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), p. 28

<sup>60</sup> See Colin McInnes, *Spectator-Sport War: The West and Contemporary Conflict* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002)



order to try and prevent this 'negative affect' from manifesting itself, the Pentagon developed a new way of warfighting which relied less on front-line soldiers and more on airpower. This new way of warfighting, as noted above, was premiered during the 1991 Gulf War. Also, instead of seeing the media as an enemy, the Pentagon unveiled plans to integrate the media within the American war process itself. This plan was sold to the media as a way to safeguard the lives of journalists as they would no longer have to operate unilaterally from dangerous front-line positions. This concern for journalist safety was also reflected, by the Pentagon, prior to the start of the war when it ordered all journalists out of Baghdad. The military then set up press pools at a purpose built facility where information would be distributed centrally by the American military through press briefings and this information would then be shared throughout the press pools by journalists. These press briefings provided journalists with packaged digests of information which could then easily be repackaged by journalists and sent back to their editors to be circulated to news audiences.

Philip M. Taylor has argued that audiences of the Iraq War were mesmerized by the real-time footage of the war.<sup>61</sup> But such mesmerizing goes even deeper. The journalists themselves were mesmerized by this military manufactured, heavily spun footage. They were not critical of the footage but simply circulated it, without developing effective ways to cope with the new challenges of reporting war in the age of real-time communications. As Cynthia Weber puts it:

What makes CNN so interesting is not only its fusion of news and entertainment but also the declaration its acronym makes. CNN does not only stand for the Cable News Network. Employing phonetic license, the acronym CNN announces that this network stands for the Circulation of Non-knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 14

<sup>62</sup> Cynthia Weber, 'The Media, the 'War on Terrorism', and the Circulation of Non-Knowledge', in *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, eds. Daya Kishan Thussu and Des Freedman (London: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 190

According to Robin Andersen: 'With the exception of Arnett in Baghdad and the controversy surrounding his reporting, American officials and military sources provided the overwhelming bulk of CNN's round-the-clock-coverage.'<sup>63</sup>

The First Gulf War was when media events<sup>64</sup> and war first came together in real-time for specific audiences. As a result, according to Leon Kreitzman, 'the world is [now] seen through a different lens.'<sup>65</sup> In some ways aspects of Raymond Williams' argument 'that cable television will be the final opening of Pandora's Box, or that satellite broadcasting will top out the Tower of Babel'<sup>66</sup> became a reality during the 1991 Gulf War. This development in news, meant that audiences felt that they could be *real* spectators and in a sense participants to the war and also react immediately to events as they were unfolding over in the distant Iraqi theatre of operations. Viewers were tricked into thinking that they were more than mere spectators. In reality, according to Kevin Robins, 'image technologies...may...be mobilised as intoxicating and narcotic distractions or defences against the vicissitudes of reality. And, at their most extreme, they may be used to construct alternative and compensatory realities.'<sup>67</sup>

This became a reality during Operation Desert Storm, when much of the footage released by the military to the press was clinical PGM footage taken from a safe distance. The 1991 Gulf War was effective in terms of war propaganda precisely because the American military were able to trick the media into doing their will (unlike during the Vietnam War) and thus present to news audiences clinical visuals which would not adversely effect morale and fuel anti-war sentiments. This reversal of fortunes put the military back in a dominant position over the media.

The 1991 Gulf War saw the start of real-time war. The military also proved that they were better prepared to control the centralized flow of war information leaving the theatre of operations, while the media instead merely reported – rather than

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<sup>63</sup> Andersen, *A Century of Media*, p. 187

<sup>64</sup> See Daniel Dayan, and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994)

<sup>65</sup> Leon Kreitzman, *The 24 Hour Society* (London: Profile Books, 1999), p. 63

<sup>66</sup> Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 128

<sup>67</sup> Kevin Robins, *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 123

questioned – the official version of events. However, this contemporary domination of the military over the media would not last for long.

### **Media and the Kosovo Conflict**

The difference between the First Gulf War and the Kosovo Conflict was obvious. Where the former saw the premiering of real-time communications/war and the dominance of official sources, the Kosovo Conflict saw the weaponizing of the internet and this new development further complicated the military-media relationship.

NATO forces intervened in Kosovo, in 1999, so that the Serbian military, led by Slobodan Milošević, could be ejected thus allowing displaced Kosovar Albanian refugees to return to their homeland. First a bombing campaign was undertaken, similar to the air campaign during the 1991 Gulf War. This was followed by the deployment of NATO peacekeeping forces. The bombing campaign was conducted to knock-out certain pre-selected nodes, specifically communication systems and transport systems like roads and bridges, before military ground forces were deployed. It was hoped that this air campaign would either paralyse the Serbian military to such an extent that it would force them to surrender, or, the Serbian military's ability to fight would be severely weakened.<sup>68</sup>

From an audience perspective the NATO bombing campaign was a spectacular, made-for-TV event. It shared all the hallmarks of the 1991 Gulf War air campaign: missiles were shown being launched by military personnel on aircraft carriers, a safe distance from the theatre of operations. Also, footage showing PGMs destroying bridges and other carefully selected targets were shown through the media. One particular PGM video perfectly reflected Western military concerns about collateral damage. The video showed a bridge with a vehicle travelling along it and the bridge being destroyed just after the vehicle has cleared it. Footage of missiles was also circulated throughout the international media, showing missiles travelling through

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<sup>68</sup> See Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Vintage, 2001)

the night skies, looking as one online observer put it, 'like flames and falling like stars.'<sup>69</sup>

The second phase of the military operation, the deployment of ground forces, again reflected Western concerns about collateral damage. It is significant that NATO decided to deploy peacekeeping forces rather than traditional military forces. This decision gives the impression that NATO believed that the conventional military operations had been concluded with the end of the air campaign. Peacekeeping forces are also distinct from traditional military forces as they are mandated to maintain the peace and not engage militarily unless their own lives are being directly threatened by enemy violence. Therefore they could not engage in skirmishes on the ground but only help maintain the peace.

The internet, then a relatively new technology, was mobilized with great effect during the war in Kosovo (and it is now referred to as the first internet war). This NATO led campaign also saw the auditioning of what James Der Derian has termed the RMA's 'hybridization of warring and gaming.'<sup>70</sup> Thanks to the internet, the Western military were able to conduct network-centric warfare where all arms of the military were able to communicate with each other in real-time. This meant that for the first time instant communications could be made and maintained between the military command base, soldiers on the ground, air force personnel and naval forces on aircraft carriers thus enabling military planners to respond to real-time situations and therefore adapt their plans to take account of these previously unaccountable events.

The Serbian military were also reliant on the internet for communications although they did not have the same network-centric capabilities as the NATO forces. Prior to important Serbian communication nodes being bombed, NATO forces had launched an electronic campaign against the Serbian military. They spread disinformation through email, they also urged military personnel to defect, tampered with Serbian intelligence, planted fake intelligence in Serbian information systems and uploaded

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Keenan, 'Looking Like Flames and Falling Like Stars: Kosovo, 'the First Internet War''. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 7, no. 4 (2001), p. 540

<sup>70</sup> James Der Derian, 'War as Game'. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2003), p. 39

computer viruses. This was psychological operations (psyops) for the information age.

The internet also had a significant effect on the media and this in turn affected the way journalists reported the war. In the 1991 Gulf War the media were caught off guard. But journalists had learned valuable lessons from this. Journalists were mindful not to rely again solely on military disseminated information. Instead the internet was exploited as a new source of information by the mainstream media, during the Kosovo Campaign, helping journalists to add depth to their news reports.

Thomas Keenan has argued that:

At the digital level, and at the speed of light, new fields of action emerged and were robustly populated. The channels were open. It was this alternative public sphere [the internet] that was put to the most extreme test...in the spring of 1999, when the war that had circled around Serbia and Kosovo for so many years finally landed.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, the Kosovo Conflict proved, according to Manuel Castells, the clear emergence of unofficial media actors and individuals and that:

states are losing the battle over media in the Information Age. The ability of information, and images, to diffuse via satellite, video-cassette, [DVD] or the Internet has dramatically expanded, so that news black-outs are increasingly ineffective in the main urban centers... precisely those places where the educated, alternative elites live.<sup>72</sup>

This is because these educated alternative elites mobilized themselves through the internet, writing blogs and publishing their accounts of the war for the rest of the world to read. From here these words were then circulated through the mainstream media. The internet therefore enabled alternative elites in the Kosovo theatre of operations to have a voice and communicate this voice clearly, directly and without too much censorship to audiences in the West. The internet dominated the course of the Kosovo Campaign. While NATO forces were busy exploiting this technology, conducting military operations whilst staying in constant communication with their commanders and carrying out unprecedented psychological operations (psyops) – the

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<sup>71</sup> Keenan, 'Looking Like Flames', pp. 542-543

<sup>72</sup> Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 2*, p. 257

media were also exploiting this technology and adapting to warfare in the internet age.

The Kosovo Conflict marked the start of internet warfare. A distinct new war platform had opened up; the military further advanced their psychological operations (psyops) and network-centric war while the media mobilized the internet. Once again the media routinely questioned the official version of events, thanks in part to the emergence of bloggers (eyewitnesses operating online within the theatre of operations). Therefore, any military advantage gained in Iraq was soon eroded by the media and civilian bloggers in Kosovo. Again the media edged ahead of the military in terms of information warfare dominance as military attempts to establish one central point of information control were again thwarted.

### **Media and September 11, 2001 and the War on Terror**

The contrast between the Kosovo Conflict and September 11<sup>th</sup>/the war on terror were marked. Where the former saw the start of internet war, the 9/11 attacks signalled a shift towards image warfare. Images did play an important role in the other conflicts. However, the other conflicts are defined by real-time communication and the internet. On September 11<sup>th</sup> traditional ways of warfighting became outdated almost over night. Even propaganda was promoted from a secondary role in war to one of centrality<sup>73</sup> as Al Qaeda weaponized images and deployed them against the West. All of the technology at the disposal of the Pentagon and the American Intelligence Services had not stopped Al Qaeda's 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to John Downey and Graham Murdock:

the events of 11 September 2001 heralded a *counter-revolution* in military affairs in which the established weapons of modern guerrilla warfare (hijacking, car bombs, suicide bombers, small arms and portable rocket launchers), coupled with the global dispersal of combatants effectively counteract many of the supposed gains from advanced weapons systems and communication networks.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See Philip Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 2007)

<sup>74</sup> John Downey, and Graham Murdock, 'The Counter-Revolution in Military Affairs: The Globalization of Guerrilla Warfare', in *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, eds. Daya Kishan Thussu and Des Freedman (London: Sage Publication, 2003), p. 71

The rules of the game had changed. Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling believe that:

On September 11, 2001, terrorists struck at the heart of the capitalist world-order. The attack and its targets demonstrated with horrendous efficiency that neither global wealth (World Trade Center (WTC)) nor military might (the Pentagon) could defend against low-tech, human sacrifices when mobilized.<sup>75</sup>

W. J. T. Mitchell has also argued that:

The destruction of the towers had no strategic military (as distinct from symbolic) importance and the murder of innocent people was, from the point of view of the terrorists, merely a regrettable side effect (“collateral damage” is the military euphemism) or merely instrumental to the aim of “sending a message” to America.<sup>76</sup>

The media was therefore central to Al Qaeda’s 9/11 plans especially its plans for the World Trade Center. Osama bin Laden was acutely aware that his terrorist organization could not hope to compete on traditional military terms with the West and needed to find a way to exploit existing systems. The media was an existing system that had already been successfully hijacked by terrorists and Al Qaeda knew that the media could again be exploited to disseminate their powerful images of terror. In selecting the WTC as a target Al Qaeda had intentionally selected a powerful media spectacle. According to Patrick Fuery and Kelli Fuery:

The Twin Towers were already established images, existing in so many of the visual representations of New York (and synecdochically, the USA), and the terrorists would have known that their acts would be captured by a variety of media. And it is the images of the towers that remain most vivid in people’s minds.<sup>77</sup>

According to Slavoj Žižek:

Is not the endlessly repeated shot of the plane approaching and hitting the second WTC tower the real-life version of the famous scene from Hitchcock’s *Birds*, superbly analysed by Raymond Bellour, in which Melanie

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<sup>75</sup> Anna M. Agathangelou, and L. H. M. Ling, 'Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11'. *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2004), p. 517

<sup>76</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 13

<sup>77</sup> Patrick Fuery, and Kelli Fuery, *Visual Cultures and Critical Theory* (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 69

approaches the Bodega Bay pier crossing the bay in a little boat? When, as she approaches the wharf, she waves to her (future) lover, a single bird (first perceived as an indistinguishable dark blot) unexpectedly enters the frame from above right, and hits her on the head. Was not the plane which hit the WTC tower literally the ultimate Hitchcockian blot, the anamorphic stain which denaturalized the idyllic well-known New York landscape?<sup>78</sup>

The media therefore unwittingly played an important force multiplier role on September 11<sup>th</sup>. They shot and circulated powerful images which have since formed the opening chapter of the iconography of the war on terror – these images were also the first of many that have since been manufactured and deployed by both Al Qaeda and Western governments in the war on terror.

In response to the terrorist attacks, America declared a war against the criminal acts of 9/11 – thus showing just how much the rules of the game have indeed changed. In order to help strategize this unique war situation the Pentagon enlisted members of the media and influential members of the Hollywood entertainment industry, gathering them together at the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technology, which James Der Derian has termed the MIME-NET. This is further evidence of America misunderstanding the changing information environment, still trying to control the spectacle of war and the kinds of information that journalists can circulate. Part of what was developed from this meeting was a war script. The media's job was then to cover the war in Afghanistan – America's response to 9/11 – as acted out by the military.<sup>79</sup>

The war in Afghanistan began as planned with a big budget remake of a combination of the First Gulf War and the Kosovo Conflict opening scenes: only this time Al Jazeera was playing the role of CNN. The TV friendly air campaign, or pilot episode, contained all of the now familiar elements like tracer fire racing across the night skies of Afghanistan. The second part of this war script was planned to be a short, sharp ground attack, leading to the defeat of the Taliban and bin Laden's quick capture. This second part of the war script however was cancelled and ended up not being filmed. Instead Al Qaeda responded to the launching of the war in

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<sup>78</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002). See also Raymond Bellour, 'System of a Fragment (on the Birds)', in *The Analysis of Film*, ed. Penley Constance (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 28-69

<sup>79</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*. 2nd eds, pp. 240-241



Afghanistan with what Der Derian has termed ‘a counter air-strike.’<sup>80</sup> Al Jazeera aired on October 7, 2001 a video by Osama bin Laden. This video disrupted the MIME-NET manufactured war script for the Afghanistan campaign and immediately placed all of the media attention back on bin Laden and Al Qaeda (see Chapter Three). After this the original script for Afghanistan was officially abandoned. What has since replaced it is a more open-ended campaign, with no quick solutions, an enemy (the Taliban) who have absolutely no intention of surrendering any time soon and an international terrorist (bin Laden) who has absolutely no intention of being physically found.

After the 1991 Gulf War and throughout the 1990s real-time news media developed what Piers Robinson describes as ‘the ability of real-time communications technology, via the news media, to provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to both global and national events.’<sup>81</sup> Historically, the media were able to elicit emotional responses from audiences in response to the aftermath of events like natural disasters and wars and mobilize audiences to send in their money and rally governments to organize aid to be sent to the victims. Whereas in the 1990s the real-time reporting of events like wars and natural disasters by CNN and other news broadcasters has meant that news is now disseminated to audiences while it is still unfolding rather than being consumed by audiences in the aftermath and when all the immediate policy decisions which need to be made have already been made. This has led some, like Robinson, to argue that there exists a “CNN Effect” where news broadcasters may elicit actual policy responses from governments rather than simply emotional responses from audiences. A key example of the CNN Effect is what happened in Somalia in 1992 when President George H. W. Bush partly as a reaction to the news coverage of humanitarian crisis ordered American military forces into the country. In 1993 The Battle of Mogadishu was covered by the media who also reported on how an American Black Hawk helicopter had been shot down over Mogadishu and footage was shown of a dead US Army Ranger being dragged through the streets. In response to the airing of this footage President Bill Clinton took the decision to withdraw American troops from

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<sup>80</sup> James Der Derian, 'In Terrorem: Before and after 9/11', in *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*, eds. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 109

<sup>81</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, p. 2

Somalia. This is again evidence of the media influencing the foreign policy decision-making process and of the shift in the military-media matrix. Turning to the present day, however, and the war on terror, Al Jazeera is a powerful new media actor who today influences the foreign policy decision making process just as CNN did during the 1990s. Seib has further elaborated on this shift with his “Al Jazeera Effect” concept which accounts for the impact of Al Jazeera and new media technologies on the foreign policy decision making process.<sup>82</sup>

The hunt for bin Laden in the Tora Bora Caves has since descended into a protracted game of cat and mouse. The October 7<sup>th</sup> bin Laden video has also led to a tit-for-tat mimetic battle playing out through Al Jazeera and more recently over the internet. President George W. Bush, on September 20, 2001, in an address made to a joint session of Congress and the American people, stated that the war on terror would be ‘unlike any other [war] we have ever seen.’<sup>83</sup> He even recognized that ‘[i]t may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success.’<sup>84</sup> However, the war on terror has instead proven, to quote Paul Virilio: that ‘*[w]e are always one war behind...there are not yet any experts in global terrorist warfare.*’<sup>85</sup>

Western militaries are currently trapped, convinced that the war on terror will be won through a military campaign which is derived from principles developed from the most recent RMA and adapted for image warfare. Two of these adaptations, which were premiered during the 2003 Iraq War, are: the reviving of the press briefing centre and the embedding of journalists. A new press briefing centre was set up at Central Command (CENTCOM) in Doha, Qatar – and this time it was a big budget military spectacle that shared all the hallmarks of a Hollywood blockbuster movie, not surprising given that it was designed by the Hollywood Art Director George Allison. The Pentagon had again built a central platform where senior military officials could appear in front of the gathered press to disseminate digests of

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<sup>82</sup> See Seib, *The Al-Jazeera Effect*

<sup>83</sup> President George W. Bush, 20/09/2001. Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September 2001. Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>. Accessed on 16 November 2008, p. 4

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

<sup>85</sup> Virilio, *Ground Zero*, p. 35

information and show spectacular images and footage on large plasma screens. This centralized approach to disseminating information does not account though for the many new media actors and information sources available and it instead simply reinforced the outdated mass communication model and shows that America is still failing to respond to the challenges of the rhizomatic condition.

Embedded journalism was the Pentagon's response to growing journalist dissatisfaction with the tight restrictions in place in the press pool system and it also represents a last attempt by the military to try and maintain control of its centralised mass media propaganda model. The idea behind embedded journalism was that journalists would be embedded in military units and then deployed within the theatre of operations. Allowing journalists to again operate within theatre, it was hoped, would give them the sense of freedom that journalists felt was lacking in the press pool system. However, the reality of embedded journalism was much the same as it had been with the press pool system; it was again all about the military maintaining control over the flow of information via a centralised mass media model. The military units that journalists were embedded with decided where journalists could go and what they could see and military censors also gave embedded journalists strict instructions about what they could and could not report on as they were operating in theatre.

This techno-supremacy was once a military advantage against a traditional enemy, especially during the 1990s, and against another traditional enemy it could once again be a decisive military advantage. But against an unconventional terrorist enemy (like Al Qaeda) this warfighting model is outdated: warfare has moved on to an age of image warfare and a new theatre of war has opened up in the twenty-first century. Western militaries now need to respond to these new security challenges. According to Mary Kaldor, 'Bush and Rumsfeld's conception of a new war... is more like an updated version of old war, making use of new technology.'<sup>86</sup> She instead argues that:

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<sup>86</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. 2nd eds. (Cambridge Polity Press, 2006), p. 151

if we are to understand the war in ways that are useful to policy-makers, then its novel character should not be defined in terms of technology. What is new about the war needs to be analysed in terms of the disintegration of states and the changes in social relations under the impact of globalization.<sup>87</sup>

Kaldor, in her assessment of the 2003 Iraq War, while offering important critical insights into the complex social and identity relations operating within Iraq (a reworking of her new wars thesis developed originally to explain warfare in the 1990s) ultimately she offers no counter to the current war of images. The recent Iraq War was indeed a textbook case of how not to respond to these new security challenges. As Philip Hammond puts it:

It was as if Pentagon planners had read their Baudrillard and resolved that this time it really would be a 'bloodless' war-show. In a triumph of media-military synergy, the military campaign was propaganda and the propaganda was part of the military strategy.... The effectiveness of the propaganda was undermined by the way the news media self-consciously drew attention to its deliberately manufactured quality.<sup>88</sup>

Across the post-war periods the relationship between media and military has become ever more complex. At times the military has tried to control the outputs of media networks and at times the media has allowed them to do so. But as both media and military technologies have changed so too have the opportunities for journalists to show a story of their own choosing. As the speed and extent of media reporting has increased media information and imagery has moved ever more closely towards the inside of the military process, becoming a new kind of participant in the unfolding of war and not merely its observers. That has at times challenged military thinking but has also become incorporated within it. In the Iraq War the Pentagon tried to reduce the war to a series of powerful manufactured media spectacles which, according to Diane Rubenstein, 'evinced the Baudrillardian logic of the non-event'<sup>89</sup>: the Saving Private Jessica Lynch episode;<sup>90</sup> the falling of Saddam Hussein's statue in central

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. 150

<sup>88</sup> Philip Hammond, 'The Gulf War Revisited', in *Jean Baudrillard: Fatal Theories*, eds. David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel, William Merrin and Richard G. Smith (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 123

<sup>89</sup> Diane Rubenstein, 'Reality: Now and Then - Baudrillard and W-Bush's America', in *Jean Baudrillard: Fatal Theories*, eds. David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel, William Merrin and Richard G. Smith (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 148

<sup>90</sup> See David Campbell, 'Cultural Governance and Pictorial Resistance: Reflections on the Imaging of War'. *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003), pp. 62-64 and Steve Tatham, *Losing Arab*

Baghdad;<sup>91</sup> and President George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech from onboard the US aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln*.<sup>92</sup> Even when these manufactured media spectacles were discredited, the Bush administration responded by manufacturing yet more. Specifically, on November 27, 2003, the media covered President Bush's visit to Baghdad where upon arriving he presented the troops with a turkey for Thanksgiving. Only later did it emerge that, as Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, 'this turkey was a fake, created by the military kitchen staff to generate a sense of holiday atmosphere.'<sup>93</sup> But the Pentagon's unwavering commitment to manufacturing media spectacles is proof that they misunderstand the contemporary media environment and continue to wage an RMA way of warfighting that is out of date. For, as I have shown, today the media are not a unified system but a complex, rhizomatic and unpredictable flow. There has been, as it were, a Revolution in Media Affairs (RMeA). The contemporary media environment instead of being dominated by a few powerful media actors is driven by a diversity of independent media actors (bloggers and *YouTube* video producers) who are producing and disseminating content beyond the control of government, military and media (see Chapters Three to Six). To respond more effectively to the challenges posed by the rhizomatic condition and to offer the Pentagon a credible alternative to its RMA way of warfighting new theories need to be developed which provide a more up-to-date understanding of media and images in war.

IR theorists are beginning to respond to these new challenges to security, in their efforts at conceptualising the September 11, 2001 attacks and the events of the war on terror. Many of these theorists approach the study of the war on terror from post-positivist or post-structuralist perspectives, within which my own research is embedded. I will now turn, then, to a critical exploration of the work of a number of post-positivist and post-structuralist inspired IR theorists and in particular their attempts to conceive of the construction and maintenance of a war on terror discourse

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*Hearts and Minds: The Coalition, Al Jazeera and Muslim Public Opinion* (London C. Hurst & Co., 2006), pp. 58-59

<sup>91</sup> See Sheldon Rampton, and John Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq* (London: Robinson, 2003), pp. 1-2

<sup>92</sup> Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), p. 78

<sup>93</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 19

or meta-narrative, and also the role of images in the war on terror. I will also consider the complex media-entertainment matrix that currently resides at the centre of American strategic thinking about contemporary warfare. As I will show such work offers important critical insights into the interaction of media, images and war – but as I will also show, IR theory needs to go further.

### **Images and Warfare in IR Theory**

I have already discussed how society has undergone significant changes, moving from a centralised age of mass media to an information/rhizomatic age – where the circulation of images is today increasingly deterritorialised and unpredictable. I have also identified how this has impacted on war: a shift from techno-war to image warfare. As a result, the discipline of International Relations needs to and is beginning to respond to these new security challenges. Numerous IR theorists now recognize the significance for this field of mass media, popular culture, discourse and images and have developed concepts and analytic tools of great significance that can contribute to the development of a theory of the weaponizing of the media and images.

An important contribution to this is François Debrix's *Tabloid Terror: War, Culture and Geopolitics* which develops a theory of the current 'terror'/'war' discourse via the tabloidization of geopolitics and popular culture. Debrix starts his analysis by exploring the fake risk surrounding the Y2K virus; he then shifts his study to terrorism, both these incidents are part of his wider discourse: *tabloid geopolitics*. According to Debrix, 'tabloid geopolitics is a discursive public enterprise that seeks to proliferate narratives and images intended to saturate and satisfy (and satisfy by saturating) the global cultural landscape, or what is left of it.'<sup>94</sup> This saturation of the global cultural landscape is thanks, in large part, to the recent proliferation of all things visual. In turn this tabloid reporting style has now crossed over from newspapers and it now populates the tele-visual medium also.<sup>95</sup> This so-called tabloidization does not stop at television. Iver B. Neumann, in a review of this book, eloquently describes Debrix's research: 'geopolitics is so media-infested as to be

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<sup>94</sup> François Debrix, *Tabloid Terror: War, Culture and Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 5

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38

inevitably tabloid.’<sup>96</sup> Debrix has traced this tabloidization through the work of other International Relations theorists. He firstly discusses works by Robert D. Kaplan,<sup>97</sup> Samuel P. Huntington<sup>98</sup> and Zbigniew Brzezinski<sup>99</sup> and terms them *tabloid realists*.<sup>100</sup> He has also shown, with reference to Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection,<sup>101</sup> just how much the West has become filled with equal feelings of rejection and fascination in relation to the war on terror thus cementing it as a perpetual crisis.<sup>102</sup> In another review of *Tabloid Terror* Neha Sud has noted how:

Debrix contends that the US tabloid media’s coverage of the 9/11 period depicted a USA constantly in danger, a population vulnerable to attack, and, ultimately, an unyielding, terrorist-ridden world, where war was the only response. Politicians used the media to perpetuate the fear culture, while the media posed few questions and devoured the discourse on violence and instability. This mutually serving relationship between the tabloid media and the state created a war machine that explained the war against terror to US audiences in strict *realpolitik* terms.<sup>103</sup>

Debrix has also discussed three further works: by Robert D. Kaplan,<sup>104</sup> Victor Davis Hanson<sup>105</sup> and finally Michael Ledeen.<sup>106</sup> Each of these tabloid realist books, Debrix believes, has helped to promote abjection – towards the war on terror – within society.<sup>107</sup> The military are depicted post-9/11, according to Debrix, like Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s ‘war machine’<sup>108</sup> and he has explored this idea<sup>109</sup> with

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<sup>96</sup> Iver B. Neumann, 'Book Review: Tabloid Terror'. *International Studies Review* 10, no. 2 (2008), p. 306

<sup>97</sup> See Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-Cold War* (London: Vintage, 2001)

<sup>98</sup> See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (London: Yale University Press, 2006) and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: The Free Press, 2002)

<sup>99</sup> See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century* (New York, NJ: Collier, 1993) and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York, NJ: Basic Books, 1997)

<sup>100</sup> Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, pp. 45-68

<sup>101</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York, NJ: Columbia University Press, 1982)

<sup>102</sup> Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, p. 72

<sup>103</sup> Neha Sud, 'Review: François Debrix Tabloid Terror: War, Culture and Geopolitics'. *Media, War & Conflict* 1, no. 2 (2008), pp. 252-253

<sup>104</sup> See Robert D. Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (London: Vintage, 2003)

<sup>105</sup> See Victor Davis Hanson, *An Autumn of War: What America Learned from September 11th and the War on Terrorism* (New York, NJ: Anchor Books, 2002)

<sup>106</sup> See Michael Ledeen, *The War against the Terror Masters: Why It Happened, Where We Are Now, How We'll Win* (New York NJ: St. Martin's Press, 2002)

<sup>107</sup> Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, pp. 75-89

<sup>108</sup> Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 351-424

<sup>109</sup> Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, pp. 90-121

reference to the writings of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri,<sup>110</sup> General Tommy R. Franks,<sup>111</sup> Samuel P. Huntington,<sup>112</sup> Alain Joxe,<sup>113</sup> Lawrence F. Kaplan and William Kristol<sup>114</sup> and finally David Frum and Richard Perle.<sup>115</sup>

Debrix has also shown how this tabloid aesthetic now dominates popular television drama. He discusses this with specific reference to Steven Bochco's show *Over There*. The show follows an American army unit on patrol in Iraq, facing the daily threat of death and severe injury. It displays, according to Debrix, 'a form of tabloid story-telling and tabloid-spectacle not unlike those produced by many geopolitical discourses and representations found in the US media (broadly defined) before and after 9/11.'<sup>116</sup> A major problem with this though is that these fictional representations can be too close to reality and *Over There* found this out when, as Debrix notes, 'viewing figures dropped by over 40 per cent over the course of the first five episodes'.<sup>117</sup> The show was not re-commissioned. What has fared better in the current climate of the war on terror, because of their extreme pro-war/anti-war views, is the work of Bill O'Reilly within his infotainment show *The O'Reilly Factor* and Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

Debrix's thesis is wide ranging and he recognizes the importance of the increased visualization of society. His argument focuses primarily, however, on the tabloidization of the media and the knock-on effect that this has had on his IR colleagues (a novel approach). Importantly, he also traces this tabloidization through popular culture. However, his examination of popular culture is very much a secondary concern compared with his discussion of *tabloid geopolitics*. The key insights I take from Debrix's argument are that a tabloid aesthetic – the tabloidization of IR and the tabloidization of popular culture – dominates the war on terror

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<sup>110</sup> See Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) and Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London Penguin Books, 2006)

<sup>111</sup> See General Tommy R. Franks, *American Soldiers* (London: HarperCollins, 2004)

<sup>112</sup> See Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York, NJ: Simon & Schuster, 2005)

<sup>113</sup> See Alain Joxe, *Empire of Disorder* (New York, NJ: Semiotexte(e), 2002)

<sup>114</sup> See Lawrence F. Kaplan, and William Kristol, *The War over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2003)

<sup>115</sup> See David Frum, and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York, NJ: Ballantine Books, 2004)

<sup>116</sup> Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, p. 123

<sup>117</sup> Croft, *Culture*, p. 252



discourse and that the recent proliferation of the visual has played a central role in the construction of this tabloid terror discourse. However, Debrix fails to adequately explore the impact of this tabloidization of popular culture. His conclusions about popular culture would have been more forceful if he had only extended his discussion of popular culture and balanced it with his discussion of tabloidization in IR. This discussion of IR theorists will now move on to look at Richard Jackson's description of the war on terror discourse.

*Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* by Richard Jackson is a more conventional analysis of the war on terror which offers a compelling account of official language in the war on terror. Jackson believes that language has played an important discourse forming function in the construction of the war on terror. However, questionably, Jackson uses language to describe 'all the seals, flags, emblems, insignia, logos, letterheads, colour-coded warnings on websites, iconic images from 'ground zero' and Iraq, memorials and any other visual representation of the campaign.'<sup>118</sup> Jackson argues that the war on terror is 'the deliberate and systematic construction of a social climate of fear.'<sup>119</sup> This fear is a discourse developed from a combination of elements from the above language. He believes that '[a]ll these symbols form part of the overall language and they reproduce and amplify the central meanings, assumptions and knowledge of the counter-terrorism campaign.'<sup>120</sup>

Jackson's collection of symbols is diverse and for the purposes of his study he has concentrated almost exclusively on examining the language employed by members of the Bush administration within media interviews, public addresses and speeches between September 11, 2001 and January 31, 2004.<sup>121</sup> However, he has made a grave error in lumping together a diverse range of visual representations, describing them as language and then not discussing them, instead choosing to concentrate on examining the speeches and interviews of politicians during the war on terror. If the visuals he listed are part of a wider language then surely he should have set aside

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 18

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26

more space to discuss them properly. Jackson, unlike Debrix, has clearly failed to properly understand the important role that images play in the war on terror.

Jackson argues that the war on terror discourse was born directly from the nothingness which immediately followed 9/11. Taking his lead from David Campbell<sup>122</sup> and James Der Derian,<sup>123</sup> he describes September 11<sup>th</sup> as having created a 'void of meaning'.

The 'void of meaning' left in the empty spaces where the towers had once stood was a direct consequence of the sheer visceral horror of the images – the massive explosions and walls of flame when the planes smashed into the structures, the bodies falling like rain as people leapt to their deaths, the unimaginable vision of two of the world's biggest buildings falling down in a massive cloud of dust and debris. Such sights are inherently horrifying and extremely rare, being hardly ever captured on film as they occur; as such, they inevitably produce a moment of verbal paralysis and linguistic dyslexia as onlookers struggle to express the powerful emotions and thoughts engendered by the spectacle. Usually, we only see the aftermath of this kind of violence: burning buildings, stunned survivors, emergency services attending the wounded.<sup>124</sup>

What has risen, like a phoenix from the flames of Ground Zero, is an age of global terror – fuelled by a perpetual fear and risk of terrorism – that has led to the creation of a powerful and pervasive war on terror discourse. This primarily political discourse, Jackson argues, has also been reproduced and widely circulated by socially based institutions like the church, the media and also academia.<sup>125</sup>

Jackson's discussion of the war on terror discourse is distinct from Debrix's. While Debrix discusses the role of institutions such as the media and academia, Jackson does not. He does, however, discuss the political speeches and interviews from the war on terror, something that Debrix does not include in his own analysis. Jackson's discussion of political linguistic rhetoric during the war on terror is valuable, though his argument does fall down at the point whereby he describes his conception of language.

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<sup>122</sup> See David Campbell, 'Time Is Broken: The Return of the Past in the Response to September 11'. *Theory & Event* 5, no. 4 (2001)

<sup>123</sup> Der Derian, 'In Terrorem', pp. 101-18 and see also W. J. T. Mitchell, '9/11: Criticism and Crisis'. *Situation Analysis* 1 (2002), Unpaginated

<sup>124</sup> Jackson, *Writing the War*, pp. 29-30

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 153-154

The key insights I take from Jackson's argument are about the central role of language in the construction of the war on terror discourse and his wide interpretation of what constitutes a language. For Jackson language does not distinguish between visual representations – such as colour-coded warnings, flags, iconic images, logos, memorials – and political speeches/interviews in the war on terror. My criticism of Jackson is that he has undermined his own argument about the power of official language in the war on terror by simply collapsing it with the diverse range of symbols operating in the war on terror and then not taking the time to unpick, decode and understand these diverse symbols and the important differences between them and official language in the war on terror. If the visuals he listed are part of his wider language then surely he should have set aside more space to discuss and understand their role within the complex war on terror meta-narrative. Jackson instead recognizes that there are diverse visual symbols operating in the war on terror but he then fails to properly integrate them into his meta-narrative. His argument ultimately lacks an examination of the visuals he identified; however, he could have avoided this simply by maintaining a distinction between language and visuals. My discussion of IR theorists will now move on to look at Stuart Croft's analysis of the war on terror meta-narrative.

Stuart Croft in *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* has also explored the construction of the meta-narrative, the 'war on terror', though he has decided to do so through an examination of popular culture<sup>126</sup> which situates visuals at the centre of his analysis. Croft's recognition of the power of the visual dimension and his examination of it through popular culture is a significant achievement and also it is an analysis that was well overdue. Whereas Debrix only considered popular culture representations towards the end of his book, Croft has embedded them throughout his analysis. He strongly believes that some popular culture and political elites co-produce discourse. He argues:

that the political elite and some producers of popular culture are mutually constructed in the contemporary United States. One cannot articulate a political project without impact upon popular culture; popular culture is not

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<sup>126</sup> Croft, *Culture*, p. 109

comprehensible without considering the political. Not all political discourse is apparent in popular culture...; not all elements of popular culture are political in a sense understood by the political elite. But the articulation of a particular understanding of crisis, the formation of discourse, occurs both at the level of the political elite and at that of popular culture. Their mutual construction means that the way in which the crisis of 9/11 came to be understood was produced by both the Bush administration *and* many cultural producers in the United States.<sup>127</sup>

Croft charts this process through examining a diverse range of American popular culture directly affected or inspired by September 11<sup>th</sup>. He examines: art, bumper stickers, children's TV, comics, computer games, evangelical religious literature, films, jokes, memorabilia for 9/11, music, novels, poetry about 9/11, political cartoonists' work, prominently placed remembrance placards, remembrance books and finally tattoos. Each popular culture node has an important function to play within the overall production of what Croft has termed: *the crisis cycle*.

This 'social crisis process' is in fact made up of a complex 'series of cycles' and Croft has offered this description of them:<sup>128</sup>

an event is of such magnitude that it requires (re)examination; meaning has to be ascribed. That event comes to the attention of a wider public, as well as of the policy-making community: that is, the event demands *public* understanding. There is therefore a contestation of different explanations, each of which is drawn from pre-existing narratives which may or may not have already found forms in which they can be clearly expressed. A crisis cannot be understood through an infinite number of explanations; it can only be given meaning by those that have elements that pre-exist. The crisis comes to be understood through the decisive intervention that defines it, but that decisive intervention itself has a pre-history, a genealogy that allowed one set of ideas to have a discursive power over others.<sup>129</sup>

Hence the many references to the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour in the immediate aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks and films. Croft then goes onto state that:

[t]he crisis process therefore begins with an event that is understood to be a challenge to the existing way of thinking about a policy area. ...A decisive intervention successfully gives meaning to that event, and begins to create a

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p. 275

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p. 272-273

new common sense through which all alternative narratives are seen to be 'weak', 'foolish' or 'theoretical'.<sup>130</sup>

The framing, by the Bush administration, of 9/11 in terms of a war on terror and also their identification of a so-called axis of evil are both powerful factors in the development of this war on terror discourse. Following on from this:

[a]n institutional restructuring begins which leads to particular organisations being (re)formed, practices being updated, laws being introduced or amended. That which exists is seen to be out of date, in need of remodelling. This affects in some ways all aspects of policy and of policy practice. At the same time, the institutional restructuring affects those outside of the policy world as well: in terms of the second American 9/11, it includes non-governmental organisations, academia, the media, popular culture and the churches.<sup>131</sup>

The next cycle is where stabilisation of the discourse is achieved within society. Although, as Croft is all too aware, this stability 'inevitably has a limited shelf-life: it will be met at some point by contestation.'<sup>132</sup> Contestation is the next cycle and it returns society again into a state of crisis.<sup>133</sup> According to Croft after contestation there are two ways forward. First, 'a new decisive intervention'<sup>134</sup> driven by social resistance to the war on terror; which leads onto a strong backlash against changes and amendments to the law and the further erosion of civil liberties; second, the war on terror discourse responds to the contestation within society, the 'discourse strikes back'<sup>135</sup> and stabilisation is once again achieved. This state of stability again only has a short shelf-life as contestation will once again return.

The key insights I take from Croft's argument are about the central role of popular culture and visuals in the construction of the war on terror meta-narrative. He explores this meta-narrative through a diverse range of popular culture nodes – such as art, bumper stickers, films, jokes, novels, political cartoons, tattoos – and the construction of *the crisis cycle*. However, though compelling, Croft's *crisis cycle* shows that he is still confined by the desire and need to identify and centrally control information and that he does not in fact appreciate the unpredictable and

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p. 273

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p. 273

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p. 274

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p. 274

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p. 274

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, p. 275

uncontrollable nature of information in the contemporary rhizomatic condition. Debrix, Jackson and Croft's theses, though distinct, each complement each other and together help to explain the construction and maintenance of the war on terror discourse/meta-narrative. Croft's thesis, however, is the most inclusive of the three and also appears to be the most open towards the important and distinct role of visual representations in the war on terror. My discussion of IR theorists will now focus on Milena Michalski and James Gow's examination of the image as a key weapon in contemporary war.

*War, Image and Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict* by Milena Michalski and James Gow presents a timely account of the role of images in contemporary war. Their book opens:

The collapsing Twin Towers of September 11, the hooded figure in a web of electrodes at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the frozen images on moving screens of those whose beheadings were available to those seeking them out on the internet, the emaciated Bosnian Muslim figure at the barbed wire fence of a Bosnian Serb concentration camp, the dancing flashes of detonators across the skylines of some capital – Baghdad, Belgrade, or elsewhere – as US-led air bombardment dealt blows to another 'rogue' regime and its long-suffering people: these images define contemporary conflict. More than that, they – and whichever other images become available – dominate the various environments in which the legitimacy of armed campaigns in an era of rapid international and transnational change is contested – politically, socially, legally and communicatively. There is a competition over images – the images, rightly or wrongly, appear to distil the essence of a conflict. They are the short cuts to understanding, and so at the heart of the competition for hearts and minds in different quarters in modern war. Images are the key weapons in contemporary warfare.<sup>136</sup>

It is impossible not to concur with Michalski and Gow's recognition of the fact that images are such weapons. However, I am concerned over the downplaying of still images in their analysis in favour of a focus on *moving* images<sup>137</sup> and on 'moving-image media narratives.'<sup>138</sup> Michalski and Gow's examination of feature films, actuality/documentary films and User Generated Content (UGC) footage from 9/11, Beslan and 7/7 is significant and important for IR. My concern in this respect is

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<sup>136</sup> Milena Michalski, and James Gow, *War, Image and Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 1

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1-2

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22

shared with Katy Parry who, in her review of the book, writes that she too had ‘rather hoped for more reference to the scholarship in the fields of visual communication and culture which offer perceptive approaches to appreciating how images communicate.’<sup>139</sup> She argues that despite ‘some excellent observations on the visual textures within films, at times this volume lacked detailed attention to the images themselves as communicative tools.’<sup>140</sup>

Another concern with Michalski and Gow’s inclusion of feature/documentary films in their wider discussion of moving images as the key weapons in contemporary warfare is that these mediated features and documentaries are made and released after the event has taken place. How can they then be termed powerful weapons – as they cannot affect the course of these events as they are unfolding in real-time? Similarly Benjamin de Carvalho has identified that:

The collective memory of wars is today largely shaped by representations of warfare in popular culture. In the case of the Vietnam War, movies had a tremendous effect on reshaping the collective memory of the war both for those who did not experience it first-hand, and even for those who *did*.<sup>141</sup>

This form of collective memory building however takes place after an event has been concluded. Both Andreas Behnke and Benjamin de Carvalho have also drawn on the iconic event of *Accidental Napalm* to help cement their argument:

The images of the war which had formed the understanding of Vietnam *during* the conflict, such as the naked and frightened Vietnamese girl fleeing away from a napalm attack, were gradually being replaced by new images, only this time the images were Hollywood fiction.<sup>142</sup>

Films do indeed play an important role, after the fact, in informing audiences about events but they are not the primary weapons in contemporary war and can only be properly understood if placed in the context of a broader understanding of the overall

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<sup>139</sup> Katy Parry, ‘War, Image and Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict’ by Milena Michalski and James Gow. London, Routledge, 2007’. *Media, War and Conflict Journal* 1, no. 1 (2008), pp. 135-136

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136

<sup>141</sup> Benjamin de Carvalho, ‘War Hurts: Vietnam Movies and the Memory of a Lost War’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 34, no. 3 (2006), p. 951

<sup>142</sup> Andreas Behnke and Benjamin de Carvalho, ‘Shooting War: International Relations and the Cinematic Representation of Warfare’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 34, no. 3 (2006), p. 936

phenomena of image warfare within which such films are a mode of circulation. Hollywood manufactured images do not replace the original war images but re-circulate and reinvent them.

UGC, the ABC produced videos of 9/11 and terrorist produced videos are, however, a distinct phenomenon. These videos, I concede, are weapons and I agree with Michalski and Gow when they argue that:

The events summarised by 'September 11' are among the most significant ever in terms of TV news coverage, as well as for international relations generally. The event is significant for TV news coverage because many of the key early moments in the unfolding history were caught live and raw on television, most notably the second aircraft hitting the World Trade Center. Within minutes of the first attack, ABC television in New York, with others quickly following the lead, had cameras trained on the site of the incident. This made for remarkable images that not only defined the story, but also fell neatly into complementing the 'terrorist' strategy of the attackers: maximum visibility and coverage.<sup>143</sup>

The coverage of the 2005 London Bombings is another important example of powerful UGC moving image footage entering the news media in near real-time. The footage which has since come to define this event was captured by London Underground commuters (like Adam Stacey<sup>144</sup>) on their mobile camera/video-phones, sent into the BBC newsroom and then circulated through multiple media platforms and social contexts. Such UGC and terrorist produced moving image footage (which is increasingly making up news coverage of events) can become a weapon in the war on terror (see Chapter Four). Michalski and Gow are right to recognise this but their examination fails to take account of important Visual Culture research and this leads them to discuss feature and documentary films alongside UGC footage, news footage and terrorist produced footage without fully appreciating the important differences between these different media texts. To help explore the important differences between these different media texts my discussion of IR

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<sup>143</sup> Michalski and Gow, *War*, p. 123

<sup>144</sup> Anna Reading, 'The Global and the Mobile: Camera Phone Witnessing in an Age of Terror', in *Collective Memory and Collective Knowledge in a Global Age - An Interdisciplinary Workshop* (London School of Economics: 2007), p. 8 and Daniel Rubinstein, and Katrina Sluis, 'A Life More Photographic'. *Photographies* 1, no. 1 (2008), p. 11



theorists will now focus on Michael J. Shapiro and his examination of the new violent cartography and its counter-spaces in the war on terror.

*Cinematic Geopolitics* by Michael J. Shapiro examines the position that films, both fictional and documentary, have assumed within contemporary geopolitics. However, rather than arguing, as Michalski and Gow do, that moving images are the primary weapons within contemporary war Shapiro instead has revisited and adapted his earlier 'violent cartographies' thesis. His original argument was

that the bases of violent cartographies are the "historically developed, socially embedded interpretations of identity and space" that constitute the frames within which enmities give rise to war-as-policy. Violent cartographies are thus constituted as an articulation of geographic imaginaries and antagonisms, based on models of identity-difference.<sup>145</sup>

For example, he discussed the role and significance of the Treaty of Westphalia from 1648 in the construction of violent cartographies, along with other examples which he believed have also aided in the construction of violent cartographies. This revision of violent cartographies for the information age and as a result of the recent RMA has led Shapiro to identify new violent cartographies. He recognises the central role of the Institute for Creative Technology (ICT) at the University of Southern California in the war on terror. Shapiro writes that:

the ICT justifies its role in the anti-terrorism infowar by noting that it addresses two constituencies, military and academic; their "Experience Learning System" (ELS) "will teach soldiers and students about the future by having them 'virtually' go there." Many of the prototexts for the dual pedagogy are provided by past Hollywood feature films. For example, in describing "the hub of the ICT's research," its "Experienced Learning System," they liken it to "the Holodeck in Star Trek," which they see as a model that allows one to "'virtually' go there." This "virtual reality" thematic pervades the ICT's educational strategy. For example, in the graphics lab, the goal is "to achieve 'virtual reality,' absolute realism in geometry, reflectance, lighting, dynamics and animation. The lab [they note] is doing groundbreaking research in active range sensing, global illumination, reflectometry, dynamic simulation, human and facial animation, and real-time rendering." ...Part of the new violent cartography is to be found in the pages

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<sup>145</sup> Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, p. 18, see also Michael J. Shapiro, 'The New Violent Cartography'. *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 3 (2007), pp. 291-313 and Michael J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

of many daily newspapers, often in feature sections rather than national and international news reports.... Nevertheless, in recent months some of the independent media is asserting itself, rather than allowing its space to be incorporated within the new violent cartography.<sup>146</sup>

Shapiro sees art (especially the series of paintings, *Abu Ghraib*, by the Colombian artist Fernando Botero), films (both documentary and fictional), film festivals and some sections of the news media as important and powerful ‘counter-spaces to the new violent cartography.’<sup>147</sup>

However, Shapiro has decided to focus his attention exclusively on film and film festival counter-spaces. He sees the film festival as a ‘cinematic heterotopia’<sup>148</sup> and a direct counter-space to the ICT at the University of Southern California.<sup>149</sup> Shapiro draws this distinction because of two particular though equally compelling points: Firstly, because of his firsthand experiences as a juror at the 2005 Tromsø International Film Festival in Norway. He has recounted how he and four other jurors – ‘Eva Gran, the director of the Tromsø branch of Norway’s UN information agency, Margreth Olin, a Norwegian filmmaker and director, Ola Lund Renolen, the cultural director for the municipality of Trondheim, Norway, and Alberto Valiente Thoresen, a student in the Peace Studies program at the University of Tromsø’<sup>150</sup> – considered ten nominated films for *The Norwegian Peace Film Award (Den Norske Fredsfilmprisen)*. After careful and lengthy deliberation the award was presented to *Beautiful City* by the Iranian Director Asghar Farhadi. Shapiro returned to Norway, in 2007, for the Tromsø International Film Festival to again act as a juror for *The Norwegian Peace Film Award*.

Secondly, Shapiro has identified the screening by the Department of Defense, in 2003, in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, of Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers* as significant. The film was shown to American military personnel as an example of how a successful counter-terrorism military campaign should be executed. It famously shows a number of extreme interrogation scenes: including

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<sup>146</sup> Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, p. 32

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1

deliberate electric shock, controlled drowning, blowtorch burning, and a man hanging upside-down.<sup>151</sup> Shapiro sees parallels here with Josef Goebbels appropriation, during World War Two, of Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin* as a benchmark for National Socialist filmmakers to aspire to. Eisenstein famously wrote an open letter to Goebbels condemning the appropriation of his film by the Nazi party.<sup>152</sup>

Having a greater understanding of the effects of cinema on geopolitics is especially important in the war on terror given that on September 11<sup>th</sup>, according to Cynthia Weber, the 'blurring of reality and film – of real time and reel time – was endlessly repeated on CNN Headline News.'<sup>153</sup> Importantly, Shapiro does not make the mistake – as Michalski and Gow have – about moving images being the primary weapons in the war on terror. Rather he sees moving images (specifically documentary and fictional films) and film festivals as playing a mobilizing rather than a weaponizing role. Significantly, unlike Debrix, Jackson, Croft, Mickalski and Gow, Shapiro has decided to theorize the new space which has recently opened up in geopolitics. He has revised his earlier violent cartographies thesis and applied it here because it acts as an ideal framework for this current debate. He recognizes that there are problems with the new violent cartography, the ICT at the University of Southern California, and he also has explained how powerful visually driven counter-spaces – like art, films, film festivals and some sections of the news media – currently pose significant challenges to it.

The key insights I take from Shapiro's argument concern the central role of the ICT (the new violent cartography) in the war on terror, the role of counter-spaces – such as art, films, film festivals and sections of the news media – to the new violent cartography and how films and film festivals play a mobilizing role rather than a weaponizing role in the war on terror. I also take Shapiro's distinction between productive and representative images as it will help me to further distinguish between original weaponized images and circulated and remediated weaponized

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

<sup>153</sup> Weber, *Imagining America at War*, p. 3 see also Klaus Dodds, 'Screening Terror: Hollywood, the United States and the Construction of Danger'. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 2 (2008), p. 237

images. But to deepen this appreciation of the ICT my discussion of IR theorists will now turn to James Der Derian and specifically to his thesis concerning the role of the MIME-NET.

Der Derian has spent his academic career researching at the interface between different disciplines. He has done much to open communications between IR and media and IR and technology. As Jef Huysmans has noted, a key aspect of Der Derian's work is that 'he does not limit his sources to written ones but also pays attention to images.'<sup>154</sup> In 1990, Der Derian wrote: 'the war of perception and representation deserves more of our attention and resources... in the field of international relations.'<sup>155</sup> Again, in 1995, he stated that: 'the instantaneity of communication, the ubiquity of the image, the flow of capital, the video-graphic speed of war have made reality ever more transitory, technologically contingent phenomenon.'<sup>156</sup> And, in 2000, he wrote: 'People will live and die, figuratively and literally, by the power of images, previewed by the famine child that drew American troops into Somalia, and of the dead US Ranger dragged through the streets that hastened their departure.'<sup>157</sup> This statement might now be read as a forewarning of the dangers now present within image warfare in the war on terror.

In *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*, Der Derian posed the following question: 'the spread of instant communications, and the burgeoning of espionage, are frequently cited as factors leading to the imminent demise of diplomacy. But does this constitute a crisis, or even something new, in the history of diplomacy?'<sup>158</sup> In order to try and answer this question he undertook a detailed assessment of Western diplomacy examining; mytho-diplomacy, proto-diplomacy, diplomacy, anti-diplomacy, neo-diplomacy and techno-diplomacy. With regard to diplomacy and anti-diplomacy he identified that:

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<sup>154</sup> Jef Huysmans, 'James Der Derian: The Unbearable Lightness of Theory', in *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making*, eds. Iver B. Neumann and Ole Waever (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 343

<sup>155</sup> James Der Derian, 'The (S)Pace of International Relations: Simulations, Surveillance, and Speed', *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990), p. 308

<sup>156</sup> James Der Derian, 'A Reinterpretation of Realism: Genealogy, Semiology, Dromology', in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, ed. James Der Derian (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), p. 369

<sup>157</sup> James Der Derian, 'Virtuous War / Virtual Theory', *International Affairs* 76, no. 4 (2000), p. 775

<sup>158</sup> James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), p. 1

the content of diplomacy is negotiation between states, while that of anti-diplomacy is propaganda among peoples. In short, the purpose of diplomacy is to *mediate* estranged relations: anti-diplomacy's aim is to transcend *all* estranged relations.<sup>159</sup>

These twin themes of 'propaganda' and 'mediation' run throughout Der Derian's work.

In *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* Der Derian argues that 'in the [First] Gulf War the tightly controlled, abstractly clean images presented an appealing portrait of military technology solving intractable diplomatic problems – what we might call the “aesthetics of antidiplomacy.”’<sup>160</sup> He also believes that the manufacture of these clean images, the ‘videos of videos of smart bombs unerringly hitting their targets, cruise missiles seemingly reading street signs as they made their way down the boulevards of Baghdad,’<sup>161</sup> were indeed spectacular images for news audiences to watch. This clinical military campaign finally turned out to be more risk-free than the Gulf War war-games which had preceded it.<sup>162</sup> At the time this outcome was billed by the military as a perfectly executed military campaign; but, as critics like Baudrillard challenged the simulation of war in Iraq, the military's perception of perfection soon unravelled. Alarm bells should have then immediately begun to ring and Pentagon resources should have been immediately mobilised to work out why these manufactured media spectacles were so problematic. In reality, the Pentagon instead decided to pump its significant resources into developing yet more new military technologies – a product of its RMA mindset – and thus virtually ignore the important role of images in contemporary war. Der Derian was already clearly critical of the Pentagon's decision not to try and understand why the media spectacles of the 1991 Gulf War were now unravelling and instead channelling its significant resources into the development of yet more new military technologies.

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136

<sup>160</sup> James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 163

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163

Der Derian, in the years since the 1991 Gulf War, has dedicated much of his research to investigating the Pentagon's RMA mindset and also its preoccupation with developing new military technologies and simulations and controlling the spectacle of war. This in turn has led him to document a fascinating journey, as it were, right into 'the belly of the beast.'<sup>163</sup> His 1998 essay, *All But War Is Simulation*, offers an intriguing glimpse into his journey through the American military machine which is now so dominated by technology and simulation. Der Derian recalls how he first encountered the phrase 'All But War Is Simulation' at an annual Interservice/Industrial Training Systems and Education (I/ITSEC) Conference in Orlando, Florida where it was used time and again. Der Derian remembers how he quizzed a colonel attending the conference about the phrase and was given a brief history of STRICOM (Simulation, Training, and Instrumentation Command), the strangest command post in the US military.<sup>164</sup>

This I/ITSEC conference in Orlando was just the first stop on Der Derian's journey. He stopped off there specifically because it was where many new military technologies developed by the 'Simulation Triangle' ('the military, new media, and Mickey'<sup>165</sup>) were being shown off. According to Der Derian this

trip to the Simulation Triangle left me with a heightened sense of danger. When military forces and entertainment industries join in mimesis, when war games and language games become practically indistinguishable ("All but war is simulation"), when the imitative, repetitive, and regressive powers of simulation negate any sense of original meaning, more than just peace is at risk. I felt as if reality itself, like light being sucked into a black hole, was disappearing in the Simulation Triangle.<sup>166</sup>

In 1999, Der Derian journeyed, for *The Nation* and *Wired* magazines, to the opening of the Institute for Creative Technology (ICT) at the University of Southern California. According to Der Derian, the ICT is essentially STRICOM (Simulation, Training and Instrumentation Command) but in Los Angeles. He has explained that STRICOM moved to LA 'to find the tools and the skills for simulating and, if

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<sup>163</sup> Der Derian, 'Virtuous War / Virtual Theory', p. 777

<sup>164</sup> James Der Derian, "All but War Is Simulation", in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, eds. Gearoid O' Tuathail and Simon Dalby (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 262

<sup>165</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*. 2nd eds, p. 82

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96

necessary, fighting wars of the future'<sup>167</sup> and the ICT was developed 'as a vehicle for integrating the simulation and entertainment industries into this much-heralded "Revolution in Military Affairs."' <sup>168</sup>

In 2001, Der Derian published, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, a travelogue of his journey through the American war machine. Through this book he aimed to present a virtual theory that would 'provide the "red pill" for understanding and challenging the power of an all-too-real *Matrix*, the MIME-NET.'<sup>169</sup> Der Derian's account of the MIME-NET, a product of technowarfare, does include an engagement with images – though they are referred to as simulations and spectacles (which are images that are manufactured and tightly controlled) – and this serves to reinforce my argument that the Pentagon are trapped in a mass communication model mindset and believe that they can still centrally control the flow of information and images. In the course of his journey he travelled to Orlando, Florida to attend a conference on technology and simulation in war (as discussed above); he then went to the East Mojave Desert to witness a digitized war game; he went on to Central Command, Tampa to see how the lessons of the First Gulf War were being programmed ready for future wars; then on to Fort Knox, Kentucky to watch a SimNet tank exercise; to Hohenfels, Germany to see the First Armored Division 'peacegame' the Bosnia intervention; to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to learn about the Synthetic Theater of War (STOW); then back to Orlando to visit Simulation, Training and Instrumentation Command (STRI-COM). This was followed by trips to the Bay Area to watch an 'Urban Warrior' experiment with the navy and the marines; to Vincenza, Italy to examine the air campaign in Kosovo and then on to the Pentagon to interview the director of the Office of Net Assessments, Andrew Marshall, whom Der Derian refers to as the 'Yoda' of the Revolution in Military Affairs and also the former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Wesley Clark. Der Derian concluded his first road trip in Los Angeles, where the Pentagon and Hollywood announced a new collaborative project at the University of Southern California.

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<sup>167</sup> James Der Derian, 'Virtuous War and Hollywood: The Pentagon Wants What Hollywood's Got', in *Critical Practices in International Relations Theory: Selected Essays*, ed. James Der Derian (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 240

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, p. 240

<sup>169</sup> James Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2nd eds, p. 218

Over \$40 million was to be spent to establish an “Institute for Creative Technologies,” where the best military gamers, computer graphic artists, and entertainment executives can gather to prepare for the next war.<sup>170</sup>

*Virtuous War* immediately received a mixed reception from the IR community. Notably in an *International Affairs* review of this book, Susan L. Carruthers wrote: ‘Der Derian’s ‘road trip into the cyborg heart of the military-industrial-media-entertainment network’ is dizzying less for the ‘warp-speed’ we’re promised than for the looping route that results when one travels without maps but lets Baudrillard, Virilio and Deleuze take the wheel.’<sup>171</sup> John Garofano, in a *Political Science Quarterly* review of the same book, concluded that he remained unconvinced by Der Derian’s ‘argument about either the mimetic relationship between technology and war or its moral bankruptcy.’<sup>172</sup> What should always be remembered though is that Der Derian’s travelogue is ‘dizzying’ and massively technologically deterministic precisely because his journey is charting techno-warfare.

With *Virtuous War* Der Derian has developed ‘a cross-disciplinary theory for other travellers’<sup>173</sup> to follow. In this book he has theorized that ‘war is ascending to an even “higher” plane, from the virtual to the *virtuous*.’<sup>174</sup> He has also argued that ‘virtuous wars promote a vision of bloodless, humanitarian, hygienic wars.’<sup>175</sup> His journey shows me just how much the American military have become hypnotised, since the most recent RMA, into seeing ‘digital technologies operating as “force-multipliers.”’<sup>176</sup> According to Der Derian, the MIME-NET is the result of the next step taken by the US military after the 1991 Gulf War. It seeks to integrate technology and simulation into every level of the American military machine. Der

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<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii

<sup>171</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, 'Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network' by James Der Derian. Westview, Oxford, Boulder, Co, 2001. 'Degrading Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis' Edited by Edward S. Herman. Pluto, London, 2000. 'Strategy of Deception' by Paul Virilio. Verso, London, 2000'. *International Affairs* 77, no. 3 (2001), p. 673

<sup>172</sup> John Garofano, "Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network' by James Der Derian. Boulder, Co, Westview Press, 2001'. *Political Studies Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2002), p. 139

<sup>173</sup> James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*. 1st eds. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), p. 210

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, p. xv

<sup>175</sup> Der Derian, 'Virtuous War / Virtual Theory', p. 772

<sup>176</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 1st eds, p. 9



Derian cautions against relying too much on simulation technologies because, he believes, they cannot fully prepare soldiers for the realities of battle.

In the movie *Aliens*, when the Colonial Marines are being buffeted as they enter the atmosphere of the planet where the unknown awaits them, Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) asks the obviously anxious Lieutenant how many combat drops this is for him. He replies “Thirty-eight,” pauses, and then adds “- Simulated.” He quickly proves incapable of responding to situations that do not follow his simulation training.<sup>177</sup>

Lt. Gen. William S. Wallace, the commander of US ground forces in the 2003 Iraq War, similarly argued that: “The enemy we’re fighting is a bit different than the one we war-gamed against....”<sup>178</sup>

Der Derian has also noted that ‘the new MIME-NET runs on video-game imagery, twenty-four-hour news cycles, multiple nodes of military, corporate, university, and media power, and microchips, embedded in everything but human flesh (so far).’<sup>179</sup> Yet no resources are set aside within RMA warfare, to try and understand the important role of images and their unpredictable circulation in war. Instead, more and more resources are being channelled into the R&D of new military technologies – such as simulation technologies – something which Der Derian is critical of. Der Derian has often wondered ‘if the ICT, like other elements of virtuous war, was more *deus ex machina* than war machine.’<sup>180</sup> The MIME-NET is a vision of next generation warfare but the American military are always one war behind.<sup>181</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that war has now accelerated beyond RMA war into an age of image warfare. Der Derian’s description of a Borg-like soldier<sup>182</sup> conjures ideas of a Q-like figure, as seen in the James Bond films, in the military laboratory at the University of Southern California developing new military technologies for techno-war when instead image warfare now dominates. Der Derian remains unconvinced by the real world military impact of the ICT:

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<sup>177</sup> Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy*, p. 194

<sup>178</sup> Jim Dwyer, 'A Nation at War: In the Field - V Corps Commander; a Gulf Commander Sees a Longer Road', *The New York Times*, 28 March 2003. Available at: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C01E4D81F30F93BA15750C0A9659C8B63>. Accessed on 30 November 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>179</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 1st eds, p. 126

<sup>180</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2nd eds, p. 175

<sup>181</sup> Virilio, *Ground Zero*, p. 35

<sup>182</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 1st eds, p. 12

It is not yet evident that it can run a project, a battlefield simulation, let alone an intergalactic war. However, cutting edge or opening wedge, the Institute for Creative Technology does look to be Hollywood's – and the Pentagon's – premier laboratory for virtuous war.<sup>183</sup>

He is all too aware though that once in 'it is hard to find one's way out from the military-industrial-media-entertainment labyrinth.'<sup>184</sup>

On September 11, 2001 next generation warfare finally crashed onto the scene. It was not as the Pentagon had war-gamed. Techno-war was instead replaced by image warfare. In October 2001, Der Derian stated: 'After the looped footage of the collapse of the towers began to take on the feeling of déjà vu, I seriously wondered if the media-entertainment matrix had not taken a fatal blow.'<sup>185</sup> Instead of abandoning his MIME-NET journey though Der Derian continued, expanding his travelogue with a second edition of *Virtuous War*. He has argued that, post-9/11, for the Bush administration '[t]he goal was the same: combine technical and ethical superiority to actualize violence from a distance with minimum casualties when possible.'<sup>186</sup> He also described the Pentagon's virtuous war response to September 11<sup>th</sup> as 'an auto-immune response'<sup>187</sup> – 'primed by the military-industrial-media-entertainment network.'<sup>188</sup>

Der Derian has also turned his attention to discussing how Al Qaeda mobilized multiple forms of media on 9/11, in order to successfully execute their attack. He has reflected on how – for less than US \$50000,000 – flight simulations, hawala fund transfers, the internet and mobile phones were used by the 9/11 hijackers to transform commercial airplanes into kinetic weapons of mass destruction; how the 18-minute gap between the first and second attacks on the World Trade Center was used by Al Qaeda to transform the attacks from a local catastrophe into a global terror event and finally how bin Laden strategically produced and deployed

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, p. 177

<sup>184</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2nd eds, p. 245

<sup>185</sup> James Der Derian, '9.11: The Media-Entertainment Network', *INFOinterventions*, 2001. Available at: <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/911/article.cfm?id=28>. Accessed on 23 July 2007, Unpaginated

<sup>186</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2nd eds, p. 233

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, p. 237

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, p. 241

videotapes in the aftermath of the attacks.<sup>189</sup> Der Derian here provides strong evidence of the fact that Al Qaeda cannot compete on traditional military terms against America and so on 9/11 exploited existing technology and media systems and mobilized them to serve their own ends: commercial airplanes were transformed into kinetic weapons of mass destruction and the media were used to transform the attacks into a spectacular global event.

He has also described how the opening scenes of the air war in Afghanistan, on October 7, 2001, was played out through the media and borrowed many of its visual cues from the 1991 Gulf War and the Kosovo Campaign: like spectacular night vision footage of air attacks over Kabul and the appearance of politicians, journalists and military officials giving a running commentary on events.<sup>190</sup> This is further compelling evidence which shows how the Pentagon still mistakenly thinks that it can stage-manage war.

Der Derian has also examined how bin Laden was able to disrupt the Pentagon's carefully planned Afghanistan war script. He argues that bin Laden, in response to the first air strikes against Kabul, on October 7, 2001, made a 'counter air-strike' against America by appearing in a video – first aired on Al Jazeera.<sup>191</sup> This October 7<sup>th</sup> video was also a stylistic mimetic of the political communications of President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair (see Chapter Three).

What is clear from this whole sequence of events is that Al Qaeda has a better understanding of the power of images than the Pentagon which simply rolled out yet another techno-war in response to September 11<sup>th</sup>. On October 9, 2001 Prime Minister Blair decided to engage with bin Laden, through Al Jazeera, followed quickly by President Bush and a whole host of other British and American politicians. Again, this response was a copy of their earlier media appearances, during the 1991 Gulf War, the Kosovo Campaign and the opening scenes of the War

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<sup>189</sup> James Der Derian, 'The Question of Information Technology in International Relations'. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (2003), pp. 448-449

<sup>190</sup> James Der Derian, '9/11: Before, after and in Between', in *Terrorism, Media, Liberation*, ed. J. David Slocum (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 327-328

<sup>191</sup> Der Derian, 'In Terrorem', p. 109

in Afghanistan. This time they were appearing on Al Jazeera rather than CNN or the BBC.

The 2003 Iraq War – like the opening scenes of the war in Afghanistan – was yet another re-run of the earlier 1991 Gulf War and the Kosovo Campaign and, according to Der Derian, the Bush administration is currently playing directly into bin Laden's hands through reacting time and again to his 'mimetic traps'.<sup>192</sup> Der Derian has urged the Bush administration to avoid bin Laden's 'mimetic traps' because

[d]ead or alive, prophet or crackpot, symptom or disease, Bin Laden as well as Hussein require a mimetic foe. Without a reciprocal hatred their prophecies lose their self-fulfilling powers. As is often the case with narcissistic psychopaths, the worst thing we could do is to deprive them of their reflections.<sup>193</sup>

However, so far, the White House has not heeded these warnings. Instead it has managed to escalate mimesis, perpetuate the current war of images and pump yet more money and resources into its development of new military technologies.

To witness first hand whether or not the war on terror has changed the MIME-NET, Der Derian went back on the road. He returned to the Mojave Desert to where he began his MIME-NET journey. On his return journey Der Derian quickly realized that he was using the same map to navigate his way around as he had used back in 1994 (an interesting metaphor for the MIME-NET).<sup>194</sup> Der Derian's travelogue shows that 'it would seem that we had gone full circle, out of Borges's labyrinth and once more back into Baudrillard's simulacrum.'<sup>195</sup> To quote Baudrillard:

Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map that precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – *precession of simulacra* – that engenders the territory, and if one must return

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<sup>192</sup> James Der Derian, 'Imaging Terror: Logos, Pathos and Ethos'. *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005), p. 32

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 32-33

<sup>194</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2nd eds, p. 275

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, p. 278

to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts and that are not longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself*.<sup>196</sup>

One major change which has been integrated into the MIME-NET, post-9/11, are cultural war-games. Der Derian witnessed two so-called ‘cultural awareness operations’ firsthand: at the Riverside March Air Reserve Base and then again at Twentynine Palms where some virtual Iraqi villages had been built.<sup>197</sup> To further add to the reality of these simulations, Iraqi role-players were employed to play the role of virtual Iraqi villagers. According to Der Derian:

at the bottom of the Twentynine Palms pecking order were the Iraqi role-players. Marines were cordial towards them during the exercise – that was the purpose after all – but on more than one occasion I overheard Marines perform some classic in-group, out-group behaviour.<sup>198</sup>

In conclusion, not only is the RMA way of warfighting (promoted by the MIME-NET) out of date, little attention is still being paid to the meanings of images (something which is vital in an age of image warfare), but also the MIME-NET’s ‘cultural awareness operations’ appear to not be working as effectively as they perhaps should be.

Der Derian’s work is insightful precisely because it opens connections between IR and media, IR and technology and IR and images. He is able to show, as he travels through the American RMA war machine, how ineffective techno-war is in the war on terror and how the Pentagon has failed to respond to the threat of Al Qaeda and the new security challenges of the twenty-first century. Der Derian, in my opinion, offers the best description of American techno-war. However, Der Derian with this second edition of *Virtuous War* unfortunately does not critically engage enough with the important issues of new media and images in the war on terror. After all, we currently live in an information age where new media and images increasingly dominate our lives and our wars. He is highly critical of the institutional

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<sup>196</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1

<sup>197</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2nd eds, p. 287

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, p. 292

relationships between the military, technology industries, the media and Hollywood and their attempts to control the spectacle of war. However, he does not offer the Pentagon an alternative to the MIME-NET or indeed how it could be employed more efficiently in the age of rhizomatic media.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has surveyed the relationship between war and images and critically considered some of the ways in which IR theorists and analysts have sought to make sense of it. I started by identifying how society has shifted from a mass media system (connected to a twentieth century notion of propaganda) to a rhizomatic media system (connected with new media and the deterritorialised circulation of information). I also showed how the relationship between war, images and propaganda is age-old but how in contemporary war these relationships have changed as media have become ever more rhizomatic in nature, a development which IR theory has yet to fully address. Although IR theorists recognize the importance of information, news and images for war they do not fully grasp the extent to which in the present day there no longer exists a mass media through which there can be control of the flow of information, news and images in war. Information, news and images in war are today rhizomatic, uncontrollable and unpredictable.

I saw some aspects of this development as part of a discussion of the historically variable relationship between media and war, from the Vietnam War, the first television war, where the Pentagon failed to control the information leaving the war theatre to the First Gulf War and the premiering of techno-war, where the Pentagon dominated the information leaving the war theatre and the Kosovo Conflict, where war finally went online. I also saw how with 9/11 and the war on terror, the circulation and production of images was such that it has become necessary to conceive of images as a part of the theatre of war, weaponized yet still rhizomatic in nature.

I have also seen how International Relations theorists have explored the new security challenges of the war on terror and image warfare. Debrix has theorised the construction of a 'risk' or 'terror' discourse firstly with reference to the work of other

IR theorists and secondly with reference to popular culture. His conclusion is that a tabloid aesthetic dominates the war on terror discourse. This is an important discussion that could have been supplemented by further attention to the role of popular culture in the construction of this discourse. Jackson's assessment of the role of language in the construction of the war on terror discourse is also thought provoking but mistakenly he lumps together visuals, speeches and interviews under the term 'language'. Croft's analysis is the most inclusive examination of the construction of a war on terror meta-narrative. It places visuals and popular culture at the centre of analysis, something definitely missing from the other theorisations about the war on terror discourse/meta-narrative.

Michalski and Gow have presented a compelling case about the role of images in contemporary war with their bold argument that moving images are the key weapons in contemporary war. However, their argument is flawed. Michalski and Gow argue that all moving images are key weapons in contemporary war rather than identifying the important distinctions between different kinds of moving images: documentary and feature films, news footage and UGC footage. They fail to properly get to grips with the specificity of modes of image production, circulation and meaning-creation. They overlook the fact while some moving images (news footage and UGC footage) can become weaponized, most moving images (documentary and feature films) only have the potential for mobilization. It is necessary, therefore, to develop a broader and more nuanced conception of the ways in which images enter into, come out of and participate in the theatres of war and, in particular, of how they form a distinct theatre within which diverse processes and events can be identified.

Shapiro has successfully theorised the mobilization of moving images with a reworking of his earlier thesis of 'violent cartography'. He also identifies the counter-spaces to this violent cartography, and makes visible a broad and complex field of activity. Finally, in reviewing the important work of James Der Derian I saw just what is at stake. The Pentagon is out of touch with the reality of war, relying too much on technologies and war-games simulations which have not been programmed with image warfare scenarios.

These arguments open up new avenues of exploration and certainly help me to pose the right questions. But as I have shown they do not all fully grasp the specificity of the war of images. It is still necessary to develop concepts that help me understand this distinct theatre of conflict. That requires bringing IR into a more sustained and deeper conversation than hitherto, in fields of study more attuned to the formation and affects of images. My next chapter will therefore develop a general theorisation of image warfare through an examination of a wide variety of literatures ranging from War Studies to Media Studies and Visual Culture, making clearer the theatre within which the war of images takes place and enabling me to begin to develop conceptual terms and tools for use in further understanding it.



## Chapter Two

### Theorising Image Warfare

#### Introduction

In Chapter One I argued that the production and circulation of images in contemporary society take place in ways that break with the past. The positions of producer and consumer are sometimes indeterminate and the overall process is best thought of as rhizomatic in nature, as images flow and spread horizontally establishing new connections and new contexts sometimes far beyond that of their 'original' production. I also saw reasons to think that this has specific effects on the conduct of military activity. This revolution in media has therefore resulted in the deterritorialised and unpredictable circulation of images and consequently it has also had the effect of a paradigm shift in war: techno-war to image warfare.

International Relations and Strategic Studies have sought to respond to these developments, and to refine conceptual and methodological tools for their explication, interpretation and analysis, in a number of ways. The innovations of theorists and analysts such as Debrix, Jackson and Croft as well as interventions by Michalski and Gow, Shapiro and Der Derian have clarified the scope and significance of image-based media for contemporary conflict and, significantly, have made clear that it is now possible and necessary to conceive of these as constitutive of a distinct realm of activity and not merely an adjunct to techno-war. It remains, however, to clarify further the nature of that realm and the activity it calls forth. As I show in this chapter that requires a fuller engagement by International Relations with work found in those fields specifically concerned with the contemporary culture of the image.

I will begin with an exploration of the RMA literature in which I will show how its focus on technology has resulted in the important roles of media and images in contemporary war being neglected by traditional IR/Strategic Studies theorists. Such neglect has led to a misunderstanding of the extent to which it is still possible to

control the flow of images in contemporary war. In order to correct this I need to supplement such studies with the insights of other disciplines, especially from Media Studies and Visual Culture. Exploring the transformation of propaganda from something produced centrally and disseminated from the top-down, into information that flows from decentralized sources in multiple directions I will closely consider the impact of new media technologies such as the internet, blogs and mobile phones on contemporary war-making. This relates directly to theories of 'postmodern war' found in the work of Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio both of whom have been especially interested in the impact upon war of real-time communications. However, as I will show, where Baudrillard sees only the negations and containments of mass mediation and real-time communication, Virilio points the way to understanding the new forms of activity and agency made possible by new media and real-time communication. He offers a prophetic glimpse of the shift from the centralized mass media age to the rhizomatic information age.

In this chapter I will also see how conceptual resources can be further enriched through drawing on research into photography, especially that of Susan Sontag, as well as recent work on image production, circulation and interpretation by writers such as W. J. T. Mitchell, Nicholas Mirzoeff and Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. In combination these will help me to more adequately conceptualise the complex circulation and meaning-production effects of images. On the basis of these readings I will develop three key conceptual terms: 'image munitions', 'counter-image munitions' and 'remediation battles'. These concepts help me to bridge the gaps between International Relations, Media Studies and Visual Culture and also draw attention not only to the ways in which images enter the theatre of war and are contested by different media actors but also to the historically specific ways in which images are produced and consumed. These will be tested through an analysis of two iconic historic images and their contemporary appropriations: *The Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* and *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)*. Finally, I will also discuss the methodology employed in this thesis before developing my conceptual terms in the case studies which make up Chapters Three to Six.

### **War Studies in the Age of Image Warfare**

According to Martin C. Libicki 'The United States is midway through what may be called a revolution in military affairs',<sup>199</sup> a transformation as Andrew Latham argues, 'in the technologies, techniques and organizational forms of warfighting.'<sup>200</sup> It is through the concept of the RMA that War Studies, as distinct from Security Studies, has sought to understand the ways in which, since the end of the Cold War, both warfare and society have been fundamentally transformed. This literature can usefully be divided up into two: theories concerned with the changing value of human life in war; and theories that are concerned with discussing the role of new military technologies in contemporary war. Neither literature properly engages with either the mediation of war or with images that depict war, both of which are central to understanding image warfare in the war on terror. Indeed, War Studies theorists, start with the intention of establishing how best to control and manage war spectacles. In so assuming the potential for control they misunderstand the very nature of the contemporary rhizomatic media environment.

Recent work has engaged specifically with the displacement of humans from the centre of military operations. Edward N. Luttwak has proposed the highly influential concept of 'post-heroic warfare.'<sup>201</sup> He argues that American military policy and warfare has been fundamentally altered by the distancing of human forces from the theatre of operations and their gradual replacement by airpower (putting distance between military personnel and the operational theatre). Chris Hables Gray has theorized postmodern war,<sup>202</sup> the role of the postmodern citizen – in what he terms the posthuman age,<sup>203</sup> and the role of posthuman soldiers within the postmodern theatre of war.<sup>204</sup> In *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond*, Michael Ignatieff argues that:

[t]he Kosovo conflict looked and sounded like a war... For the citizens of the NATO countries, on the other hand, the war was virtual. They were

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<sup>199</sup> Martin C. Libicki, 'Illustrating Tomorrow's War', in McNair Paper 61 (1999), p. 1

<sup>200</sup> Andrew Latham, 'Re-Imagining Warfare: The 'Revolution in Military Affairs'', in *Contemporary Security and Strategy*, ed. Craig A. Snyder (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 210

<sup>201</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, 'Towards Post-Heroic Warfare'. *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 3 (1995), pp. 109-22 and Edward N. Luttwak, 'A Post-Heroic Military Policy'. *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (1996), pp. 33-44

<sup>202</sup> See Gray, *Postmodern War*

<sup>203</sup> See Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizens: Politics in the Posthuman Age* (London: Routledge, 2002)

<sup>204</sup> Chris Hables Gray, 'Posthuman Soldiers in Postmodern War'. *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), pp. 215-26

mobilized, not as combatants but as spectators. The war was a spectacle: it aroused emotions in the intense but shallow way that sports do.<sup>205</sup>

Colin McInnes' analysis of modern warfare *Spectator-Sport War: The West and Contemporary Conflict* takes Michael Mann's concept of 'spectator sport militarism'<sup>206</sup> and makes an eloquent argument – from a War Studies perspective – about the displacement of humans from warfare and the centrality of media in contemporary war. However, even he (like other War Studies theorists) fails fully to engage with media outputs. McInnes does not fully subscribe to “the CNN Effect”.<sup>207</sup> Rather, he argues that audiences cannot but maintain a distance where an engagement is limited to spectatorship without risk or direct participation in the first instance. This critical distance marks an important shift in the relationship between the media and its audience: one where spectacle becomes increasingly important. McInnes thus acknowledges the fact that:

although consumers of the media may not be “absorbent sponges,” they remain spectators. What is striking is that the debate is couched in terms not of galvanizing public action but of influencing public opinion to allow others to act (or not to act, as the case may be). In this sense, the role of the media in contemporary war is very different from that of propaganda in previous wars.<sup>208</sup>

As a result, contemporary war is increasingly concerned with the manufacture of media spectacles. According to Philip Hammond, during the 2003 Iraq War the US military felt compelled to manufacture media spectacles<sup>209</sup> or ‘pseudo-events’<sup>210</sup> (key war moments) – such as the Saving Private Lynch episode, the pulling down of Saddam Hussein's statue in central Baghdad or Bush's “Mission Accomplished” speech – and to make sure that these events were circulated. He has also noted how ‘the effectiveness of the propaganda was undermined by the way that the news media

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<sup>205</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 3

<sup>206</sup> See Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988)

<sup>207</sup> See Robinson, *The CNN Effect*

<sup>208</sup> McInnes, *Spectator-Sport War*, p. 147

<sup>209</sup> See Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity*

<sup>210</sup> See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. 25th Anniversary ed (New York, NJ: Vintage Books, 1992)

self-consciously drew attention to its deliberately manufactured quality.<sup>211</sup> He is also aware that:

Today's media culture is one in which there is an acute awareness of image manipulation. School students practice deconstructing television programmes for their Media Studies GCSEs, advertisers frequently appeal to us on the basis of our awareness of advertising techniques, and Hollywood films such as *The Truman Show*, *The Matrix* and *Wag the Dog* play with the idea that the media produce illusions of reality. The War on Terrorism is not immune from culture. Digitisation, the Internet, and the growth of global media audiences all play a role in promoting a greater self-consciousness about image construction.<sup>212</sup>

All of these factors have resulted in people becoming increasingly wary of the manufactured spectacle of war. Thus Naomi Klein was able to announce that 2003

was the year when fakeness ruled: fake rationales for war, a fake President dressed as a fake soldier declaring a fake end to combat and then holding up a fake turkey. An action movie star became governor and the government started making its own action movies, casting real soldiers like Jessica Lynch as fake combat heroes and dressing up embedded journalists as fake soldiers. Saddam Hussein even got a part in the big show: He played himself being captured by American troops.<sup>213</sup>

Such accounts seem to imply that the spectacle of war is very much under the control of military planners or media corporations. But such spectacles have in fact become increasingly uncontrollable in the age of new media, and in ways that undermine Western military strategic thinking. Indeed, Al Qaeda has instead demonstrated a more sophisticated understanding of the new relationship between audiences and the media. According to McInnes:

The spectator-sport metaphor also helps us to understand the events of 11 September 2001, when hijacked aircraft were deliberately crashed into the Pentagon and World Trade Center. These terrorist acts created not only spectacular images but also rendered the West empathic spectators – in watching the destruction, the citizens of the West were made aware of their vulnerability to subsequent acts. Being a spectator was used by the terrorists

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<sup>211</sup> Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity*, p. 59. See the Centre for Research on Globalisation. The Pulling Down of the Statue Was a Staged Media Event, 11 April 2003, Available at: <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/NYI304A.html>. Accessed on 22 January 2008

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63

<sup>213</sup> Naomi Klein, 'The Year of the Fake', *The Nation*, 08 January 2004. Available at: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040126/klein/print>. Accessed on: 20 November 2008, Unpaginated

not to distance citizens of the West from the attacks but to bring them closer.<sup>214</sup>

McInnes' recognition that acts of terrorism are also acts of communication is highly significant. However, its importance has largely been missed within much of the postmodern War Studies literature.<sup>215</sup> Yet Al Qaeda has clearly realized that – when deployed at strategically significant moments in the news-cycle – images can become weaponized and in their own way are as powerful as bullets or bombs. Indeed, given that they cannot compete on traditional military terms against techno-war such weaponizing of images is a vital tactic for organizations such as Al Qaeda: the weaponization of images on September 11<sup>th</sup> gave them an immediate strategic advantage in the war on terror against the Pentagon which was instead primed for RMA warfare.

Martin Shaw has argued that since the watershed of the 1991 Gulf theatre of operations, society has been in a 'post-military'<sup>216</sup> situation. Shaw recognizes that as warfare changed fundamentally during this time so too did society's relationship with it. Although audiences were witnessing the mediated spectacle of war unfolding in real-time in the distant theatre of operations, the majority of the audience were not actually directly affected by the events: they were merely spectators. In 2005 he added a further term to the lexicon of War Studies, 'risk-transfer war.'<sup>217</sup> Shaw's risk-transfer war thesis sees techno-war taken to its logical conclusion. The increased Western military reliance on technology has led to the transfer of the risks of war away from human life and onto technology. This transfer of risk is also reproduced in the West as society has become increasingly removed from the risks of war. Paul Rogers has similarly described this new way of warfare as 'war against real estate'<sup>218</sup> and has gone on to argue that Western war now appears 'kinder' and 'more humane.'<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> McInnes, *Spectator-Sport War*, p. 151

<sup>215</sup> For a detailed discussion about terrorism as communication see, Joseph S. Tuman, *Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003)

<sup>216</sup> See Martin Shaw, *Post-Military Society: Militarism, Demilitarization and War at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991)

<sup>217</sup> See Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War: Risk-Transfer War and Its Crisis in Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005)

<sup>218</sup> Paul Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p. 25

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25-26

Christopher Coker also picks up on this humane theme in his exploration of media representations in contemporary warfare.

War becomes humane not only when it appears to take place on a television screen in one's home, but when it enlists societies in humane ways. With the end of conscription it no longer requires the actual participation of the citizen. Because of the bypassing of representative institutions it no longer requires democratic consent. And because wars are short and relatively cheap, governments do not even have to raise special taxes as Germany and Japan did in the [First] Gulf War... We have become so intoxicated by the idea of precise, risk-free warfare that we believe what we want to believe.<sup>220</sup>

In his book *Waging War Without Warriors?* Coker has discussed the significance of the media's role within the 1991 Gulf War. An average of 600 million viewers watched the war unfold through CNN's media coverage<sup>221</sup> and yet

[f]ew gruesome pictures were shown during the Gulf War. Of the 1,104 Desert Storm photographs that appeared in... three major news magazines, only thirty-eight showed actual combat, whereas 249 were catalogue-style photographs of military hardware.<sup>222</sup>

He concluded that because of the disappearance of soldiers from the images of war and their replacement with images of the latest military technologies, wars are now waged without warriors in their traditional sense. Traditional warriors are being phased out to make way for new technology – thus significantly reducing the threat to military personnel. In 2007, Coker argued:

Some years ago I wrote a book, *War Without Warriors*, which argued that the increasing instrumentalisation of war (which the United States has led, if not pioneered) was making warriors as a class increasingly redundant. Since it was published, warriors have come to hold centre stage in the war on terror. Special forces are increasing in numbers all the time. Warriors are back in the news. I still wonder, though, whether they can survive long into the twenty-first century.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Christopher Coker, *Humane Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 150

<sup>221</sup> Christopher Coker, *Waging War without Warriors? The Changing Culture of Military Conflict* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2002), p. 173

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, p. 68

<sup>223</sup> Christopher Coker, *The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. ix

Coker's work is significant because it shows how, just as warriors are being phased out to make way for new military technologies in contemporary warfare, so are images of soldiers in battle being replaced by images of the latest military technologies. In this respect then Coker recognises that something important is happening with regard to the representation of war. However, he remains ambivalent on the role of Special Forces personnel in contemporary warfare – especially over the fact that they played a central role in the Saving Private Lynch episode. As Alastair Finlan notes, the Lynch episode was a rather unusual situation:

the entire mission was 'filmed' by the assaulting Special Forces, a highly unusual set of circumstances bearing in mind that the soldiers should have been totally concentrating on the mission rather than dedicating specific assets to recording it – more appropriate to a training exercise, rather than a live mission.<sup>224</sup>

Finlan's bewilderment is instructive: he fails to realise that the filming of the mission was not a subsidiary element but central to it. As Hammond argues 'in more recent years the point of the missions undertaken by the Western military has often seemed to be primarily their propaganda value rather than, say, the acquisition of territory or the achievement of some strategic goal.'<sup>225</sup>

A central claim of such research into the RMA is that it involves the replacement of a reevaluation of the life of soldiers and, consequently, attempts to reduce the extent to which they are deployed in the field of battle. However, a corollary of this – noted but not always explored by theorists of the RMA – is a transformation in the importance of the *representation* of soldiers in battle and an increase in the conscious deployment of them for the purpose of producing successful and significant representations of operations as opposed to operations that are indeed successful and significant in their own right. It should therefore be of little or no surprise that so-called 'Neocortical Warfare', a model of warfare designed specifically to subdue 'adversaries without violence'<sup>226</sup> has been popular with certain RMA inspired

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<sup>224</sup> Alastair Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror: Warfare by Other Means* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 146-147

<sup>225</sup> Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity*, p. 41

<sup>226</sup> Richard Szafranski, 'Neocortical Warfare? The Acme of Skill', in *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*, eds. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), p. 412



military planners, such as those at the Institute for Creative Technology (ICT) at the University of Southern California. Spectacles are a central feature of contemporary war in which elite warriors are mobilised not just for their warfighting abilities but for starring roles in MIME-NET manufactured media spectacle.<sup>227</sup>

The second key strand of theory and analysis within the RMA literature concerns the role of new military technologies in contemporary war which has been transformed by 'revolutions' in airpower, precision munitions and new communication systems – techno-war. Colin S. Gray, in 1998, identified seven different 'schools' of thought which help to characterise the information-age RMA debate. These also demonstrate the contestability of the RMA even within the Strategic Studies literature: 'Cyberwar, or Strategic Information Warfare,' 'Information-led Warfare: The Radical Vision,' 'Information-led Warfare: The Digital Overlay,' 'Much Ado About Nothing Much,' 'Air is the Real Revolution,' 'Space is the Real Revolution' and 'A Revolution in Security Affairs.'<sup>228</sup> Gray's seven schools also reveal how these different explanations depart from one another and how the RMA is indeed central to a diverse range of debates in Strategic Studies. He has also outlined his own tentative conclusion regarding the RMA's impact, which has since proven to be inaccurate, writing that:

I-war is not akin to war in the geographically specific media, and I-power is not a sibling to airpower, seapower, landpower, and spacepower. Timely, accurate and appropriate information, rapidly and securely disseminated to 'sharp-end' military users, may be the advantage most critical to success (though I doubt it; human virtues of judgement, discipline, and courage are likely to be more important).<sup>229</sup>

Gray is dubious about the impact of the RMA while Lawrence Freedman is far more willing to acknowledge that the information revolution has already had a massive impact on the waging of war, remarking that:

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<sup>227</sup> See Der Derian, *Virtuous War*. 2nd eds.

<sup>228</sup> Colin S. Gray, 'The Revolution in Military Affairs', in *The Nature of Future Conflict: Implications for Force Development*, ed. Brian Bond (London: TSO for Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1998), pp. 60-63

<sup>229</sup> Colin S. Gray, *The American Revolution in Military Affairs: An Interim Assessment* (London: TSO for Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1997), p. 49

defence analysts write about command, control, communications, computers, intelligence and battle management in the same vein. Although 'C<sup>4</sup>I/BM' is something of a mouthful, it conveys the view that information systems have become essential to an extremely wide – indeed comprehensive – range of functions and that they are also, in some critical sense, inter-dependent.<sup>230</sup>

Freedman understands that the information revolution has impacted on all aspects of the military and has transformed contemporary war – making new information systems central to contemporary war. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and Admiral William A. Owens have also both recognized the vital role that information is playing in contemporary warfare. They both go even further than Freedman and argue that information has had a massive 'force multiplier'<sup>231</sup> effect upon warfighting. In fact Nye, Jr. and Owens believe that: 'The information age has revolutionized not only military affairs but the instruments of soft power and the opportunities to apply them.'<sup>232</sup> Admiral Owens is also credited with developing the concept of the *system of systems* which has since been the driving theoretical force behind the military's current preoccupation with 'network-centric war'<sup>233</sup> where real-time communications can be established and maintained between all arms of the military.

To sum up, there is considerable agreement among War Studies theorists that warfare in the post-Cold War era has undergone a significant and pervasive shift. As these scholars have shown this contemporary military revolution has in turn impacted on the participants, audiences and strategists of war. Thus, as technology has succeeded the soldier in battle, and as war has become a distant media spectacle, so military strategists have accounted for these changes conceptualising airpower as central to military operations, emphasising the importance of precision and stressing the significance of spinning war.

However, although recognising the increased significance of media images and spectacles and the strategic importance of information and its movement, war theorists have underestimated the importance of these and, consequently, have under-

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<sup>230</sup> Lawrence Freedman, 'The Revolution in Strategic Affairs', in *Adelphi Papers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 12

<sup>231</sup> Jr. Nye, Joseph S., and William A. Owens, 'America's Information Edge'. *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 2 (1996), p. 20

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29

<sup>233</sup> Micheal Dillon, 'Network Society, Network-Centric Warfare and the State of Emergency'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no. 4 (2002), pp. 71-79

theorised their impact in the war on terror. To more fully grasp the significance and character of such developments I need to look beyond the International Relations literature. In the following section I will examine briefly the wider study of propaganda. Historically, and as I noted in Chapter One, propaganda models have been prominent in attempting to understand the impact upon politics of media and images. The development of new media technologies – such as the internet, blogs and mobile phones – mean that image production has now become increasingly decentralized and unpredictable as an increasing number of new media actors are creating and uploading their own content. This reaffirms the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the contemporary media system: where information is no longer thought of as being controlled from the top-down but is instead seen as being rhizomatic and decentralized.

### **War and Propaganda in the Age of New Media**

Philip M. Taylor's seminal work on the history of propaganda outlines the long relationship propaganda has had with war.<sup>234</sup> The first and second editions of this book were divided into five sections: 'Propaganda in the Ancient World', 'Propaganda in the Middle Ages', 'Propaganda in the Age of Gunpowder and Printing', 'Propaganda in the Age of Revolutionary Warfare' and 'Propaganda in the Age of Total War and the Cold War.'<sup>235</sup> Significantly, in 2003, the third edition of this book included a new sixth section entitled: 'The New World Information Disorder.'<sup>236</sup> These sections are indicative of more pervasive assumptions of continuity of image usage in warfare.

Taylor makes his own position on propaganda perfectly clear from the outset: 'Once war has broken out, propaganda has proved to be a weapon of no less significance

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<sup>234</sup> Another excellent collection of essays on the history of propaganda is: Mark Connelly and David Welch, eds., *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900-2003* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005)

<sup>235</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: War Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Nuclear Age*. 1<sup>st</sup> eds. (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Patrick Stephens Limited, 1990), Philip M. Taylor, Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*. 2nd eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)

<sup>236</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*. 3rd eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

than swords or guns or bombs.<sup>237</sup> Its power lies in its unique ability to compel others to do the propagandists will without the direct threat of violence. Unlike Hammond,<sup>238</sup> Taylor has chosen not to redefine the role of propaganda within contemporary war. Rather he sees propaganda as having maintained its traditional and central function. Nor does he challenge centralised models which conceive of propaganda flows as unidirectional. This said, in his discussion of propaganda during the Second World War, he does identify two distinct forms of propaganda. Firstly *white* propaganda, 'namely propaganda emanating from a clearly identifiable source,'<sup>239</sup> such as, for example the BBC and, secondly, *black* propaganda which 'describes material emanating from an undisclosed source.'<sup>240</sup> This division of propaganda between 'white' and 'black' has remained the dominant division for a number of years and is evidence of the dominance of propaganda in the mass media age. Taylor, in *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* shows how persuasive the coalition's propaganda campaign during the 1991 Gulf War actually was, attending in particular to the now iconic footage filmed by the planes which launched PGM's against Baghdad: 'Television war addicts were in a sense mesmerised by the live coverage, reducing their capacity to stand back from the images objectively or critically.'<sup>241</sup>

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* have developed an alternative influential centralised propaganda model which helps to describe the role of propaganda in the age of mass media and more recently the information age, concentrating on manufacturing the public's consent.<sup>242</sup> Put quite simply, this consent, as discussed by Herman and Chomsky, is manufactured in response to an event through an intertextuality of

a series of government leaks, press conferences, white papers, etc., or with one or more of the mass media starting the ball rolling... If the other major

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<sup>237</sup> Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*. 2nd eds., p. 5

<sup>238</sup> Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity*

<sup>239</sup> Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*. 2nd eds., p. 222

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, p. 225

<sup>241</sup> Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 14

<sup>242</sup> See also Anthony R. Pratkanis, and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York, NJ: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2001), Rampton and Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception* and Nicholas Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004)

media like the story, they will follow it up with their own versions, and the matter quickly becomes newsworthy by familiarity.<sup>243</sup>

Herman and Chomsky are also aware of the fragility of propaganda within the news system: 'If a theme collapses of its own burden of fabrications, the mass media will quietly fold their tents and move on to another topic.'<sup>244</sup>

However, this centralized propaganda model, of one-way information flows, is no longer adequate. The age of single information sources like press conferences and government white papers is over. As Dan Gillmor puts it, 'the press release culture is beginning to die'.<sup>245</sup> The mass media age is now over and has instead been replaced by a rhizomatic media age where information is now beyond the control of a few dominant media actors. This is because the number of other possible ways for journalists and audiences to get their hands on information has proliferated in the information age. After 9/11 non-traditional information sources have been used more and more to get information such as bin Laden videos, suicide videos and hostage videos (see Chapters Three, Four and Five) although these information sources do indeed share similarities with both official political communications and press conferences (see Chapter Three). From here this information has been circulated throughout the mainstream media both television and print.

An important example of this shift is the increasing prominence of the Al Jazeera news network, which currently acts as an information conduit between the non-mainstream and the mainstream news media. Indeed, perhaps such media services should now be regarded as sources of *grey* propaganda.<sup>246</sup> They are clearly identifiable news sources but at the same time consistently preview footage like Osama bin Laden videos which originate from undisclosed sources. Two other media phenomena should also be added to the growing list of *grey* propaganda

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<sup>243</sup> Edward S. Herman, and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 34

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34

<sup>245</sup> Dan Gillmor, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2006), p. 68

<sup>246</sup> Scot Macdonald, *Propaganda and Information Warfare in the Twenty-First Century: Altered Images and Deception Operations* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 33

sources. Firstly, war-blogs offer a vital source of information during times of war, where civilians such as Salam Pax in Baghdad can comment on events in real-time from within the theatre of operations. This becomes particularly significant either when journalists are absent or when specific blog entries can be used to support claims made by journalists within their news reports (bloggers therefore have now assumed a kind of eyewitness role). Secondly, the website *YouTube*, founded in February 2005, has become another powerful media conduit for a number of controversial videos, such as suicide videos, hostage videos and 'War Porn' footage (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). All of these new technologies have been vital in opening up new lines of communication which intensify the decentralization of information within conflict scenarios. Manuel Castells has termed this 'a space of flows.'<sup>247</sup> According to Daya Kishan Thussu: 'The global media landscape in the first decade of the twenty-first century represents a complex terrain of multi-vocal, multimedia and multi-directional flows.'<sup>248</sup> Traditional theories of propaganda are insufficient for conceptualising and understanding these developments.

New media technologies have played a vital role in helping to create the 'multi-directional flows' of the postmodern 'mediascapes'<sup>249</sup> and they have also directly affected warfare in the information age. What are now traditional communication technologies such as the telephone, radio and television helped to revolutionise the First World War, Second World War and the Vietnam War respectively.<sup>250</sup> A similar transformation appears to be taking place in contemporary global life: an increase in

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<sup>247</sup> See Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 1*. 2nd eds., Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 2* and Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 3*. 2nd eds.

<sup>248</sup> Thussu, 'Mapping Global Media Flow and Contra-Flow', p. 12

<sup>249</sup> 'Mediascapes refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. These images involve many complicated inflections, depending on their mode (documentary or entertainment), their hardware (electronic or preelectronic), their audiences (local, national, or transnational), and the interests of those who own and control them. What is important about these mediascapes is that they provide (especially in their television, film, and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscaapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. What this means is that many audiences around the world experience the media themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens, and billboards.' See Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 35

<sup>250</sup> See Stephen Lax, *Beyond the Horizon - Communications Technologies: Past, Present and Future* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1997)

the visualising of war and the liberation of the spectacle of war from control.

According to Philip Seib:

We are seeing a comprehensive reconnecting of the global village and reshaping of how the world works. ...Al Jazeera is a symbol of this new, media-centric world. ...More than that, Al Jazeera is a paradigm of new media's influence. Ten years ago, there was much talk about "the CNN effect," the theory that news coverage – especially gripping visual storytelling – was influencing foreign policy throughout the world. Today, "the Al Jazeera effect" takes that a significant step farther. Just as "the CNN effect" is not about CNN alone, so too is "the Al Jazeera effect" about much more than the Qatar-based media company. The concept encompasses the use of new media as tools in every aspect of global affairs."<sup>251</sup>

Seib's 'Al Jazeera effect' concept describes how with access to new media technologies today's new media actors – Al Jazeera, bloggers, Al Qaeda and others – are influencing the foreign policy process. In order to explore further this 'Al Jazeera effect' (or what Der Derian additionally describes as 'the Nokia-effect'<sup>252</sup>) I will now focus upon the impact of three specific new media technologies: the internet, blogs, and mobile phones. In each case I can see how the contemporary flow of media information and images cannot be fully grasped by a model of centralised propaganda dissemination, and demands a more nuanced concept of complex and multi-directional rhizomatic flows.

The internet is a media platform – like television, radio and print – which facilitates communication. Nicholas Negroponte,<sup>253</sup> Howard Rheingold<sup>254</sup> and Manuel Castells have been instrumental in promoting debate about the increasing significance of the internet. According to Castells:

The internet is a communication medium that allows, for the first time, the communication of many to many, in chosen time, on a global scale. As the diffusion of the printing press in the West created what McLuhan named the

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<sup>251</sup> Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, pp. ix-x

<sup>252</sup> James Der Derian, 'Paul Virilio', in *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, eds. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 337

<sup>253</sup> See Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (London: Coronet Books, 1996)

<sup>254</sup> See Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. 2nd eds. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000)



‘Gutenberg Galaxy’, we have now entered a new world of communication: the Internet Galaxy.<sup>255</sup>

This ‘Internet Galaxy’ has, as noted by Castells, opened up a world of new possibilities for real-time communications. For example, it allows Al Qaeda to disseminate bin Laden videos and hostage videos with better accuracy, inserting them into particular news-cycles and timing them to coincide with specific anniversaries and events (see Chapters Three and Five). *YouTube* video producers are also able to use the internet to bring existing content to the attention of new audiences, produce new content to challenge official content and adapt and remediate existing content by inserting it into new political situations (see Chapters Three to Six). The internet has, therefore, played an important part in the decline of mass communication and top-down propaganda and in the rise of the unpredictable rhizomatic condition (see Chapter One).

Blogs are another technology which pose a serious challenge to controlling the information of war. Again, anyone, in any location with access to a working computer, live electricity supply or batteries, and an internet connection can immediately post material for anyone to read and comment on. This is a significant technological advance and it also opens up a new and valuable information source that gives a voice to people who sometimes find themselves in extraordinary situations, like war-zones. Of course many bloggers are just people writing about their everyday lives on their home PCs. But some blogs do come to be considered along with mainstream journalism, as credible information sources and therefore are potentially a forum for contesting *white* propaganda. Salam Pax’s blog about the 2003 Iraq War is just such a case. This blog has successfully managed to transcend a number of different media platforms – with his blog entries now collected together within a book *The Baghdad Blog*<sup>256</sup> – so that his commentary on the war has become known beyond the blog itself. *We Are Iran* by Nasrin Alavi<sup>257</sup> is another important book which sees for the first time a collection of Iranian blog entries being published other than on the internet. My point here is that it is not just spectacles that cannot

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<sup>255</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 2-3

<sup>256</sup> See Salam Pax, *The Baghdad Blog* (London: Guardian Books, 2003)

<sup>257</sup> See Nasrin Alavi, *We Are Iran* (London: Portobello Books, 2005)



now be controlled, but also information, as blog entries are collected, repackaged and remediated.

Mobile phones first emerged during the 1980s, although it was not until the mid to late-1990s when, in parts of the world, they rose to prominence. Soon the mobile phone was routinely used by journalists and civilians alike to inform the media of events as they were taking place. Dan Gillmor has discussed the role of SMS text messaging within the recent SARS outbreak in China noting that ‘...the first inkling among journalists of China’s SARS epidemic came in an SMS from sources inside the medical profession there.’<sup>258</sup> However, for this thesis, the most significant development with mobile phones has been the development of camera phones and video phones. According to Gillmor, ‘mobile phones... [are now] able to send information and images to individuals and groups, and publish to web pages in close to real time.’<sup>259</sup> The July 7, 2005 London Bombings was a major turning point in terms of the relationship between the mobile phone, the media and civilians. Commuters – like Adam Stacey – who were caught up in the bombings, quickly began recording what was happening around them. These people then sent this footage to the media for immediate circulation. Since 7/7, news networks now make regular pleas for viewers to send in their footage and so news audiences have become re-agentialized (see Chapter Four).

The most important feature of the new media revolution, however, has been the convergence of old and new media into a mediated reality whereby information including images can now effortlessly move from one media platform to another and circulate with little restraint. Without these new technologies a technology deficit would still exist, obstructing the circulation of information and images. In fact, maybe image warfare in its current manifestation would not be possible at all. Anyone located anywhere – with access to ‘minimum media’<sup>260</sup> – whether Osama bin Laden in a cave or a disenfranchised teenager in their bedroom, can now

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<sup>258</sup> Gillmor, *We the Media*, p. 33

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35

<sup>260</sup> Andrew Hoskins, and Ben O’Loughlin, *Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 127

manufacture an image weapon with a damaging yield and potential international impact. Henry Jenkins has discussed a localised effect of this media convergence:

Intoxicated students at a local high school use their cell phones spontaneously to produce their own soft-core porn movie involving topless cheerleaders making out in the locker room. Within hours, the movie is circulating across the school, being downloaded by students and teachers alike and watched between classes on personal media devices.<sup>261</sup>

He has also employed the example of the appropriation of the Bert character from *Sesame Street* (“Bert is Evil”) by someone called Ignacio. This appropriation takes Bert, a popular children’s television character, and gives him a subversive edge with the caption ‘Bert is Evil’ and his pairing with nefarious figures. The appropriation has since gone on to not only become an internet phenomenon but also to cross over into the mainstream media as a social phenomenon right across the world. Jenkins has described this image’s journey as follows:

In the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets counted across multiple media platforms. Think about the circuits that the Bert is Evil images travelled – from *Sesame Street* through Photoshop to the World Wide Web, from Ignacio’s bedroom to a print shop in Bangladesh, from the posters held by anti-American protestors that are captured by CNN and into the living rooms of people around the world. Some of its circulation depended on corporate strategies, such as the localization of *Sesame Street* or the global coverage of CNN. Some of its circulation depended on tactics of grassroots appropriation, whether in North America or in the Middle East.<sup>262</sup>

New media actors and technologies have made possible a realm of decentralised and multi-directional information and image flows. In this super-networked society the spectacle of war is no longer controllable. Images are in fact contradicting some of the assumptions of the advocates of a techno-war led RMA. The challenge, then, is to find a way to theorise such images that is able to account for their form and function in ways that also meets the needs and capacities of theories of war and strategy. One possible way of so theorising is that developed under the name of ‘postmodern war’ and it is to a consideration of these that I now turn.

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<sup>261</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, NJ: New York University Press, 2006), p. 17

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 2-3

## Theorising Postmodern War

If the scholarship conducted in the name of the RMA is limited when it comes to the fuller comprehension of transformations in military technologies and their impact on contemporary war, then there are resources within the fields of cultural theory and philosophy that can take us far – perhaps even too far – beyond them. This is a large literature and I will here examine two leading figures: Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio whose research into real-time communications and war has sparked widespread interest and, in the case of Baudrillard's well-known book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, courted some degree of controversy. Patton's introduction conveys Baudrillard's argument about the 1991 Gulf War as:

At the time, the TV Gulf War must have seemed to many viewers a perfect Baudrillardian simulacrum, a hyperreal scenario in which events lose their identity and signifiers fade into one another. Fascination and horror at the reality which seemed to unfold before our very eyes mingled with a pervasive sense of unreality as we recognised the elements of Hollywood script which had preceded the real (the John Wayne language and bearing of the military spokesmen), and as the signifiers of past events faded into those of the present (the oil-soaked sea bird recycled from the *Exxon Valdez* to warn of impending eco-disaster in the Gulf). Occasionally, the absurdity of the media's self-representation as purveyor of reality and immediacy broke through, in moments such as those when the CNN cameras crossed live to a group of reporters assembled somewhere in the Gulf, only to have them confess that they were also sitting around watching CNN in order to find out what was happening. Television news coverage appeared to have finally caught up with the logic of simulation.<sup>263</sup>

Patton also offers a description of the Baudrillardian principle of 'hyperreality' – 'the fusion of the virtual and the real into a third order of reality.'<sup>264</sup> Invoking Baudrillard, Debrix also believes that: 'The Gulf War... can only make sense in the context of hyperreality, as a *trompe l'oeil* war'<sup>265</sup> of simulacra and simulations. Baudrillard argues that real-time information

loses itself in a completely unreal space, finally furnishing the images of pure, useless, instantaneous television where its primordial function irrupts,

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<sup>263</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Translated by Paul Patton (Sydney: Power Publications, 1995), p. 2

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>265</sup> François Debrix, 'Jean Baudrillard', in *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, eds. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 57

namely that of filling a vacuum, blocking up the screen hole through which escapes the substance of events.<sup>266</sup>

He concludes his assessment of the role of the media in the First Gulf War as follows:

CNN seeks to be a stethoscope attached to the hypothetical heart of the war, and to present us with its hypothetical pulse. But this auscultation only provides a confused ultrasound, undecidable symptoms, and an assortment of vague and contradictory diagnoses.<sup>267</sup>

Paul Virilio in *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light* offers an alternative critique of the 1991 Gulf War. He introduces the idea of the media as a new weapon of war in two distinct ways: firstly, as ‘weapons of mass communication’<sup>268</sup> and secondly, as ‘weapons of instantaneous communication.’<sup>269</sup> In identifying the media as having become weaponized in these two distinct ways Virilio is making an important comment here about how during the 1991 Gulf War the Pentagon was able to – with its press pool system – use the media as a weapon of mass communication to centrally distribute information to audiences via the waiting press. Virilio is also making an important point here about the fact that during the 1991 Gulf War the Pentagon was able to exploit the media as a weapon of instantaneous communication to mesmerise journalists and audiences alike. For example, the Pentagon made night-vision video footage of air raids over Baghdad available to journalists in the press pools and then allowed these journalists to submit this footage to news networks who then circulated it. As argued below, I believe that in the war on terror the Pentagon are still slaves to the idea of the media being a weapon of mass communication and a weapon of instantaneous communication when instead the media system has now changed and is more rhizomatic and unpredictable.

During the First Gulf War the media did indeed fall into the trap of real-time communication, enabling the Pentagon to manufacture and stage-manage a series of spectacular media spectacles. Baudrillard believed that the development of real-time

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<sup>266</sup> Baudrillard, *The Gulf War*, p. 31

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48

<sup>268</sup> Paul Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*. Translated by Michael Degener (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 12

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49

transfers of information signalled the end of any meaning for the disseminated information. He wrote the following epitaph for the 1991 Gulf War: 'War implodes in real time, history implodes in real time, all communication and all signification implode in real time.'<sup>270</sup> Baudrillard believed that all reality in the First Gulf War imploded and was instead replaced by simulacra and simulation. He dismissed real-time war even before it had taken place: 'The Gulf War Will Not Take Place.' He then criticised it while it was taking place: 'The Gulf War: Is It Really Taking Place?' And after the war ended he remained critical of it: 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place'. Baudrillard was right to dismiss the 1991 Gulf War as a mere simulacrum of war. However, he too quickly dismissed all real-time warfare. This is proven by the fact that in response to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks Baudrillard was forced to reverse his position on real-time communications and war and concede that 9/11 was 'the absolute event.' He gave this reflection:

Throughout the stagnation of the 1990s, events were 'on strike' (as the Argentinian writer Macedonio Fernandez put it). Well, the strike is over now. Events are not on strike any more. With the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, we might even be said to have before us the absolute event, the 'mother' of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all the events that have never taken place.<sup>271</sup>

Virilio, by contrast, saw the 1991 Gulf War and real-time transfers of information as heralding a new age of meaning for communication. His assessment of the First Gulf War is prophetic and offers a glimpse onto a future step-change in war that was finally realised with the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks: image warfare.

Theorists of postmodern war have been particularly focused upon the development of real-time communications. Baudrillard was immediately critical of the First Gulf War and all real-time communication, arguing that 'reality' imploded with the war in the Gulf and was instead replaced by a simulacrum of war. He was correct to draw attention to the extent to which the First Gulf War, as experienced by media audiences was something that 'did not take place' outside of its own simulation. However, he too quickly dismissed all real-time communication and war and was

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<sup>270</sup> Baudrillard, *The Gulf War*, p. 49

<sup>271</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*. Translated by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003), pp. 2-3

forced to reverse his position after 'the absolute event' of 9/11. Virilio, in contrast, realised that the 1991 Gulf War was the start of a new era in communication and war and so developed the idea that the media are 'weapons of mass communication' and 'weapons of instantaneous communication.' Virilio's prophetic words about a new era in communication and war were eventually realized with the 9/11 terror attacks and the launching of image warfare. But the challenge of more fully comprehending this still remains. In order to develop an adequate understanding I must, as I have already shown, look beyond the disciplinary boundaries of International Relations. That is why I will now turn to research in the field of Visual Culture in search of a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of images and their relationship to media technologies and institutions in image warfare.

### **Theorising Image Warfare**

Scot Macdonald in *Propaganda and Information Warfare in the Twenty-First Century: Altered Images and Deception Operations* has shown that the literature on information warfare currently misunderstands propaganda and particularly altered images within contemporary war.<sup>272</sup> In an attempt to better understand the role of such images, Macdonald takes us beyond the information warfare literature explored above. He argues that in the past the producers of propaganda material used rudimentary methods to alter images for use in deception operations and that these unsophisticated altered images were often easily identifiable. He then goes on to make the claim that in the wars of today the producers of propaganda material again create it for deception operations but they now use computers and other sophisticated technologies to make their propaganda and as such altered images are not so easy to identify. Another development in propaganda operations, noted by Macdonald, is that altered images can now be disseminated globally in near real-time. Therefore, he argues, increasingly altered images are being employed in deception operations in attempts to try and gain a military advantage against superior military forces such as America.

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<sup>272</sup> Macdonald, *Propaganda*, p. 4

Macdonald is undoubtedly correct to draw attention to the deployment of images in military contexts. However, he remains fixated upon a model of propaganda formation and dissemination that is based on the mass communication model discussed in Chapter One. He fails to recognise the importance and extent of the rhizomatic nature of contemporary media production and dissemination which requires, in turn, different concepts and reference points. In search of these I will now turn to research from within Visual Culture. This literature is important to my study of image warfare because it offers a perspective on images, something which is limited within the IR literature and it also helps me to clarify the institutional relationships between actors, objects and subjects.

In her seminal work *On Photography* Susan Sontag explores how images help to construct and reconstruct our understanding of the world, acting as important instruments of knowledge.<sup>273</sup> According to Sontag: ‘Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.’<sup>274</sup> Photography, she argues, encourages people to take ownership of and document the world around them such that: ‘After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed.’<sup>275</sup> However, she is equally aware that:

Photographs, which fiddle with the scale of the world, themselves get reduced, blown up, cropped, retouched, doctored, tricked out. They age, plagued by the usual ills of paper objects; they disappear; they become valuable, and get bought and sold; they are reproduced. Photographs, which package the world, seem to invite packaging. They are stuck in albums, framed and set on tables, tacked on walls, projected on slides. Newspapers and magazines feature them; cops alphabetize them; museums exhibit them; publishers compile them.<sup>276</sup>

Beyond encouraging a rethink of the ways in which images (and their meanings) are transformed, Sontag further explores the important relationship between ‘context’ and ‘image’. In fact she identifies two distinct types of context. The first of these is,

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<sup>273</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1990), p. 3

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

as discussed above, the conditions under which an image is displayed; the second is the intertextual relationship an image shares with other images. Sontag writes:

The photograph that the Bolivian authorities transmitted to the world press in October 1967 of Che Guevara's body, laid out in a stable on a stretcher on top of a cement trough, surrounded by a Bolivian colonel, a U.S. intelligence agent, and several journalists and soldiers, not only summed up the bitter realities of contemporary Latin American history but had some inadvertent resemblance, as John Berger has pointed out, to Mantegna's "The Dead Christ" and Rembrandt's "The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Tulp." What is compelling about the photograph partly derives from what it shares, as a composition, with these paintings. Indeed, the very extent to which that photograph is unforgettable indicates its potential... for becoming a timeless image.<sup>277</sup>

Here Sontag explains how photographs get taken and then circulate, becoming repackaged. She also argues that '[a] photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened.'<sup>278</sup> As I will see below this is an important observation, for anyone seeking to understand the circulation, repackaging and remediation of images in the war on terror, and one usefully developed by the Visual Culture theorist W. J. T. Mitchell who has theorised the so-called 'pictorial turn', taking his inspiration from the earlier linguistic turn and drawing attention to 'the sense that we live in a world of images, a world in which, to paraphrase Derrida, there is nothing outside the picture.'<sup>279</sup>

Mitchell takes up Sontag's themes, while pointing to the omnipresence of images today. He has since turned his attention to theorising the role of Visual Culture in the war on terror, noting that terrorism has become 'cloned'. Mitchell has represented this connection pictorially with specific reference to an image, first photographed by Mikey Flowers, which shows the dust and smoke filled scene from Ground Zero. This image was then manipulated by the artist Kevin Clarke as he laid a DNA code

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 106-107

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

<sup>279</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 41. "There is nothing outside of the text" by Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 158



on top of the original image.<sup>280</sup> Mitchell, with his 'cloning terror' concept, has made a compelling connection between 'the acephalic clone'<sup>281</sup> (which is a headless cloned body) – as discussed by Baudrillard – and the bodies which appear like acephalic clones in the war on terror. Mitchell argues:

The acephalic figure has cloned itself in a wide variety of forms in the war on terror. The decapitation of hostages as a spectacle to be recorded and circulated in the mass media is only the most literal and hideous of these images. Other variations on this obsession with the head include the famously staged photo-op of the hooding of Saddam Hussein's statue on the entrance to Baghdad, first with an American flag (which was quickly removed as excessively provocative) and then with a canvas tarp; and the scenes of Saddam Hussein's capture which feature an endlessly repeated video tape of his dental examination, the dentist's light illuminating the interior of the nefarious head of state. ...But perhaps the most widely publicized headless figures were the torture victims of Abu Ghraib prison, their naked bodies exposed to humiliation while their heads are concealed under hoods.<sup>282</sup>

According to Mitchell, an 'image cannot be destroyed; it comes back to life'<sup>283</sup> and 'like clones, the Abu Ghraib photographs now have a life of their own quite antithetical to the intentions of their producers.'<sup>284</sup> The same can also be said about the other powerful images currently circulating and remediating across multiple media platforms and image contexts in the war on terror such is the uncontrollability of the spectacle of war in the rhizomatic media age.

Nicholas Mirzoeff, also building on Sontag's ideas about image circulation and the repackaging of images and Mitchell's work on the omnipresence of images, argues that '[modern life takes] place on screen... Human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before... In the era of the visual screen, your viewpoint is

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<sup>280</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to Abu Ghraib', in *Baker-Nord Seminar Series: "Information"*, Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH. 30 November 2006. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqb8eTK1aMs>. Accessed on 13 August 2008 and W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to Abu Ghraib'. *History & Theory (Bezael Academy of Art and Design: Jerusalem)*, no. 10 (2008). Available at: <http://bezael.secured.co.il/8/mitchell.htm>. Accessed on 14 May 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>281</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion*. Translated by Julia Witwer (New York, NJ: Columbia University Press, 2000)

<sup>282</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, 'The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in a Time of Terror'. *ELH* 72, no. 2 (2005), p. 298

<sup>283</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Picturing Terror: Derrida's Autoimmunity'. *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (2007), p. 290

<sup>284</sup> Mitchell, 'The Unspeakable', p. 300

crucial.<sup>285</sup> Mirzoeff has also turned his attention to theorising Visual Culture in the war on terror but, in contrast to Mitchell, he is critical of the images of the 2003 Iraq War. According to Mirzoeff, ‘the war marks the end of a globalization in which a new visual Tower of Babel fell.’<sup>286</sup> He believes that:

In the second Gulf War, more images were created to less effect than at any other period in human history... More journalists were present in combat than ever before, using all the advantages of new digital technology to transmit reports even as fighting was taking place. What was in retrospect remarkable about this mass of material was the lack of any truly memorable images. For all the constant circulation of images, there was still nothing to see... To adopt a phrase from Hannah Arendt, the war marked the emergence of the banality of images. There is no longer anything spectacular about this updated society of the spectacle... The war itself offered the low farce of “Saving Private Lynch” and the staged destruction of Saddam Hussein’s statue.<sup>287</sup>

He likens the coverage of the Iraq War to a relentless flow of weapon-images – constructed by the American military with the intention of controlling the spectacle of war, correctly citing as key instances the cases of Saving Private Jessica Lynch, the pulling down of Saddam Hussein’s statue and President Bush declaring the official ending of the war on the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* (an event Robin Andersen refers to as a ‘million-dollar pseudo-event’).<sup>288</sup> However, Mirzoeff also believes that these weapon-images and others are in fact banal as news audiences are today increasingly able to identify MIME-NET manufactured media spectacles. For instance, they were quick to see that these events were, according to Mirzoeff, just ‘re-runs: of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), the revolutionary destruction of statues since 1776 and the action film *Top Gun* (1986).<sup>289</sup> There is an important point here but Mirzoeff is mistaken in categorising all images as part of the same banal dynamic, even those showing the lynching of coalition soldiers, the death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein and the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Certainly some images may be experienced as banal, too generic and too reminiscent of oft-seen fictional representations. But others retain a power sufficient to powerful

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<sup>285</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 1

<sup>286</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 2

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67

<sup>288</sup> Andersen, *A Century of Media*, p. xix

<sup>289</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, pp. 67-68

'image munitions' (as I will see when I consider these in Chapters Five and Six). The 2003 Iraq War, according to Douglas Kellner, was indeed proof of the 'new culture of media spectacle... with its proliferating media spectacle, megaspectacles, and interactive spectacles.'<sup>290</sup> It was also proof that the spectacle of war cannot be controlled and since then this new culture of media spectacle has indeed proliferated, deepening the crisis brought about by the new image warfare theatre of war.

*No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, again building on Sontag's ideas about the circulation and repackaging of images, Mitchell's discussion of the omnipresence of the image and Mirzoeff's claim about 'a banality of images' in the 2003 Iraq War, examines how visual arts are 'remediated in varied combinations within new media.'<sup>291</sup> They examine a selection of iconic historic images and their contemporary appropriations showing how 'copying, imitating, satirizing, and other forms of appropriation are a crucial sign of iconicity.'<sup>292</sup> Hariman and Lucaites argue that iconic images are those images which circulate widely, appearing in multiple contexts: the front cover of a history of the twentieth century, an advert for a World War Two retrospective, a web memorial of protests in the 1960s, the work of political cartoonists, commercial advertising, referred to in fiction and poetry, parodied on the internet and discussed in scholarly studies of photojournalism and photography and beyond.<sup>293</sup> According to Hariman and Lucaites iconic images are subject to

complex patterns of appropriation whereby images are taken from the mass media into many smaller circuits of private consumption, social display, retail distribution, subcultural articulation, political advocacy, and so forth, and back again into other public arts and media such as cartoons and books, and then again reproduced in major media retrospectives, celebrations, and other performances. Throughout this process the images are continually subject to alteration, repositioning, and other forms of translation.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Douglas Kellner, 'Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle', 2004. Available at: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/medculturespectacle.html>. Accessed on 29 November 2007, p. 16

<sup>291</sup> Robert Hariman, and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago, MI: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 296

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*, p. 303

As they further write: ‘The [iconic] image proves to be aesthetically powerful yet politically elastic, and circulation includes not merely mechanical reproduction but also artistic improvisation and complex forms of viewer responses.’<sup>295</sup> Hariman and Lucaites have examined what makes particular images ‘iconic’ and therefore distinct from other images which disappear quickly. They have explored how iconic images are instantly recognizable images which have the ability to also enter into complex patterns of appropriation and be repackaged without becoming unrecognizable. Their study reveals that iconic images are powerful precisely because of the fact that they can be picked up and reused and inserted into new contexts and still be recognized. Their insights about iconic images are important as they help me to better understand the circulation and remediation of weaponized images in the war on terror.

The study of visual culture, then, draws attention to the ways in which images retain a life, remaining available for continued circulation and transformation into and out of varied environments within which they can be reused, replayed, redefined: circulation and remediation are the fundamental capacities of iconic images in contemporary cultures. In this sense it serves as a powerful reminder of the fact that IR/Strategic Studies theorists – despite some recent moves to account for aesthetics, images and visuals – still largely fail to understand the complex dynamics of images. What is needed is a synthesis of these distinct traditions in a way that enables me to explore the complex dynamics of images and which offers IR/Strategic Studies a conceptual framework for exploring image warfare. Central to that synthesis will be recognition of the shift from the ‘mobilization of images’ to the ‘weaponization of images’, made possible by the transformation of society from the mass media age to the rhizomatic information age and as a result of which contemporary techno-war has now given way to image warfare.

To get a clearer understanding of this contemporary situation – and to first apply insights gained from reviewing research in Visual Culture, Postmodern Warfare and Strategic Studies – I will now consider two universally recognized iconic images:

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20

*Accidental Napalm* and *Accidental Electrocutation*. Both share iconic status and both have had a significant political impact yet they are also distinct from one another in terms of their production and dissemination.

The photograph known as *Accidental Napalm* was shot during the Vietnam War on June 8, 1972 by Nick Ut. This famous image shows five children followed by four soldiers fleeing from a Napalm attack. In the centre of this image is the shocking and now iconic figure of a naked Vietnamese girl, her arms outstretched, silently screaming with pain as her skin melts. A powerful and emotive image, with great visceral power, it was quickly used by activists and mobilized against the Vietnam War. However, at the time, released into a slow news-cycle and in a world without easy access to the technologies of media manipulation and circulation its use was limited. Recently, however, it has been subject to a number of creative redeployments or ‘remediations’. For example, in 1994, the cartoonist Tom Toles drew “Disney Napalm”. Toles drew this cartoon as a protest against the planned building of a Disney theme park near the historic Manassas battlefield. He inserted Goofy into the scene of *Accidental Napalm*, showing him running beside the girl in a visual indictment of the proposed neighbourly relationship between Disney and a historic landmark.<sup>296</sup> In 1997, the cartoonist Jeff Danziger drew “Just Do It!” taking the *Accidental Napalm* image and employing it to make a powerful statement against US run factories in Vietnam. The screaming girl (now a woman as twenty-five years had passed since the image was first shot) is here transformed into a spokeswoman for the female work force of US run Vietnamese factory assembly lines.<sup>297</sup> In 2000, the artist Jon Haddock produced “Children Fleeing” showing *Accidental Napalm* from ‘an isometric perspective’ (like in a computer game), shifting our perspective and shifting attention away from the children, onto the soldiers and thus making it appear as though the children are running away from the soldiers rather than from a Napalm attack.<sup>298</sup> Finally, the British artist Banksy has used *Accidental Napalm* as the subject of his painting *Napalm* isolating the iconic image of the girl and painting her (as if skipping along) with Mickey Mouse holding her right hand and Ronald

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<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 200-201

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid*, p. 201

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid*, p. 180

McDonald holding her left hand: the intention is to advance a damning indictment of American Capitalism.

*Accidental Electrocution* was shot during the 2003 Iraq War and has become a definitive image of the US presence in the country. It shows a hooded man – an Iraqi prisoner – standing on a box with wires leading from his hands and genital area, thus – I, like he, assume – ready for electrocution. In its title this image references the earlier one. And like it this image of the hooded man has also become iconic and subject to extensive redeployment. These similarities are important, indicative of the fact that the formation, circulation and contest of images have been a part of warfare since before the war on terror. And, yet, the differences between the ‘careers’ of the two images is also striking. Firstly, the image of *Accidental Electrocution* was not taken by a war photographer but by a serving soldier in an unofficial capacity. Its initial release was not sanctioned by any military or media agency. Indeed, its presence within the public sphere indicates the extent to which such agencies are not the only forces at work. Secondly, the image was circulated rapidly and repeatedly through national and international official and unofficial networks from there finding itself incorporated into political graffiti and posters within a very short space of time. And, thirdly, as an image that was already digital and therefore easily manipulatable it found itself abstracted and reinserted into various challenging and incongruous contexts (including famously, one which re-presented the electric wires as the headphone leads of an *iPod*).

I will explore the form and circulation of *Accidental Electrocution* in much more detail in Chapter Six. The point here has been to show how, although there are similarities in the fates of images from two conflicts just thirty years apart there are also immense differences. The politicisation and weaponisation of the later image, is indicative of our departure from the traditional centralized model of propaganda to the unpredictable and rhizomatic model of information. Images today are liberated from the controls of government, military and media institutions as new actors (in the case of *Accidental Electrocution*, US soldiers) have taken to producing, circulating and remediating weaponized images. In the war on terror all these different actors are producing and releasing weaponized images for a variety of different reasons that range from government and military (attempts to control the spectacle of war), media

(attempts to maximise their audience) to anti-war protesters and artists (attempts to discredit the official spectacle of war) and advertisers (attempts to exploit the spectacle of war to help advertise their own products).

Such weaponized images are never launched indiscriminately. Rather they are launched by actors with very specific intentions and with whatever news-cycle is present at that moment in time in mind. There is intention and direction and a complex process of decisions behind all weaponized images. The producers of weaponized images want their images to have the greatest possible impact on news-cycles and beyond by effecting changes in the military and political decision making processes. However, this does not mean that weaponized images never get misfired – like conventional munitions occasionally do in traditional war theatres. They may be misjudged, as for example with the release of Uday and Qusay Hussein death images and the capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein (see Chapter Six). Furthermore, they also get reused and recycled in complex and unpredictable ways. And one way the comparison of the two *Accidental* images shows this is with the changing speed of such appropriation. In a mass media society actors like anti-war protesters, artists and advertisers would have had to wait for government, military and media institutions to release images before circulating and remediating them. However, in our rhizomatic society actors such as anti-war protesters, artists and advertisers no longer have to wait for government, military and media institutions to officially release images before they can circulate and remediate them. Instead all of these processes may take place simultaneously and unfold within the same temporality: a twenty-four hour real-time news-cycle. Therefore, the gap between an event taking place and images of that event being disseminated has now shrunk. This means that image munitions can be inserted with greater accuracy into the news-cycle so they can be timed to coincide with events, such as Prime Minister Tony Blair's keynote speech to the 2004 Labour Party Conference and the Kenneth Bigley video which coincided with the speech (see Chapter Five) and the bin Laden video which coincided with the 2004 American Presidential Election (see Chapter Three). But it also means that the time between an image munition being first deployed and it being remediated for different political purposes has also collapsed. So, for example, today, before images get released by either government, military or media institutions they can sometimes already be found circulating on the internet

having been appropriated and remediated by anti-war protesters, artists and advertisers. For example, footage of the London Bombings began circulating on the internet without first being filtered by government, military and media institutions (see Chapter Four). In our rhizomatic society images and the spectacle of war can no longer be controlled by the military or indeed the mainstream media.

The comparison of these two *Accidental* images, in the context of our reflections upon changes in media technologies and organisation, the theory of the RMA and the insights of Visual Culture, suggests that it is necessary to treat the production and circulation and consumption of images in warfare as a conceptually distinct moment or field within conflicts. Images are 'launched' as a kind of munition and, in response, other actors may launch countering images. These can be circulated rapidly and widely across a diverse range of media platforms where they may become the subject to intense conflict over their mediation and remediation, picked up and used by different actors for different political purposes. I reflect upon these three key themes or ideas which emerge as ripe for conceptual development and clarification: images as weapons or 'image munitions'; images launched in response to other images or 'counter-image munitions'; and conflict over the redeployment of images or 'remediation battles'. In the following sections, I will develop an understanding of these terms and their relationships and show how they may provide a framework through which to explore the varying functions that images have performed in the contemporary war on terror.

## **Image Munitions**

For centuries military strategists have been theorising about deploying weapons and the impacts of these weapons on war. Sophisticated military strategies<sup>299</sup> – such as

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<sup>299</sup> Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, eds. *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), Julian Corbett, 'Command of the Sea', in *War*, ed. Lawrence Freedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 225-28, Giulio Douhet, 'Command of the Air', in *War*, ed. Lawrence Freedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 228-31 and B.H. Liddell Hart, 'The Indirect Approach', in *War*, ed. Lawrence Freedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 231-32



Blitzkrieg<sup>300</sup> – have been developed to gain military advantage in war. However, IR/Strategic Studies has largely overlooked the increasing significance of images in war and have instead chosen to focus their attention on technology in war. Traditional military arsenals contain different munitions: bullets, bombs, missiles and mines. Each of these different munitions is used by militaries (land, sea and air) in order to gain a specific strategic advantage over the enemy. Bullets are used by soldiers in the combat theatre to main and kill enemy soldiers. Bombs are deployed by militaries to destroy either large enemy areas or specific enemy targets. Missiles are launched by militaries to take out enemy targets and mines are set to main and kill enemy personnel. Today, the media and images constitute a distinct theatre of war – alongside land, sea and air – with images as key weapons (equivalent to bullets, bombs, missiles and mines) used to gain a specific strategic advantage over the enemy.

The term image munition represents a convergence of Visual Culture/Media Studies terminology in order to name a range of different images: from real-time images to post-hoc images and images of diverse mediums of capture. Something that is shared by all image munitions is a strong auratic presence. Of course images do not cause damage or harm in the same way as traditional munitions. One way to understand the power of these images is through their ‘auratic presence’. Walter Benjamin employed the term aura to describe how artistic representations of ancient idols and religious icons, such as a statue of Venus or Madonna,<sup>301</sup> in their uniqueness contain a kind of presence and sacred force in the form of ‘an aura’. But, Benjamin argued, it is precisely this that ‘withers in the age of mechanical reproduction’<sup>302</sup> when works are no longer unique and may be experienced removed from any sort of conventional context. In the process of copying pieces of art the aura of the original is not transferred. However, contemporary theorists of Media Studies and Visual Culture are taking issue with this claim. For instance, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue that ‘remediation does not destroy the aura of the

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<sup>300</sup> F. O. Miksche, 'Blitzkrieg', in *War*, ed. Lawrence Freedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 232-35

<sup>301</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: FontanaPress, 1992), pp. 217-218

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215

work of art; instead it always refashions that aura in another media form.<sup>303</sup> Hariman and Lucaites believe that '[t]he same "mechanical reproduction" that destroys the aura of the fine art work can at the same time create an aura for the lesser images.'<sup>304</sup> This is because as new media technologies have opened up new possibilities for image production and circulation so Benjamin's conception of the nature of aura has become too restrictive.<sup>305</sup> Mitchell also believes that technology now allows for exact copies to be made of originals and for the aura contained within the original to be transferred to the copy: he proclaims that society has now shifted from an age of mechanical reproduction to an age of biocybernetic reproduction.<sup>306</sup> This force or power of images – their capacity to induce affect and to 'awe' us is something that I will explore in later chapters, in the context of case studies of particularly significant examples (especially Chapter Three).

An aspect of this power lies in the peculiarities of the gaze,<sup>307</sup> the way in which figures in images appear to be able to gaze out and look at their audience.<sup>308</sup> People represented in an image munition – whether Osama bin Laden, President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, a hostage or a suicide bomber – may seem to reach out from their images and connect with audiences. This is particularly important for Al Qaeda which has a shadowy presence in the war on terror and therefore uses its image munitions as a way to manufacture a mediated presence. For bin Laden his tapes allow him to exist like 'the evil eye'<sup>309</sup> and be everywhere and nowhere simultaneously, inserted into the news-cycle to partake in and affect political debates (see Chapter Three). For suicide bombers suicide video wills are important because

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<sup>303</sup> Jay David Bolter, and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 75. See also Jay David Bolter, Blair MacIntyre, Maribeth Gandy, and Petra Schweitzer, 'New Media and the Permanent Crisis of Aura'. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 12, no. 1 (2006), pp. 21-39

<sup>304</sup> Hariman, and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, pp. 37-38

<sup>305</sup> For a further discussion of 'aura' in the contemporary age, see: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, and Michael Marrinan, eds. *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003)

<sup>306</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 309-336

<sup>307</sup> See Jacques Lacan, 'Of the Gaze as Object Petit A', in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain Miller (London: The Hogarth Press, Ltd., 1977), pp. 67-123

<sup>308</sup> Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985), p. 244

<sup>309</sup> Andrew Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes'. *Journal for Cultural Research* 10, no. 1 (2006), p. 41

they are released in the aftermath of attacks and because they help to keep particular suicide bombings in the news-cycle (see Chapter Four). For hostage-takers image munitions of hostages are important precisely because they help to give the hostages a presence even though they are physically absent and this helps to keep the hostage newsworthy and it also allows hostages to partake in political debates (see Chapter Five). All of these Al Qaeda produced image munitions have indeed had an important force-multiplier effect as they have dramatically increased Al Qaeda's presence in the war on terror.

Image munitions are also subject to and invoke dynamic power relations. Al Qaeda, through its image munitions, has repeatedly sought to discredit and undermine America and the West. For example, making hostages wear orange coloured jump-suits when appearing in hostage videos – a reference to the unlawful combatants detained at Guantanamo Bay (see Chapter Five). America and Britain have similarly both sought to discredit Al Qaeda with their image munitions and counter-image munitions. For example, releasing video footage showing bin Laden celebrating Al Qaeda coming together with Islamic Jihad (see Chapter Three) and releasing humiliating images of Saddam Hussein after his capture (see Chapter Five). American and British soldiers, as I have already remarked, have unwittingly provided Al Qaeda with powerful image munitions in the form of photographs depicting the abuse of Iraqi prisoners that have since proven very damaging for America and Britain in the war on terror (see Chapter Six). These abuse images are now referred to as War Porn (because of the pornographic nature of the abuses on display) and they also serve to reinforce perverse Orientalist<sup>310</sup>/Imperialist stereotypes of Islam. Because image munitions are not developed and deployed indiscriminately but rather are produced and deployed with a clear intention and direction in mind an analogy can be drawn here between image munitions and PGM's as they are also never launched indiscriminately but allow militaries to take out targets while minimising collateral damage.

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<sup>310</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

To conclude, image munitions in the war on terror have already been deployed strategically by Al Qaeda and also (although less effectively) by Western governments, such as America and Britain (further evidence of Al Qaeda's embrace of image warfare and America's and Britain's continuation with an outdated techno-war agenda).

### **Counter-Image Munitions**

In traditional warfare, attacks are often followed by counter attacks. To help explain this I offer an analogical assist: Army A and Army B are engaged in a battle over Position Z. Army A launches air strikes against Army B supply lines and Army B quickly initiates a counter-attack against Army A by deploying missiles against its communication nodes. Army A responds by launching yet another set of air strikes, this time against the communication nodes of Army B, and follows this up with a ground offensive pushing towards Position Z. Army B responds by deploying yet more missiles against Army A supply lines and follows this up with a ground offensive pushing towards Position Z. Army A and Army B finally engage each other directly in a series of ground battles (attacks and counter-attacks) and eventually Army B wins control of Position Z.

In image warfare the battles are similar to the one outlined above, only this war theatre is media based and bullets and bombs have been replaced by image munitions. For example, the opening episodes of the war on terror can be read as a battle of attacks and counter attacks. In attacking the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, and in attempting to attack The White House, Al Qaeda had purposefully selected targets which it knew would yield a number of powerful image munitions (see Chapter Four). America's counter attack to September 11<sup>th</sup> was its declaration of a war against Afghanistan and its spectacular air attacks against Kabul. America had simply rolled out yet another techno-war and a re-run of the opening scenes of the 1991 Gulf War and the Kosovo Conflict (see Chapter Two). The Pentagon misunderstood the war on terror and the fact that a new image warfare theatre of war

has opened up, because they thought that their spectacular air attacks would be followed by a quick ground offensive and the taking of Kabul and the capturing of bin Laden – reminiscent of the 1991 Gulf War. They had failed to adequately take account of the power of image munitions and underestimated Al Qaeda’s ability to launch a counter-attack with a bin Laden counter-image munition. On October 7, 2001 a bin Laden video was aired by Al Jazeera and it immediately took attention away from the Pentagon’s Afghanistan war script and instead returned media attention to Al Qaeda, it also forced the Pentagon to revise its war script and it resulted in Prime Minister Tony Blair, President George W. Bush and a host of other British and American politicians and military officials appearing on Al Jazeera in a series of counter-image munitions and so engaging bin Laden in a dangerous game of mimetic one-upmanship (see Chapter Three).

Counter-image munitions are deployed in an attempt to replace an image munition within the news-cycle and thus shift attention away from the message an opponent is trying to deliver with their original image munition. A significant issue with counter-image munitions in contemporary times though is that the producer of a counter-image munition often mistakenly assumes that they have the ability to control the image once it has been inserted into the news-cycle this, however, does not take account of the unpredictable nature of the rhizomatic media system.

### **Remediation Battles**

As I showed in my discussion of the iconic images of *Accidental Napalm* and *Accidental Electrocutation* image munitions are subject to reuse and redeployment. Indeed, this is one of the most significant features of image munitions and of capital importance for understanding the nature of image warfare in the era of rhizomatic media. Once deployed, even if their deployment and detonation is successful, image munitions are not destroyed but remain, as it were, pristine and ready for use by anyone who can pick them up re-presenting and re-deploying them in what are sometimes incongruous contexts. In understanding this a clear distinction needs to

be drawn between those images that are direct copies of the original image munition (for example, Osama bin Laden appearing on CNN) and those images which alter and adapt an image munition for a different political purpose (for example, bin Laden and the “Bert is Evil” poster which is discussed in Chapter Three). If ‘circulation’ refers to the process by which an original image munition remains intact and is simply disseminated through different media platforms then ‘remediation’ – according to Bolter and Grusin – describes the process whereby one medium is represented in another.<sup>311</sup> For example painting is remediated in photography and theatre is remediated in film. Remediation, Bolter and Grusin explain, also describes where ‘[t]he content has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated or quoted.’<sup>312</sup> For example Jane Austen novels are frequently the subject of adaptation. These adaptations are faithful to the original novels but they do not explicitly acknowledge that they are adaptations of novels.<sup>313</sup> I therefore recognize remediation to be where the meaning of an original image munition is altered and adapted by different actors for different political purposes: essentially the content is borrowed, but the medium is not appropriated.

Remediation battles therefore are an important feature of image warfare in the war on terror as the rhizomatic media system now enables more people to produce and upload content than ever before and as the control of information by a few powerful media actors, such as government, military and media, has been eroded. Just as Bolter and Grusin argue that remediation is not a new phenomenon but that it is key to the new media age,<sup>314</sup> so people subverting the official statements of governments, militaries and the media for their own political purposes is also not a new phenomenon but is central to the information age. People have long been producing protest placards and graffiti and organizing mass protest rallies and people are still using these same methods to get their protests recognized by government, military and media institutions and by the public. What is different in the rhizomatic condition is that the outlets for people to subvert the political process have multiplied as new technologies, such as the internet, mobile/camera/video phones, *YouTube*,

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<sup>311</sup> Bolter, and Grusin, *Remediation*, p. 45

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45

blogs and Social Networking sites, have been developed and as the 'global village' has become reconnected via decentralised networks rather than a centralized system.

The "Bert is Evil" poster is an important example of protest in the new media age. It shows how a new media actor – a teenager – can now manipulate an image on his home computer and then immediately upload it onto the internet and how this image can then be picked up and remediated by people protesting globally to appear in surprising new contexts, for example on T-shirts and protest placards. Both the circulation and remediation of images sets in motion a potentially endless set of chain reactions as image munitions are relocated and redirected.

There are, however, different phases in the dissemination of image munitions: original image munitions get launched, they circulate via news networks, as jihadi internet propaganda and they also get parodied. By identifying these different phases I am not suggesting that there is always a simple and linear process. Indeed to make any such claim would be to misunderstand the deterritorialised nature of the rhizomatic media system. In fact after an image munition gets launched it is free to get picked up and be disseminated by anyone and so these phases can unfold in any combination. These different phases will however prove analytically useful for discussion of the dissemination of image munitions (as I will see in Chapters Three to Six).

### **Circulating Flag Raising at Iwo Jima and The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)**

Image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles: these are three key concepts that will help immensely in the identification and analysis of the military and political impact of images in contemporary warfare. These will be further developed and clarified through the major case studies of this thesis. But, in order to provide immediate clarification, I will now explore two historic image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles. I have already seen hints of this kind of analysis in my brief discussion of *Accidental Napalm*.

*Flag Raising at Iwo Jima*, shot on February 23, 1945 by Joe Rosenthal, shows five US Marines raising an American flag on Mount Suribachi at the Battle of Iwo Jima. This image quickly emerged as the iconic image of the Pacific War. Hariman and Lucaites note that:

The permanent monument was not unveiled until 1954, but by mid-March Congress had appropriated the Rosenthal image as a symbol for the Seventh War Loan Drive; at the same time the photograph became the subject of a public campaign to have the U.S. Post Office issue a special “Iwo Jima” stamp. More than 3,500,000 posters bearing an artist’s rendition of the photograph were produced for the bond drive, as well as nearly 15,000 large billboards and over 175,000 cards to be placed on the sides of streetcars and buses; the postage stamp sold over three million copies on the first day and 137 million copies before going out of print in 1948.<sup>315</sup>

Rosenthal’s image has since been appropriated and become the subject of a number of remediation battles. In 1969, *Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* became the subject of a remediation battle when Ronald Bowen and Karen Bowen inserted the image into a protest art piece against the Vietnam War. They removed the background of the image, isolating the figures and the flagpole and replacing the flag with a bright pink rose. In 2000, the cartoonist Steve Benson drew “Ego Jima”. This cartoon features four figures (George W. Bush, Al Gore, Dick Cheney and Joe Lieberman) the presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the 2000 election. Benson has remediated the Iwo Jima image – a symbol of unity and comradeship – and used it to instead represent the egos and the political infighting on display during the presidential election race. He does this by giving each of the four figures their own American flag and depicting them fighting to plant their flag atop of Mount Suribachi.<sup>316</sup>

On September 11, 2001, *Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* again became the subject of a remediation battle, this time by photographer Thomas E. Franklin with his image *Raising the Flag at the World Trade Center*. It reveals how the Iwo Jima image

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<sup>315</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, p. 94

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 121-122



contains an enduring discourse of patriotism which can be mobilized whenever it is deployed. David Friend has described how Franklin came to forge this image:

Out of the corner of his eye, Franklin saw a flash of motion and color through the haze. “I see the three firemen fumbling with the flag,” he remembers. He was standing across the street, a hundred feet away, talking to photographer James Nachtwey, of all people. “They look dusty and chalky. There’s [supposedly] tens of thousands of people dead at this point. In this setting, at the time, my antennae are up: this is something I should be shooting.”

He swivelled his 245-mm lens toward the action. “I almost missed the shot,” he says. “I’m not quite sure whether the flag’s going up or going down. They’re not quite raising it. I’m anticipating.”

Over the next minute and forty-five seconds, Franklin triggered twenty-four frames. In each shot the composition is confused, the figures clustered in odd ways. But in frame number fourteen, snapped at 5:01 p.m. – at a shutter speed of 1/640 of a second and an aperture of f9 – the elements align. “They’re fussing with the flag,” says Franklin. “The flag going up casts a shadow on the firefighter in the middle. And then I shoot it.” All three men look up, the flag unfurls. The glare of the late-day sun highlights their figures against a curtain of wreckage, which rises above and behind them, slightly out of focus.

Johnson, in that instant, steps back, hands on his hips. McWilliams, in the center, and Eidengrein, to the right, work the halyard, lofting the colors up the pole.<sup>317</sup>

This image – with its strong evocation of Iwo Jima – promoted courage and determination in the face of adversity; a powerful counter-image munition for the ‘home front’ after 9/11.

*Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* has also been the subject of further remediation and this shows just how flexible an image munition can be and just how widely it can circulate. Hariman and Lucaites have discovered a number of Iwo Jima cultural artefacts that use the Iwo Jima image. They have shown how the Iwo Jima image has been used to frame things politically, hence its appearance on the front cover of books and on government reports. They have also shown how the Iwo Jima image has been widely appropriated as a symbol of patriotism and used in many products: movies, comic books and toys and how the Iwo Jima image has also been used to

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<sup>317</sup> David Friend, *Watching the World Change: The Stories Behind the Images of 9/11* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 318

give a commercial object a novelty factor: Iwo Jima Motel, personal checks, a virtual postcard, hip-hop CD covers and condoms<sup>318</sup> – proof also that the enduring discourse of patriotism which can be mobilized when the Iwo Jima image is deployed can equally be subverted by those who use the image.

A second example of an image munition is *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)*, shot variously during the Tiananmen Square protests on June 5, 1989 by Charlie Cole, Stuart Franklin, Arthur Tsang Hin Wah and Jeff Widener. The image munition shows a man with a shopping bag in one hand and a coat in his other hand standing defiantly in front of a line of Chinese tanks. Cole has since recounted how, from his vantage point within the *Beijing Hotel* overlooking the square, he had to hide his camera film containing the now iconic image munition in the toilet cistern of his hotel rooms bathroom. Later, he returned having had all of his other films seized by members of the Chinese police, and from there the image was circulated through the newswires to newsrooms across the globe. Similarly, Franklin has since discussed how, from the *Beijing Hotel*, he had to smuggle his film out inside a packet of tea before submitting it to the newswires.<sup>319</sup> This shows how in the pre-internet age the time between an image munition being shot and disseminated was delayed, whereas in the internet age the time between most image munitions being shot and disseminated has shrunk considerably (see Chapters Three to Five).

*The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)* has become the subject of a number of remediation battles. In 2000, the cartoonist Bruce Plante drew “Would You Like Fries with That?” This cartoon shows the rebel as a fast food employee asking the tanks driver: if he wants fries with that? A negative reflection on how American corporations like McDonalds operate.<sup>320</sup> In 2006, the artist David Wheeler produced “Google under the Gun”. According to Hariman and Lucaites, this image shows ‘the man sitting at a computer terminal placed inside the barrel of the tank.’<sup>321</sup> This remediation battle was a response to the announcement by *Google* that it would be

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<sup>318</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, p. 108

<sup>319</sup> Patrick Witty, ‘Behind the Scenes: Tank Man of Tiananmen’, in *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/behind-the-scenes-tank-man-of-tiananmen/>. Accessed on 08 September 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>320</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, pp. 230-231

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid*, p. 236

adding filters to *Google* in China, blocking certain searches such as the Tiananmen Square protests and *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)* image. In 2004, the *Chick-Fil-A Corporation* ran a television advertisement remediating this image munition. This advert was part of a campaign to get people to eat fewer hamburgers. The cow featured in this advert is a rebel, standing up for the rights of other cows, like the unknown rebel who stood up for Chinese Democracy and reform during the Tiananmen Square protests. The cow is shown blocking the path of a line of bulldozers that are meant to be clearing the way for a new burger shack. The advert's message is reinforced by the following graffiti statement: "Eat Mor Chikin."<sup>322</sup>

*Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* and *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)* are examples of just how flexible image munitions are and how widely they can circulate. Although they may be precisely formed and targeted image munitions they are also often uncontrollable. This is why it is important for Western military forces to grasp fully the nature of the contemporary media environment and the ways in which images can be reproduced and circulated. This is also why it is important to develop concepts – such as image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles – in order to orient thought and analysis. Scholars of IR, Strategic Studies, War Studies and so on, have certainly begun – as I saw in Chapter One – to incorporate into the field the study of media, images, popular and mass culture. But – as I have seen – their efforts do not go far enough and do not fully recognise the extent to which media images are not merely a secondary or adjunct feature of warfare but rather are an internal and intrinsic dimension of it. It is to aid in the theorisation of this dimension, of the image warfare theatre of war, which this thesis seeks to develop with the concepts of image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles and deploy in an analysis of four case studies from the war on terror.

## **Methodology**

The overarching concern of this thesis is the way in which information and images now circulate differently as society has shifted from a mass media age to that of an information age or a rhizomatic condition. I theorize this shift as a move from the

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<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 239-340

‘mobilization of images’ (linked with the twentieth century notion of propaganda and mass media) to the ‘weaponization of images’ (associated with the networked/rhizomatic society and new media). More explicitly, I am concerned with how British and American governments and the military are failing to manage image warfare in the war on terror because they are still trying to control the flow of information and images and how Al Qaeda appears to be responding better to the challenges of image warfare. I have explored this via diverse literatures from fields such as IR, Media Studies and Visual Culture and bridged the gaps between these literatures by introducing three new conceptual terms to the lexicon of IR/Strategic Studies: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles.’

This thesis will test these claims and conceptual terms through a broadly qualitative research approach which combines case study analysis and discourse theory and employs a snowball sampling technique. I adopt two different research methods here because although case studies are the best method for collecting and organizing pertinent information relevant to testing my claims, case study analysis is not sufficient in itself to engage fully with my diverse range of sources. To help close this methodological gap I integrate discourse theory into my research design. I will now discuss case study analysis in more detail and also the snowball technique before returning to discuss discourse theory.

Case studies are employed when undertaking an in-depth study of particular events, groups or themes. They also draw on a diverse range of empirical materials for their data.<sup>323</sup> According to Robert K. Yin, case studies help to define topics broadly and they support complex multivariate conditions.<sup>324</sup> Yin also recognizes that ‘[c]ase studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.’<sup>325</sup> I am researching a contemporary phenomenon (image warfare) which is embedded in a real-life context (the war on terror) and consequently I have little control over events. My research

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<sup>323</sup> Jacques Hamel, Stephane Dufour, and Dominic Fortin, *Case Study Methods*. Translated by Maureen Nicholson (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), p 45

<sup>324</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Applications of Case Study Research*. 2nd eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), p. xi

<sup>325</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 2nd eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994), p. 1

therefore fits perfectly within Yin's description of what kind of research is best suited to case study analysis. My thesis adopts a multiple case study approach and to quote Yin again, '[i]n a multiple-case study, one goal is to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details. The objective is analogous to multiple experiments.'<sup>326</sup> This idea is also supported by Bill Gillham who writes that: 'No one kind of source or evidence is likely to be sufficient (or sufficiently valid) on its own. This use of multiple sources of evidence, each with its strengths and weaknesses, is a key characteristic of case study research.'<sup>327</sup>

Taking all of these different factors into account I conduct four case studies, pertaining to four prominent themes in the war on terror: political communications (both 'official' and 'unofficial' communications), suicides (propaganda showing acts of terrorism), executions (the intentional weaponizing of hijackings/hostages and the misfiring of Uday, Qusay and Saddam Hussein image munitions) and abuses (the unintentional weaponizing of abuse image munitions). Together these four themes describe the new image warfare theatre of war which currently operates in the war on terror. In selecting the events for inclusion in my four case studies I chose events that are documented visually and are diverse so as to afford me with sufficient material with which to make my argument.<sup>328</sup> For example, televised statements by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Osama bin Laden, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the London Bombings, the Failed London Bombings, suicide terrorism in Iraq, hijackings/hostages, Uday, Qusay and Saddam Hussein, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, Extraordinary Rendition, *The Daily Mirror* fake abuses, the Camp Breadbasket abuses and President Barack Obama's early moves to increase transparency. However, although each of my four thematic case studies engages

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*, p. 112

<sup>327</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Bill Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods* (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 2. See also Alexander L. George, and Andrew Bennett, *Case Study and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (London: MIT Press, 2005), John Gerring, *Case Study Research* (New York, NJ: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley, and Peter Foster, eds. *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1995), Max Travers, *Qualitative Research through Case Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001)

<sup>328</sup> See Jennifer Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods'. *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999), p. 234

with a wide range of different images I am not primarily concerned with understanding the semiotics of the images themselves. Instead, I am interested in the movement of these images between the different institutions and actors in the war on terror – government, military, media, Al Qaeda and civilians.

An alternative study of images in the war on terror has been made by Andrew Hill who examines them via case studies ‘ordered in broadly chronological terms – opening with the September 11 attacks’<sup>329</sup> and using ‘seeing’, ‘waiting’ and ‘travelling’ as organizing themes.<sup>330</sup> However, I decided against doing a similar chronological case study analysis because I felt that it would be too restrictive, considering the uncontrollable and unpredictable movement of images in the information age. I instead decided to conduct thematic case study analysis because it allows me to draw parallels and highlight distinctions between different events, media actors, objects and subjects operating in the image warfare theatre of war.

To construct my thematic case studies and select relevant examples within them I first conducted internet research, carrying out *Google* searches. For sampling purposes I employed a ‘snowball technique’<sup>331</sup> which traditionally, according to Roland Atkinson and John Flint, ‘offers real benefits for studies which seek to access difficult to reach or hidden populations.’<sup>332</sup> Atkinson and Flint here specifically identify criminals, drug addicts, prostitutes, people with stigmatised illnesses (like AIDS sufferers) and young unemployed men.<sup>333</sup> However, the snowball technique is

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<sup>329</sup> Andrew Hill, *Re-Imagining the War on Terror: Seeing, Waiting, Travelling* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 6

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2

<sup>331</sup> Patrick Biernacki, and Dan Waldorf, 'Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling'. *Sociological Methods and Research* 10, no. 2 (1981), pp. 141-63

<sup>332</sup> Roland Atkinson, and John Flint, 'Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies', in *Social Research Update 2001*, Available at: <http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU33.html>. Accessed on 23 February 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated. For example see a study of Internet use by Breast Cancer patients. Shani Orgad, 'From Online to Offline and Back: Moving from Online to Offline Relationships with Research Informants', in *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*, ed. Christine Hine (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 51-67. See also J. Faugier, and M. Sargeant, 'Sampling Hard to Reach Populations'. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 26, no. 4 (1997), pp. 790-97, Teela Sanders, 'Researching the Online Sex Work Community', in *Virtual Methods in Social Research on the Internet* ed. Christine Hine (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 67-81, M. A. Eland-Goossensen, L. A. M. Van der Goor, E. C. Vollermans, V. M. Hendricks, and H. F. L. Garetsen, 'Snowball Sampling Applied to Opiate Addicts Outside the Treatment System'. *Addiction Research* 5 (1997), pp. 317-30 and Kath Browne, 'Snowball Sampling: Using

increasingly now also being employed in studies about internet use and material. According to Steven M. Schneider and Kirsten A. Foot, a snowball technique is useful precisely because new media actors in response to an event, such as a political scandal and the example they use is the President Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky affair, can now immediately post content online in response to a scandal.<sup>334</sup> They argue that just as a snowball technique is effective in giving researchers access to hard-to-reach populations it is also effective in allowing researchers to respond quickly and start collecting information when a 'web storm' develops surrounding a political scandal.<sup>335</sup> The snowball technique has also been employed by researchers studying blogs.<sup>336</sup> Studies into September 11<sup>th</sup> internet memorials have also used the snowball technique. For example, Lee Jarvis has studied six 9/11 online memorials. Jarvis identified these six websites via a combination of *Google* searches and clicking on links between memorial websites. The result of this is a study of six diverse internet memorials offering a compelling snapshot of the online memorialisation of 9/11.<sup>337</sup>

As well as carrying out *Google* searches I also followed links between web pages to give me a diverse sample of images: news images, bin Laden videos, hostage videos, suicide terrorism footage, Abu Ghraib images, films, *YouTube* videos, street art, gallery art, cartoon images, advertisements and beyond. I was aware throughout the research process that I could not trace every appropriation and remediation. This was because of the sheer amount of information available on the internet and also because appropriation and remediation is an ongoing process with no end point. To

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Social Networks to Research Non-Heterosexual Women'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (2005), pp. 47-60

<sup>334</sup> Steven M. Schneider, and Kirsten A. Foot, 'Web Sphere Analysis: An Approach to Studying Online Action', in *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*, ed. Christine Hine (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 162

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162

<sup>336</sup> See Susan C. Herring, Inna Kouper, John C. Paolillo, Lois Ann Scheidt, Michael Tyworth, Peter Welsch, Elijah Wright, and Ning Yu, 'Conversations in the Blogosphere: An Analysis "From the Bottom Up"', in *38th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (Hilton Waikoloa Village, Isand of Hawaii (Big Island): 2005). Available at: <http://www.computer.org/plugins/dl/pdf/proceedings/hicss/2005/2268/04/22680107b.pdf?template=1&loginState=1&userData=anonymous-IP%253A%253A1.97.130.63>. Accessed on 08 January 2010, p. 4

<sup>337</sup> See Lee Jarvis, 'Remember, Remember, 11 September: Memorialising 9/11 on the Internet'. *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 3, no. 1 (2010). See also Aaron Hess, 'In Digital Remembrance: Vernacular Memory and the Rhetorical Construction of Web Memorials'. *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 5 (2007), pp. 816-817

paraphrase Gillian Rose, I had to make a firm decision over when to stop making appropriation and remediation connections.<sup>338</sup> This was when I had a big enough sample to carry out my analysis. My diverse samples are evidence indeed that in the information age institutions and actors are now liberated from traditional top-down institutional constraints imposed by government, military and media. Institutions and actors now have greater freedoms to adapt and appropriate images, therefore, images of actions are increasingly unstable and subject to ever more surprising appropriation and remediation by newly liberated actors, such as terrorists and ordinary members of the public (see Chapters Three to Six).

To better appreciate these changing institutional relationships I have turned to discourse theory. Since its introduction, back in the 1970s, discourse theory has evolved from merely understanding semantic phenomena, to understanding semiotic phenomena to understanding all social phenomena. Jacob Torfing elaborates this shift: ‘The *first generation* of discourse theory defines discourse in the narrow linguistic sense of a textual unit that is larger than a sentence, and focuses on the semantic aspects of the spoken or written text.’<sup>339</sup> Torfing continues:

[t]he *second generation* of discourse theory defines discourse in a broader way than the first generation. Discourse is not restricted to spoken and written language, but is extended to a wider set of social practices.... Discourse is defined as an empirical collection of practices that qualify as discursive in so far as they contain a semiotic element.<sup>340</sup>

According to Torfing, ‘[t]he *third generation* of discourse theory further extends the notion of discourse so that it now covers all social phenomena.’<sup>341</sup> Today discourse theory is more inclusive.<sup>342</sup> This more inclusive understanding of what constitutes a discourse is crucial as Jennifer Milliken believes that it has opened up ‘new’ information sources and ‘a new domain of inquiry for discourse scholarship in

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<sup>338</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. 2nd eds. (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 169

<sup>339</sup> Jacob Torfing, 'Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments and Challenges', in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-7

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9



International Relations.<sup>343</sup> Milliken refers to the third generation of discourse analysis as the ‘popular culture approach, analysing the ‘everyday’ cultural conditions of novels, comic books, television and film and how they render sensible and legitimate particular state actions’<sup>344</sup> It is these ‘new’ kinds of information sources which I explore in my four thematic case studies.

To further examine discourse theory I now turn to Rose on discourse theory. Michel Foucault’s work on ‘discursive formation’, ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’ is weaved throughout her discussion of discourse. She divides discourse analysis into two parts: ‘text, intertextuality, context’ and ‘institutions and ways of seeing.’ Rose’s discussion of ‘text, intertextuality, context’ focuses on the images themselves. She argues that discourse can be constructed ‘through all sorts of visual and verbal images and texts’<sup>345</sup> and studied via the intertextual connections between images and texts.<sup>346</sup> She believes that the intertextual nature of discourse demands eclecticism of sources<sup>347</sup> and these sources can then be analysed either by iconography (the way images look) or by ‘the rhetorical organization of discourse’<sup>348</sup> (its social context). Rose is also mindful though of the fact that this focus on images and texts and eclecticism of sources also presents researchers with two potential problems – ‘knowing when to stop making intertextual connections and... grounding those connections empirically.’<sup>349</sup> However, in adopting a snowball technique to find sources I was able to stop my search when I felt that I had a large enough sample to undertake my analysis. Also, my four thematic case studies allow me to ground the intertextual connection I make empirically. Conversely though as this thesis is concerned specifically with the movement of images in the war on terror rather than with the images themselves I will now turn to the second part of Rose’s discussion of discourse theory, her discussion of ‘institutions and ways of seeing’.

This discussion rather than focussing on images instead focuses on the institutions and actors who produce the sources which go to make up a discourse. Consequently

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<sup>343</sup> Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse', p. 240

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid*, p. 240

<sup>345</sup> Rose, *Visual Methodologies*. 2nd eds., p. 142

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid*, p. 156

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169

the kinds of sources which are employed in this discussion of discourse are similar to those discussed above; however, attention is focussed on the institutions engaged in the production of the source material rather than on the actual images themselves. Employing Foucault's terminology Rose argues that photography is an example of an institutional technology that gets displayed in different institutional apparatuses.<sup>350</sup>

Rose concludes her discussion of institutional discourse by stating that:

[t]his second type of discourse analysis follows Foucault in understanding visual images as embedded in the practices of institutions and their exercise of power. It thus pays less attention to visual images and objects themselves than to the institutional apparatus and technologies which surround them and which, according to this approach, produce them as particular kinds of images and objects.<sup>351</sup>

To conclude, an institutional discourse approach is therefore central to this thesis because it enables me to get a better understanding of government, military and media power over images in the mass media age and also understand the increasingly complex, uncontrollable and decentralised circulation of images in the contemporary rhizomatic condition. It also helps me to develop a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the different media actors and their impacts on the circulation of image munitions in the war on terror.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the RMA literature, showing how mainstream IR theory is still concerned with issues about technology – a throwback to techno-war – and still generally dismissive of the important role of media and images in contemporary war. I have shown how this has fostered a misperception among International Relations theorists about the fact that it is still possible to control information in war. In reality the flow of information is no longer centrally controlled, instead information flows are increasingly unpredictable and uncontrollable. To help better understand this situation I looked beyond IR and turned to other literatures, such as Media Studies and Visual Culture, for insights. My examination of the Media Studies literature revealed just how much the role of propaganda and information has changed in the

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<sup>350</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 174-175

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid*, p. 193

wake of new technological developments (the internet, blogs and mobile phones) and as society has moved from a mass media to a rhizomatic media system. I then theorized postmodern war – as discussed by Baudrillard and Virilio. I discussed how Baudrillard was immediately critical of real-time communications and war and how he was forced to rethink this position after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks; whereas Virilio, in his critique of the 1991 Gulf War, was more open to the possibilities of real-time communication (identifying the media as ‘weapons of mass communication’ and ‘weapons of instantaneous communication’) offering a prophetic glimpse of image warfare. Finally, I turned to Visual Culture to gain a better understanding of images: Sontag’s contribution to our understanding of photography; Mitchell’s work on the pictorial turn and his theory about ‘cloning terror’ in the war on terror; Mirzoeff’s discussion of weapon-images and his theory of ‘a banality of images’ in the war on terror and Hariman and Lucaites important work on the meaning, appropriation, circulation and remediation of iconic historic images.

Having drawn important insights from both Media Studies and Visual Culture about media and images in contemporary war, I then sought to bridge the gaps between these diverse literatures and make them more accessible to an IR/Strategic Studies audience by introducing three new conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’ and illustrating them via a discussion of two historic image munitions and some of their contemporary appropriations. I concluded this chapter with a discussion of my methodology. Showing how and why I use thematic case studies, why I employ a snowball sampling technique (*Google* searches and clicking on links) to find images and finally why I use an institutional discourse theory to study the circulation and remediation of image munitions in the war on terror.

The next four chapters will develop the empirical part of my thesis, testing how America and Britain are currently failing to respond effectively to the challenges of image warfare, while Al Qaeda appears to be responding more effectively to the challenges of image warfare. I will test these claims through my three conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’ and

via my four original thematic case studies: political communications, suicides, executions and abuses.

## Chapter Three

### Political Communications

#### Introduction

In Chapters One and Two I explored the societal shift from an era of mass communication, where media are centrally controlled and information flows from the centre outwards, to a rhizomatic era of communication characterised by the horizontal proliferation and flow of information and images in an uncontrollable and unpredictable circulation. I also saw that this has impacted on contemporary war and how a misplaced emphasis on a particular kind of techno-war has obscured the fact that the spectacle of war cannot be controlled, image warfare now dominates and Al Qaeda appears to have the greatest appreciation of weaponized images. I also saw how IR theorists are beginning to theorise the distinct challenges posed by images but also that IR has further to go in this respect. Through an in-depth review of the techno-war literature and an engagement with other disciplines including Media Studies and Visual Culture I developed three conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’ intended to help bridge the gaps between Media Studies, Visual Culture and War Studies. I have shown, briefly, how these can be mobilised in analysing iconic images and their appropriations, through a consideration of *The Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* and *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)*. It is now time to carry out a much deeper and more sustained case study analysis.

In this chapter – the first of four case studies – I am specifically concerned with tracing out some aspects of political communications in the war on terror, understood as forms of image munitions. I will explore how ‘official’ political communications by leaders have become an important instrument in disseminating information from the seat of power to the people in times of war and peace, and how new media technologies have played an important part in the development of contemporary political communications. I will look in particular at the political communications of American Presidents and British Prime Ministers who pioneered the use of

leadership video addresses, a genre which has taken on a significant role in the war on terror. As I will show, the format of Presidential and Prime Ministerial television addresses has since been adopted by Al Qaeda and applied to bin Laden's video addresses. In order to explore this in detail bin Laden's post-9/11 tapes will be discussed chronologically, up to 2009, with particular emphasis on the way they are shaped by 'place', 'symbolism' and 'mimesis'. Drawing on Andrew Hill's Lacanian analysis of the bin Laden tapes I will consider the ghostly and lingering presence of bin Laden in the war on terror. Hill's analysis is distinct from the work of Baudrillard and Virilio because while they offer a perspective which is focussed on the media he offers a nuanced understanding of the important contemporary role of images. However, his chronological discussion of events from the war on terror while offering an intriguing description ultimately fails to see that these events are taking place within a much wider image warfare theatre of war. I instead offer a thematic discussion of the war on terror which accounts for this wider image warfare theatre of war. British and American responses to the bin Laden tapes, I will see, are also mimetic in form and play directly into the hands of Al Qaeda.

Attention will then turn towards a discussion of the circulation of bin Laden's counter-image munitions, drawing on Binoy Kampmark's work on the spectre of bin Laden. I will then consider the complexity of such images by closely examining the remediation of bin Laden's counter-image munitions and their manifestation in a number of different interventions. In conclusion, this chapter will show that bin Laden is a sophisticated communicator and a savvy manipulator of new media technologies. He manages to evade physical capture whilst maintaining his strong visual presence through his perpetual circulation and remediation within new image contexts.

### **'The Oval Office' and '10 Downing Street'**

The 'official' political communications of leaders have always been important as centralised mechanisms for disseminating information from the seat of power to the public in times of war and peace. Products of the mass communication age, these official statements are orchestrated by press offices with the aim of stage-managing journalists. Press releases – digests of information, also produced by press offices –

similarly help to frame a statement in advance and control its entry into the news-cycle. Spin doctors also play an important role in the production of 'official' political communications as they work closely with political leaders, speech writers and the press office to package the information included in statements. The formal character of 'official' political communications also means that certain 'places' and 'symbols' are consistently present. Al Qaeda have also picked up on the importance of political communications for disseminating information and as a source of powerful image munitions (for a detailed description of this term, see Chapter Two) and thus have developed their own 'unofficial' political communications, featuring Osama bin Laden, and a repetition of spaces and symbols. The media also play a fundamental role here as the conduit by which these 'official' and 'unofficial' political communications are delivered. As the ways in which political communications are disseminated have evolved, so too has their format.

In the newspaper age, political communications often began life as press releases and journalistic notes which were then repackaged by journalists. Up until the mid-twentieth century leaders were often media shy. Politicians preferred instead to engage with their voters' directly through public meetings rather than indirectly through the media. Jeremy Paxman in his *2007 James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture* at the *Edinburgh International Television Festival* observed of Prime Minister Winston Churchill that:

The only occasion on which he held a press conference was on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1941. He was visiting Washington. Roosevelt belonged to a different political culture. He persuaded a baffled Churchill to undergo the ordeal. The transcript in the Roosevelt papers reads as follows:

“The President. ‘And so I will introduce the Prime Minister. I wish you’d stand up for one minute and let them see you.’” Churchill then stands on a chair and takes a dozen or so questions from the reptiles, almost all of whom address him as ‘sir’, and not one of whom follow up his original inquiry with any persistence or repetition. Occasionally, perhaps because he genuinely was going deaf, perhaps to give himself time to think, Churchill says he can’t hear the questions, and it is repeated, slowly. At the end, the Prime Minister is thanked by the press corps.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Jeremy Paxman, 'Never Mind the Scandals: What's It All For?' Paper presented at the The James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture, Edinburgh International Television Festival 2007. Available at:[http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/2007/08/the\\_james\\_mactaggart\\_memorial\\_lecture.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/2007/08/the_james_mactaggart_memorial_lecture.html). Accessed on 10 March 2009, Unpaginated

Today's leaders are simply not able to have such a distant relationship with the press and media management has today become an integral part of being a leader.

In the radio age Winston Churchill became famous for his radio addresses. On a number of occasions he addressed the nation from 10 Downing Street seemingly addressing people directly as they sat in their living rooms in front of the radio. Because Churchill would pre-record his radio addresses he did not have to deal directly with journalists, only with his advisors, script writers and BBC technicians. Because he was addressing the nation via the radio he only had to concentrate on delivering his address clearly and did not have to concentrate on his visual presence.

The advent of television radically changed political communications. The visualising of leadership addresses meant that no longer did politicians have only to concentrate on delivering their policy plans in pitch-perfect speeches, but body language and other visual concerns traditionally reserved for person-to-person communication needed to be taken into account. In today's media-driven political climate politicians are constantly concerned with projecting the right image.<sup>353</sup>

According to John Street:

This process begins with personal appearance and dress, and continues into the way party conventions and conferences are designed. It is evident in the way political advertisements increasingly mimic the conventions of commercial advertising; it is blatantly demonstrated in the crafting of sound bites and photo-opportunities. In many ways, the latter two are the most important because they are intended to appear in regular news broadcasts, and as such acquire the legitimacy and veracity of *news*.... Whatever the format or forum, the intention is to create images and slogans which are easily recognized or digested, and which spark a series of associations that crystallize a political response.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> See Max Atkinson, *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), Bob Franklin, *Packaging Politics: Political Communications in Britain's Media Democracy*. 2nd eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Howard Kurtz, *Spin Cycle: Inside the Clinton Propaganda Machine* (London: Pan Books, 1998)

<sup>354</sup> John Street, *Mass Media, Politics and Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 189-190



This process has also been discussed by Alan Finlayson who has described a snapshot, a prepared broadcast, from the New Labour media campaign during the 1997 British General Election.

Here a British bulldog is seen falling asleep while the voiceover explains that, despite all our talents, we have been too long under the same master and ‘in a rapidly changing world we seem, somehow, to have lost our sense of purpose’. The film cuts to footage of Blair getting out of a jag, pressing through a crowd, meeting with Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton, while we hear that, ‘Now, someone has emerged who is determined to give it back to us. He is the most talked about politician of his generation... in three short years his energy and leadership have transformed his party’. Blair takes up the screen space, once again talking to the side of the camera, discussing crime, Europe and tax, and saying that ‘we’ (Britain) can make the country better, but ‘I will not promise anything I can’t deliver’. Indeed we are not urged to vote Labour but to ‘Give Tony Blair your mandate on May 1<sup>st</sup> [1997] and let him give Britain back its sense of purpose’. The image of the bulldog, typically associated with a Conservative form of nationalism, is thus linked to the new man and the new style. Blair himself will place his hand on the dog and command him to rise up and walk once more.<sup>355</sup>

What is clear from this style of campaigning, according to Finlayson, is that New Labour had made the conscious decision that Tony Blair should take ‘the lead in the representation of the party, and at all times in ways that seek to reduce the distance between him and the people he wants to represent.’<sup>356</sup>

British Politics had reached a critical juncture during the 1997 General Election – politics became more personable. Tony Blair broke the party leadership mould, traditionally someone who is distanced from the electorate. Instead, as the leader of New Labour Tony Blair spoke directly to the electorate. He managed to tap directly into the zeitgeist of the mid-1990s. This is thanks, in part, to a combination of the development of new communication technology and to Alistair Campbell, Tony Blair’s Director of Communications and Strategy (spin doctor) from 1994-2003, who effectively stage-managed the way in which the media could interact with New Labour and later the Blair government. A number of lessons were also drawn from the Conservative Party’s earlier use of the advertising agency *Saatchi and Saatchi* and from previous American Presidential election campaigns. These advertising

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<sup>355</sup> Alan Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 2003), p. 53

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51

lessons were expanded and applied to every aspect of the Blair government. At the beginning of Labour's 1997 General Election campaign the party was totally re-branded: *New Labour*.

This also coincided with the age of real-time television – meaning that leaders now have to respond to events, often while these events are still unfolding. In the first half of the twentieth century Winston Churchill was able largely to avoid press conferences, while in the late twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first century Tony Blair actively encouraged the press, holding weekly press conferences. He also became a regular on talk shows like *The Des O'Connor Show* and *Parkinson* and even appeared in an episode of *The Simpsons*. Throughout his premiership he was presented as more than just a leader. His public image was carefully crafted so as to become a metonym for New Labour and over time Blair also developed his own signature presentation style which went hand in hand with his public persona sometimes referred to as his 'People's Princess-style' (a reference to his public address made outside his local church in his Sedgefield Constituency on Sunday August 31, 1997, shortly after news of the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales).

The internet age has again forced political communications to evolve. Both the American and British governments were quick to realize its importance and created interactive White House and 10 Downing Street websites. The launch of *YouTube*, back in February 2005, allowed President Bush and Prime Minister Blair to further expand their use of the internet in a drive to reconnect with a younger generation who – it was feared – were becoming increasingly disengaged from politics.<sup>357</sup> President Bush and Prime Minister Blair quickly began exploiting this new media platform, posting video addresses on both *YouTube* and on the White House and 10 Downing Street websites. The fact that these video addresses were internet based makes them globally available in real-time – even perhaps to Al Qaeda.

Attention will now turn to look at the visual aspects of the political communications made by American Presidents and British Prime Ministers in more detail. I consider

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<sup>357</sup> For more information about this ongoing debate see Gerry Stokes, *Why Politics Matters: Making Democracy Work* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and Colin Hay, *Why We Hate Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007)

the political communications of American Presidents and British Prime Ministers to be important sources of image munitions. This is because political communications are made when the leader is welcoming an official dignitary, making an announcement or responding to a crisis. As such these broadcasts are produced with the intention of conveying a specific message to the audience and therefore, as with traditional weapons, they are deployed with a specific target in mind. Both countries' leaders work hard to construct and maintain an image of their leadership through their press conferences, fixed broadcasts and photo opportunities. Here, 'place' and 'symbols' are vital.

The US President delivers his addresses from three key White House locations. Firstly, he most often addresses the nation from The Oval Office – the 'place' (within the White House) which contains the physical seat of power, the Presidents' desk and chair. Secondly, the President often holds press conferences in the East Room of the White House. Either appearing alone in front of the gathered press or, appearing with official dignitaries. Thirdly, the President also holds frequent press conferences in the White House Rose Garden (whose backdrop is The West Wing and The Oval Office) again appearing by himself and also with official dignitaries.

'Place' is also important in the addresses of British Prime Ministers, though it is very different to America. This difference is because of the fact that the British Prime Minister does not work from the official seat of power: indeed there is no physical seat of power and the Prime Minister is not the Head of State. Because of this the British Prime Minister does not have an equivalent Oval Office from which to address the nation. Instead 10 Downing Street is, however, a symbol of the place of a Prime Minister's power. The shiny black door of Number 10 acts as a metonym for the official residence of the British Prime Minister and so many of the Prime Ministers' addresses to the nation take place in front of this door it is also where they often hold press conferences when welcoming official guests. Consistency of 'place' is all important in these addresses because 'place' instantly frames these political communications for audiences. When American Presidents and British Prime Ministers address their nations in the wake of a national crisis, like 9/11 or 7/7, a consistency of 'place' reaffirms their leadership and reassures the public that the 'place' of power is still secure.

‘Symbols’ are also important in the official addresses of world leaders. The ‘place’ will change along with the leader – between the political communications of different countries – but largely the ‘symbols’ remain the same. American Presidential addresses from The Oval Office show the President sitting behind a desk with an American flag over his right shoulder, the seal of the President of the United States over his left shoulder and a window as a backdrop. The Stars and Stripes flag represents the United States of America right across the world – from the flagpoles of American Embassy’s to the flagpoles at medal ceremonies where American athletes have won gold, silver or bronze – the American flag is as symbolic as the American National Anthem. The American flag is made up of thirteen alternating red and white stripes which each represent one of the thirteen original colonies and in the top left corner of the flag is a blue square with fifty white stars on it. These fifty white stars represent the fifty states which make up the United States of America. Taking all of this into account it makes perfect sense that this symbol of America should appear in the background of Presidential addresses because nothing symbolizes America *more* visually than its flag. The political communications of some other world leaders also contain their own nation’s flags for precisely the same reasons. Also, when American Presidents and British Prime Ministers host other world leaders – at either the White House or 10 Downing Street – they are always presented to the press standing side-by-side with the President or Prime Minister in front of their respective nation’s flags. The presence of a flag behind visiting leaders is also meant to show audiences that although the visiting leader is away from their seat of power they are acting on behalf of their nation abroad.

The Union flag is set against a dark blue background. The white cross is taken from the St. Andrew’s cross flag of Scotland, the red cross from the St. Patrick’s Cross of Ireland and finally the red cross from the St. George Cross of England. The Union flag represents the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the world over. The Union flag is also present in the flags of some of the Commonwealth member states, for example Australia and New Zealand. However, in contrast to American Presidents, the British Prime Minister does not have a seal or standard – this is because he or she is not the Head of State, but rather the Head of the government.

I will now move on to discuss – stressing once again the importance of ‘place’ and ‘symbols’ – some press conferences and photo opportunities featuring President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. It is important to remember though that each of these examples is a manufactured image munition which carries specific meanings for the target audiences as they were all made by Bush and Blair at specific times and about specific things.

President Bush has – along with a number of his predecessors – also hosted official dignitaries at the Western White House (the official second residence of the American President). For George W. Bush this has been his Prairie Chapel Ranch in Texas, where he takes his vacations. This ‘place’ immediately frames images differently from images taken of the President at the White House. The Prairie Chapel Ranch is his ‘place’ of vacation and the White House is his ‘place’ of work. Therefore, when the President is shown at the ranch he often appears looking more relaxed: with no tie, no suit jacket and with a Stetson on his head. However, when hosting official dignitaries he still holds press conferences standing behind a lectern which displays the seal of the President of the United States. Thus he manages to strike a formal/informal balance. Similarly, Prime Minister Blair has also hosted official dignitaries at Chequers (the official country retreat of the British Prime Minister). Chequers is his ‘place’ of retreat and 10 Downing Street is his ‘place’ of work. However, when hosting official dignitaries he still holds official press conferences and therefore, like President Bush, manages to get a balance between the formal and the informal.

Since the 2003 Iraq War both Bush and Blair have made numerous visits to Iraq to see their troops. These visits are perfect for photo opportunities and the manufacture of positive image munitions for the press to then circulate. President Bush made a surprise visit to see US troops in Iraq on Thanksgiving Day 2003. He met some troops in a hanger and presented them with a turkey and all the trimmings. Thanksgiving is a significant holiday in America and often American families get together to have a big feast which traditionally features a turkey. The ‘place’ of his visit – the Iraqi theatre of operations – was important because it projected an image of Bush which showed that he was willing to put himself at some considerable risk in

order to visit his troops. His presentation of a turkey with all the trimmings was also highly symbolic because it was supposed to show the troops, and also the American public, that although these brave men and women are thousands of miles away they are still in America's heart, mind and prayers and also that America appreciates all their hard work and sacrifices. However, this spectacle has since somewhat unravelled as it has emerged that the turkey was in fact pre-prepared by military chefs, presented to President Bush who then presented it to the waiting troops.

On December 17, 2006, in the run-up to Christmas, Prime Minister Blair made a similar surprise visit to Iraq to see British troops and also to manufacture similar positive image munitions to be circulated by the media. He met with British troops in Basra in a hanger and praised them for their continued hard work and sacrifices. As with Bush's earlier visit, the 'place' of Blair's visit – the Iraqi theatre of operations – was significant because it showed that he too was willing to risk his own safety to visit his troops. The timing of his visit was also highly symbolic. Like Bush's earlier visit which was timed to coincide with Thanksgiving, an important national holiday, so Blair's visit was also meant to show the troops and the British public that these brave men and women will be in Britain's thoughts and prayers during the festive season. The style and setting, symbolism and place of such representations of the US President and British Prime Minister should be borne in mind as I now turn to the 'unofficial' political communications of Osama bin Laden.

### **Mediated Contact with Osama bin Laden**

I will now examine Osama bin Laden's 'unofficial' political communications as they are evidence of Al Qaeda using the media, like President Bush and Prime Minister Blair do, to deliver their messages to the news audience. A widely held view about bin Laden is that his video appearances only started after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. This is in fact wrong. He had already appeared in a number of videos prior to 9/11, for example after the attack against the *USS Cole* in 2000, and had established a strong media presence. According to Philip Seib:

Al Qaeda's sophistication in media matters can [also] be seen in the establishment of its own production company, the As-Sahab Foundation,

which produces videos of bin Laden's statements and infomercials about al Qaeda and jihad. As-Sahab is part of the media department bin Laden established when al Qaeda was created in 1988.<sup>358</sup>

However, it was not until his video appearance on October 7, 2001 that bin Laden finally received a level of media coverage on a par with world leaders such as President Bush or Prime Minister Blair. My interest lies with bin Laden's post-9/11 political communications – or counter-image munitions (for a detailed description of this term, see Chapter Two) – up until 2009. As such, what now follows is a chronological discussion of bin Laden tapes.<sup>359</sup>

Bin Laden's October 7<sup>th</sup> video appearance – the first to be released in a time of image warfare – coincided with the start of US air strikes against Afghanistan and it is important precisely because it shows Al Qaeda weaponizing images in order to gain a military advantage back from Coalition forces operating in Afghanistan. Der Derian has described this video as bin Laden's 'counter air-strike to the USA.'<sup>360</sup> For instance, the timing of the release was significant because it interrupted the Pentagon's carefully planned war script for the campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The original plan was to mesmerise international news audiences with an impressive air campaign, as had been achieved previously during the 1991 Gulf War and the Kosovo Conflict. Al Qaeda, unable to compete militarily with the unfolding Afghanistan media spectacle, manufactured a bin Laden video, a counter-image munition, which could act as a weapon drawing attention away from the West and back onto Al Qaeda. This video was a huge success. It successfully diverted attention away from the unfolding made for TV media spectacle (see Chapter One). Audiences of the video were immediately confronted by the following chilling statement from bin Laden about the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>:

God has struck America at its Achilles heel and destroyed its greatest buildings, praise and blessings to Him. America has been filled with terror from north to south and from east to west, praise and blessings to God. What America is tasting today is but a fraction of what we have tasted for decades. For over eighty years our *umma* has endured this humiliation and contempt.

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<sup>358</sup> Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, p. 104

<sup>359</sup> During this same period a number of other tapes were also released which featured al Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri. These tapes will not be discussed here though apart from where bin Laden and al-Zawahiri appear together.

<sup>360</sup> Der Derian, 'Imaging Terror', p. 30

Its sons have been killed, its blood has been shed, its holy sanctuaries have been violated, all in a manner contrary to that revealed by God, without anyone listening or responding. So when God Almighty granted success to one of the vanguard groups of Islam, He opened the way for them to destroy America utterly. I pray to God Almighty to lift them up to the highest Paradise. When these men retaliated on behalf of their poor, oppressed sons, their brothers and sisters in Palestine and in many of the other lands of Islam, the whole world cried out. The infidels cried out [in protest at 9/11], and the hypocrites followed them.<sup>361</sup>

With this statement bin Laden successfully managed to strike fear once more into the hearts of Western audiences with his conspiratorial tone, echoing *The X Files* and Oliver Stone films.<sup>362</sup> He reminded audiences that terror no longer takes place only at a distance. Although the opening phase of the war on terror was unfolding in the distant Afghanistan theatre of operations his words reminded audiences that at any given time terror could again return to the West.

The visual elements which make up this video are particularly important because they set the standard for later bin Laden tapes. The October 7<sup>th</sup> video reproduces the format of conventional political communications in minute detail. It is shot as a set-piece to camera – like Presidential addresses from the Oval Office and Prime Ministerial addresses from 10 Downing Street. With bin Laden delivering his timely message straight to camera it feels almost as if he is somehow addressing his audience members personally. In the background of the video is an AK-47 assault rifle. This weapon has since become a common feature within bin Laden videos – either in the background (like in this particular video) or with him holding one. It symbolizes the ongoing struggle that Al Qaeda is engaged with against Western infidels. Al Qaeda is not a state and therefore it does not have a flag. But like those displayed in the background of political communications by legitimate world leaders, the AK-47 has come to embody all that flags do.

Just as ‘place’ was central to Presidential and Prime Ministerial addresses so ‘place’ is important to bin Laden in his own addresses. Because the hunt for bin Laden was unfolding in Afghanistan and because the Pentagon believed that bin Laden was

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<sup>361</sup> Bruce Lawrence, ed. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*. Translated by James Howarth (London: Verso, 2005), p. 104

<sup>362</sup> Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2005), p. 6



hiding somewhere in the Tora Bora Caves, the logical place from which to launch his 'counter air-strike' against Afghanistan was a cave. The cave wall could just as easily have been covered up as it has been in later videos. However, in his October 7<sup>th</sup> video bin Laden appeared sitting in a cave. This cave has since become synonymous with bin Laden. In fact the cave has since become bin Laden's equivalent to The Oval Office or 10 Downing Street.

Bin Laden released another video or counter-image munition on December 26, 2001 – marking the three month anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Again this video took the form of a political communication with him directly addressing audience members in a statement delivered directly to the camera. Again the AK-47 was present but this time he appeared sitting in front of generic brown sheeting instead of his now familiar cave background. However, the 'place' of the address was just as important as it had been in his previous video. The cave had become so cemented in the public consciousness (following the October 7<sup>th</sup> video) that it made no sense for Al Qaeda to risk giving away bin Laden's exact location through giving US intelligence officials yet another cave background to analyze. Consequently the cave background disappeared from bin Laden's counter-image munitions – though he would forever be associated with the Tora Bora caves. This video was also released because it showed that bin Laden had survived the American air bombardment of Afghanistan, although it did also show that bin Laden had seemingly aged significantly in the short space of time since his last video appearance.

Bin Laden did not appear again until November 12, 2002 when he decided to break his silence with the release of an audio tape, broadcast by Al Jazeera. In it he stated that:

The road to safety begins with the cessation of hostilities, and reciprocal treatment is a part of justice. The events that have taken place since the attacks on Washington and New York, like the killing of the Germans in Tunisia, the French in Karachi, the bombing of the giant French tanker in Yemen, the killing of marines in Failaka and of the British and Australians in the Bali explosions, the recent operation in Moscow, and various other operations here and there: these are all reactions in kind perpetrated by the

zealous sons of Islam in defence of their religion and in response to the order of their Lord and their Prophet.<sup>363</sup>

The fact that this communication is only in audio makes verifying it somewhat problematic. However, the statement is widely believed to be by bin Laden. On February 11, 2003 another audio address by bin Laden was broadcast by Al Jazeera, this time urging Iraqis to commit suicide attacks against US forces in Iraq. In another audio tape, released on April 8, 2003, bin Laden called Muslims in Bahrain, Kuwait, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to arms.

Bin Laden's audio addresses are a product of necessity rather than of choice. This is because in an age of real-time communications it is not always possible for Al Qaeda to produce and disseminate a video address quickly enough to make a timely response. Audio addresses are quicker to produce and therefore are sometimes the only viable option available to bin Laden in an age of real-time media.

For the second anniversary of the 9/11 attacks a video along with an audio tape, was released to Al Jazeera, on September 10, 2003. The counter-image munition showed bin Laden and al-Zawahiri walking through some mountains. This video should still be considered a political communication, like the other videos, even though it does not adopt the traditional style of a set-piece statement. Rather it adopts a style more befitting of a party political broadcast showing Western audiences a more relaxed bin Laden in consultation with his second in command. There is a further reference here to Western leaders who are also sometimes shown in news footage consulting with their deputies. The fact that the video is accompanied by an audio statement shows that bin Laden is indeed acutely aware of the problems with audio addresses. He is also aware that videos carry a higher news value than audio tapes. The audio statement, however, explicitly mentions the second anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, thus immediately placing it into a contemporary context.

On October 18, 2003 a media package containing a number of counter-image munitions: two further bin Laden audio tapes and a series of recent suicide video wills were broadcast by Al Jazeera. On January 4, 2004 another bin Laden audio

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<sup>363</sup> Lawrence, ed. *Messages to the World*, pp. 173-174

tape was broadcast by Al Jazeera. Then on April 15, 2004 another bin Laden audio tape was broadcast which denounced the recent killing of the Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. This once again proved that bin Laden was still alive. In an audio message, released on May 7, 2004, bin Laden offered a reward of gold to anyone who could kill either Paul Bremer, the Director of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for post-war Iraq, or Kofi Annan, then the Secretary General of the UN. He also offered smaller rewards of gold to anyone who killed soldiers and civilians from members of the 'Coalition of the Willing'.

In the final run up to the 2004 US Presidential election bin Laden disrupted President Bush's final days of campaigning – by deploying a counter-image munition – drawing attention away from the American election spectacle and back onto the war on terror. In this October 29, 2004 video he admitted Al Qaeda's complicity in the 9/11 attacks and 'claimed that they were first inspired by the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon in which towers and buildings in Beirut were destroyed in the siege of the capital.'<sup>364</sup> The counter-image munition itself, according to Douglas Kellner, shows

[a] calm bin Laden slowly read[ing] a long speech in an 18-minute video attacking both Kerry and Bush, demonstrating that it was a recent tape, and mocking Bush for reading a goat story on September 11 after the first plane attacked the Twin Towers, suggesting bin Laden may have seen Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* film.<sup>365</sup>

This counter-image munition is also the strongest indicator so far that bin Laden is purposefully manufacturing political communications like those produced and released by official world leaders. Whereas Presidents and Prime Ministers make their addresses to their respective nations, bin Laden – in his tapes – is delivering his messages instead to two distinct audiences: a Western audience and the global ummah.<sup>366</sup> To Western audiences, his addresses are meant as chilling warnings. 'What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years.' And to the global ummah, his addresses are meant as a call to arms for Muslims worldwide to join the jihad against the West.<sup>367</sup> In this video

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<sup>364</sup> Kellner, *Media Spectacle*, p. 204

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, p. 203

<sup>366</sup> See Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004)

<sup>367</sup> Tuman, *Communicating Terror*

bin Laden also appears mimetically sat behind a desk, in homage to President Bush's addresses to the nation from The Oval Office: it is an alterative Presidential address.

December 16, 2004 saw the release of another audio tape but then bin Laden disappeared for the whole of 2005 – replaced instead by al-Zawahiri – fuelling much media speculation about whether bin Laden was indeed dead or alive. His silence was then broken, on January 19, 2006, by the release of a new audio tape. On April 24, 2006 bin Laden released another audio tape in which he referred to the conflict in Darfur and also to the new Hamas government. These recent events helped to date the tape as there had been discussion about whether in fact bin Laden was dead and he had secretly stockpiled videos for every occasion before his death.<sup>368</sup> The fact that this audio tape mentions contemporary events partially dispels this possibility. However, as was identified earlier, there always remains a problem of identifying bin Laden audio tapes because the possibility always remains that someone is merely purporting to be bin Laden. To further allay speculation over whether bin Laden was in fact dead or alive and also to comment on more contemporary events he released another audio tape on May 24, 2006. In this tape he attempted again to undermine the Bush administrations' war on terror, claiming that Zacarias Moussaoui, the only man so far to be charged in connection with the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks had had nothing to do with the plot. On June 30, 2006, in an audio message, bin Laden eulogised Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, who had recently been killed in a US airstrike in Iraq. This audio tape is supposed to act as proof that bin Laden is still alive and also that bin Laden's resolve is steadfast regardless of al-Zarqawi's death. July 1, 2006 saw the release of another audio tape in which bin Laden again criticised the continued American military occupation of Iraq.

The latest bin Laden video was released, on September 7, 2007, to coincide with the sixth anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. However, as Andrew Hill observes:

this appearance took a form quite different from that of his preceding video appearances.... This video contained no moving image footage of Bin Laden, instead presenting a still image of Bin Laden accompanied by a voice

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<sup>368</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', p. 45

assumed to be his.... [L]ittle mention was made of the unusual nature of the visual presence of Bin Laden assumed in this footage, or of the difficulty in attributing the voice heard on the video to Bin Laden...Instead, the references in the video to recent developments – Nicholas Sarkozy and Gordon Brown were referred to – were focused upon as providing evidence of the recent date of its production.<sup>369</sup>

Hill thinks that this response is strange:

It is almost as if – after the lengthy absence of video appearances by Bin Laden – the still photograph this footage contained was enough to satisfy the desire for a sighting of him, when the very absence of moving images of Bin Laden might be taken as evidence that he has indeed passed away (or was too sick to appear). Indeed, the very absence of questions about the nature of the visual form Bin Laden assumed in this video can be read as suggestive of a certain desire for Bin Laden to still remain alive.<sup>370</sup>

Hill therefore believes that as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks become an increasingly distant memory, as bin Laden is still a fugitive and because the war on terror has been constructed around bin Laden as the enemy other than any visuals (even a still image) are today enough to constitute a sighting of him. This counter-image munition is further evidence of bin Laden inserting himself into the news agenda, via an alternative Presidential address pre-empting and undermining President Bush's official address to mark the sixth anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Since then eight more bin Laden audio tapes have been released: on November 29, 2007, December 29, 2007, March 19, 2008 (where he responded to cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad), March 20, 2008, May 16, 2008, May 18, 2008, January 14, 2009 (released in the final days of the Bush administration) and June 3, 2009 (to coincide with President Barack Obama's first visit to Saudi Arabia). Further evidence indeed, according to Hill, of 'Bin Laden's continued capacity to haunt the West: his status as spectral metonym for an enemy that refuses to be exorcised.'<sup>371</sup>

Hill believes that bin Laden 'has come to function as a metonym for Al Qaeda and the enemy more broadly in the War on Terror.'<sup>372</sup> Hill has divided the bin Laden videotapes into two distinct categories: videos that were made for release to the

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<sup>369</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 140

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33

media; and videos apparently not meant for public broadcast.<sup>373</sup> The counter-image munitions released by Al Qaeda to the media, are bin Laden's political communications and the unofficial videos released, for example by the Pentagon, are meant as counter-image munitions to bin Laden's continued visualization throughout the war on terror.

Hill has interpreted these videos drawing on the Lacanian concepts of 'the imaginary' and 'the gaze'. He argues that the bin Laden tapes help 'to confirm Bin Laden's continued wellbeing and ability to remain active as the head of Al Qaeda'<sup>374</sup> and are used by Bin Laden 'as a platform for statements in which he has issued threats and demands, attempted to rally his followers, and appealed for greater support.'<sup>375</sup> As such they are 'not simply *a* means but perhaps *the* primary means through which Al Qaeda is able to challenge and intimidate its opponents at the level of the imaginary.'<sup>376</sup> They are also an important weapon in the war on terror as they enable Al Qaeda to gain a military advantage against traditionally superior military forces. In response the Pentagon has attempted to disrupt and control Western audiences' *imaginary* and *gaze* of bin Laden. The Bush administration wanted to regain control of the spectacle of the war on terror and defuse bin Laden's counter-image munitions. They attempted this in a few different ways. They realized that they could not disrupt the dissemination of the bin Laden videos at their initial point of reception (Al Jazeera and the internet) but they could instead try and disrupt their circulation through other Western news networks.<sup>377</sup> This is further evidence of the Bush administration misunderstanding the diverse and unpredictable nature of the rhizomatic media environment and instead continuing to believe that they can impose some form of top-down control on the flow of information and images. Hugh Miles recounts how, on October 10<sup>th</sup>, the White House revealed that it had asked the five major US television networks to censor Al Qaeda footage and not to show bin Laden videos. Shamefully, he writes:

all five network executives conceded they would vet all their clips from Afghanistan and not use any of Al Jazeera's footage live. 'Pre-recorded

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<sup>373</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', pp. 36-37

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*, p. 39

<sup>377</sup> See Der Derian, 'In Terrorem', p. 111

statements from representatives of Al Qaeda could be communicating hidden messages to their members', said Walt Disney Co.'s ABC News. NBC would 'apply journalistic judgement before deciding which portions, if any, we will broadcast', said a spokesman. 'We'll do whatever is our patriotic duty,' said Australian-born media mogul Rupert Murdoch, whose company News Corp owned the Fox News channel, Fox Television, Twentieth Century Fox, other television stations and a large stable of newspapers. 'Our policy is to avoid directly transmitting any report we think will facilitate any terrorist action,' reasoned CNN in a statement. 'To determine what should be transmitted, CNN will take the advice of the pertinent authorities.'

The US First Amendment, it was stressed, was not at stake in this instance because Rice had phrased her concerns as a request and not as an order, but the pressure from the White House was obvious.<sup>378</sup>

The Blair government was exerting similar pressures on the British Press and busy spinning quasi-guidelines on what was acceptable to report and what was not. Alastair Campbell, Director of Communications for Prime Minister Tony Blair, wrote to broadcasters urging them to air Al Qaeda information with a 'health warning'.<sup>379</sup> This is also evidence of the Blair government also being trapped in a mass media mindset and not understanding the uncontrollable flow of information and images in the internet age.

As America and Britain were busy trying to make these counter-image munitions of bin Laden disappear they were simultaneously trying to discredit bin Laden's wider image (with their release of counter-image munitions of him condemning the West and similarly celebrating the coming together of his organization with the terrorist group Islamic Jihad). Bush and Blair hoped that in releasing counter-image munitions they could win the battle against bin Laden's counter-image munitions. Bin Laden, however, had been concentrating on remaining a fugitive figure and had, according to Hill, 'effectively engineered his own disappearance.'<sup>380</sup> The Pentagon underestimated this fact and failed to realise the significance of his move, they saw it as a retreat by bin Laden rather than what it actually was, a strategic withdrawal by

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<sup>378</sup> Hugh Miles, *Al Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World* (London: Abacus, 2005), pp. 116-117

<sup>379</sup> Kamal Ahmed, and Jay Rayner, 'Campbell Urges BBC to Censor Bin Laden Videos'. *The Guardian*, 14 October 2001. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2001/oct/14/broadcasting.afghanistan/print>. Accessed on 25 February 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>380</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', p. 40

bin Laden. Since, bin Laden's presence has continued to haunt the West but physically he has remained at large. Richard Devetak believes:

bin Laden seems to combine monstrosity with invisibility or ghostliness, hiding in shadows and underground networks, operating by stealth and spreading fear through surprise acts of terror.... [B]in Laden is an underexposed other; he is an elusive 'incorporeal presence', present and visible to the West only as an image on film, or a voice on audiotape.<sup>381</sup>

As Baudrillard put it: 'The photo preserves the moment of disappearance and thus the charm of the real, like that of a previous life.'<sup>382</sup> It is because of this disappearance that bin Laden is seemingly effortlessly able to continue to break away from and rejoin the events of the war on terror almost at will. He can reinsert himself – 'via these videos'<sup>383</sup> and counter-image munitions – back into the media spotlight in response to events as and when they occur. Hill believes that:

[t]hese recordings have served as a repeated reminder to Western audiences of the threat Bin Laden and Al Qaeda continue to present to their lives. And, they have played a principle role in establishing the figure that Bin Laden can be said to have come closest to resembling for Western audiences – that of the demon – the personification of evil that exists in highly similar forms across cultures, and typically combining features that include an intense capacity for evil, with a shifting ontological profile and the capacity to appear and disappear at will.<sup>384</sup>

Hill is again emphasising the fact that bin Laden has been constructed as the enemy other in the war on terror: a demon, he also argues that the Bush administration has not disrupted bin Laden's image. Rather, 'It is almost as if Bin Laden's image has metamorphosised into a form of weaponry, as if his gaze has acquired the power of "extramission", or come to function as a version of... "the evil eye".'<sup>385</sup> As previously remarked, bin Laden seems to address each individual audience member with his video statements, and Hill's reference to extramission and the evil eye connects with Walter Benjamin's observations of figures gazing out of images

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<sup>381</sup> Richard Devetak, 'The Gothic Scene of International Relations: Ghosts, Monsters, Terror and the Sublime after September 11'. *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 4 (2005), p. 636

<sup>382</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*. Translated by Chris Turner (London Verso, 2002), p. 86

<sup>383</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', p. 40

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41



creating the illusion of being able to actually see their spectators.<sup>386</sup> Hill sees 'Bin Laden as a type of ghostly presence'<sup>387</sup> in the war on terror concluding his discussion of the bin Laden tapes with the remark that: 'The 'impossibility' of destroying Bin Laden adds a further dimension to the critique of the United States and its allies for instigating a conflict of the scale of the War on Terror against an adversary of Bin Laden's nature.'<sup>388</sup> Invoking Derrida, Hill argues that:

[w]hile ghosts may not be able to be captured or killed, they might...be negated, dissipated, or exorcised – processes that entail seeking to remove their presence through addressing the causes of their coming into being. And yet, in the period since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, addressing the processes through which Bin Laden has come to assume the status he has for many in the Muslim world has been accorded far less importance than confronting and destroying him.<sup>389</sup>

According to Hill, rather than trying to find, confront and destroy bin Laden and his mediated presence, a more effective tactic would be to address why bin Laden has been able to become such a powerful omnipotent presence in the war on terror, understand his visual presence and as a result exorcise him from his support base. Hill's discussion of the bin Laden tapes is important precisely because he presents a perspective about bin Laden which has largely been overlooked by academia and governments. His discussion also offers important insights into possible ways of dealing with bin Laden's counter-image munitions.

Tony Blair and George W. Bush have underestimated bin Laden, believing his counter-image munitions and their counter-image munitions simply to be political manoeuvres in a game. Unwittingly engaging him instead in what Der Derian terms a 'mimetic war of images'<sup>390</sup> they have played directly into his hands. In engaging him in a mimetic war of images and opening up a mimetic communication loop via their counter-image munitions, Britain and America have enabled bin Laden to continue to haunt the West. Stephen McVeigh has written of how:

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<sup>386</sup> Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, p. 244

<sup>387</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 36

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42

<sup>390</sup> Der Derian, 'Imaging Terror', p. 37

On 17 September 2001, less than a week after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush was responding to questions from the press about America's mobilization for the so-called War on Terrorism. One reporter asked, "Do you want bin Laden dead?" Bush replied, "I want justice. There's an old poster out west, as I recall, that said, 'Wanted: Dead or Alive.'<sup>391</sup>

Following this, according to David Friend:

the design team at the *New York Post* laid out a mock Wild West poster showing the face of Osama bin Laden, with the headline: WANTED, DEAD OR ALIVE. It would appear as a foldout in the next morning's paper, and would be plastered on walls and windows throughout the city.<sup>392</sup>

According to Der Derian:

Dead or alive, prophet or crackpot, symptom or disease, Bin Laden as well as Hussein require a mimetic foe. Without a reciprocal hatred their prophecies lose their self-fulfilling powers. As is often the case with narcissistic psychopaths, the worst thing we could do is to deprive them of their reflections.<sup>393</sup>

This ongoing mimetic battle all started with Tony Blair appearing on Al Jazeera after bin Laden's October 7, 2001 video address. Since then, a host of other British and American officials (including George W. Bush) have made similar appearances on Al Jazeera and more recently on the internet.

As has already been discussed, bin Laden seeks to carefully construct and control his image, in a similar fashion to American Presidents and British Prime Ministers. Bin Laden is able to do this because of new media technologies. But these same new media technologies and the unpredictable rhizomatic condition of the contemporary media system have simultaneously also opened up a world of images that cannot be controlled. Hence, bin Laden's counter-image munitions have become an object of conflict as America and Britain continuously fail to control them with their own counter-image munitions and as new media actors engage in remediation battles so as to take bin Laden's counter-image munitions and insert them into new political

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<sup>391</sup> Stephen McVeigh, *The American Western* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. vii

<sup>392</sup> Friend, *Watching the World Change*, pp. 308-309

<sup>393</sup> Der Derian, 'Imaging Terror', pp. 32-33

contexts. This remediation is a vital aspect of the phenomenon of image warfare and it is to a discussion of this that I will now turn.

### **Circulating bin Laden's Image**

Bin Laden's counter-image munitions – since their initial deployment – have become the subject of uncontrollable circulation and the focus of numerous unpredictable, surprising and intense remediation battles (for a detailed description of this term, see Chapter Two); each one setting off a complex and potentially endless set of chain reactions as they get picked up and remediated by new media actors. Binoy Kampmark has eloquently argued with regards to the remediation of bin Laden's image, that because he is still a fugitive evading physical capture he remains trapped in 'deauratized forms.'<sup>394</sup> According to David Friend:

Within days, his image would be paraded through the streets of Peshwar, Jakarta, and Gaza, his likeness often cribbed from magazines or downloaded from the Internet; within weeks it would appear on everything from sheets of novelty toilet paper in New York (for \$19 a roll, 10 percent of the profits earmarked for charity) to targets at U.S. rifle ranges. In Pakistan's kiosks, bazaars, and open-air markets, Osama's face appeared on T-shirts, ballpoint pens, bottles of cologne, and candy wrappers.<sup>395</sup>

Kampmark believes that '[t]hese forms of representation become the substitute for physically finding him,'<sup>396</sup> allowing bin Laden to continue to circulate as a powerful and pervasive spectre throughout society. Therefore, his image is removed from the control of specific social groups.<sup>397</sup> Friend has argued that:

Digital scanners had cribbed bin Laden's image from published sources. Digital printers allowed protesters to paste them hither and yon. Digital cameras had then photographed people holding posters with the pirated shots. The Internet then completed the cycle, zapping pictures of the pictures to the news shows, the wire services, and computer desktops everywhere. Bin Laden was more than an idle beneficiary of this image traffic. He was a shrewd propagandist and spin doctor himself.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Binoy Kampmark, 'The Spectre of Bin Laden in the Age of Terrorism'. *CTheory.net*, 2002. Available at: <http://www.ctheory.net/printer.aspx?id=355>. Accessed on 20 January 2008, p.3

<sup>395</sup> Friend, *Watching the World Change*, p. 173

<sup>396</sup> Kampmark, 'The Spectre of Bin Laden', p.1

<sup>397</sup> See John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb, and Richard Hollis, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1975)

<sup>398</sup> Friend, *Watching the World Change*, p. 173

To help explain this better Kampmark has drawn on the work of Walter Benjamin, specifically his work on the 'aura'. Benjamin argues that what makes a piece of art unique is its aura, the sacred sense derived from its singularity.<sup>399</sup> However, as he writes, 'that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.'<sup>400</sup> Benjamin concludes that: 'To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense.'<sup>401</sup>

According to Kampmark '[w]here the aura has been estranged from the original subject, the alienated image circulates within a sign system that simulates bin Laden's physical reality.'<sup>402</sup> Kampmark has also written about the so-called 'product substitution' of aura with reference to bin Laden's image:

[T]he product substitution of aura, has been frequent with bin Laden. These have tended to involve various 'products' of his image: commodities where the bin Laden emblem becomes a material object that circulates as an object of commerce; virtual 'capture' of bin Laden through a modern form of pillory and stockade in cyberspace; and forensic substitutions of his body through DNA samples from his family.<sup>403</sup>

By way of conclusion Kampmark has argued that: 'For bin Laden, the aura is never reproducible; it has been severed by endless mechanical duplications, from the moment his own cameraman has filmed him, to the times he has been pictured on Al Jazeera and CNN.'<sup>404</sup> Friend believes that '[o]nce bin Laden went into hiding after the September 11 attacks, he ceased to exist as a bona fide "public" figure and, instead, *became* his image.'<sup>405</sup> Arguably, however, Kampmark misunderstands the nature of aura in the contemporary age. Hariman and Lucaites instead believe that: 'The same "mechanical reproduction" that destroys the aura of the fine art work [or indeed bin Laden's image] can at the same time create an aura for the lesser

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<sup>399</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 217

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid*, p. 218

<sup>402</sup> Kampmark, 'The Spectre of Bin Laden', p. 4

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9

<sup>405</sup> Friend, *Watching the World Change*, p. 176

images.<sup>406</sup> According to W.J.T Mitchell society with the advent of the information age has now moved from a period of mechanical reproduction to one of biocybernetic reproduction. And this, he writes:

reverses the relation of the copy to the original. Now we have to say that the copy has, if anything, even *more* aura than the original... The digital reproduction of sounds and visual images, for instance, need not involve any erosion of vividness or lifelikeness, but can actually improve on whatever original material it starts with. Photographs of artworks can be “scrubbed” to remove flaws and dust; in principle, the effects of aging in an oil painting could be digitally erased, and the work restored to its pristine originality in a reproduction. Of course this would still constitute a loss of aura that Benjamin associated with the accretion of history and tradition around an object; but if aura means recovering the original vitality, literally, the “breath” of life of the original, then the digital copy can come closer to looking and sounding like the original than the original itself. And the miraculous programming framework of Adobe Photoshop even preserves the “history” of transformations between original and copy so that any transformations can be reversed.<sup>407</sup>

It is precisely this altered relationship between the copy and the original and new media technologies that enables bin Laden’s counter-image munitions to circulate so widely and to carry with them auratic traces.

Kampmark is right to argue that the product substitution of bin Laden is the substitute for finding him. However, his understanding of the relationship between aura and original images is incompatible with my own conceptual schema about bin Laden’s counter-image munitions. If I accept his argument that the aura of an image munition is indeed severed after its initial deployment then the circulations and remediations of his image are deauratized. This cannot be the case though because I do not believe that circulating and remediating image munitions would have the impacts that they do if they were devoid of an aura. Instead, Hariman and Lucaites and Mitchell’s understanding of the nature of aura in the contemporary age are more compatible with my conceptual schema as they account for the fact that circulating and remediating image munitions also contain auras.

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<sup>406</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, pp. 37-38

<sup>407</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, p. 320

Bin Laden has become a household name, a celebrity terrorist if you like. He has successfully managed to get his counter-image munitions copied across multiple media platforms, according to Hill, becoming ‘a metonym for Al Qaeda and the enemy more broadly in the War on Terror.’<sup>408</sup> The only thing missing from his extensive media portfolio – unlike Tony Blair – is an invitation to appear on *The Simpsons*. Bin Laden, since 9/11, has proved that he has a sophisticated understanding of the media and how to play the media game. In mimicking the style of established Western political communications he intentionally packages his addresses for a wide circulation in the West. The similarities between the bin Laden tapes and Western political communications gives Western audiences an immediate level of familiarity with the tapes and it also helps to give them legitimacy with Western audiences. The fact that the bin Laden tapes follow the same media conventions as Western political communications also means that the Western media are able to insert them into existing news frames with relative ease and because the bin Laden addresses were designed to be repackaged it has been relatively easy for producers of jihadi internet propaganda to pick up his counter-image munitions. Bin Laden has been edited together with footage of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, with videos of insurgent attacks in both Afghanistan and Iraq, with footage of the terror attacks in Bali, Madrid and London, with videos of terrorists in remote training camps and with the suicide video wills of suicide bombers.

Beyond the news networks and jihadi internet propaganda the spectre of bin Laden has continued to remediate via a variety of interventions made by groups and individuals with divergent motivations that are totally distinct from those of Al Qaeda. Thus posing a significant challenge to the authenticity of bin Laden’s image and also proving that the spectacle of war cannot be controlled. These interventions, however, can be usefully explored and recorded thematically.

Politically a significant remediation has been made by Aaron McGruder, who has returned time and again to the subject of bin Laden, with his political cartoon series *The Boondocks* in *The Chicago Tribune*. McGruder’s cartoon series is a satirical look at American society and it’s stereotyping of race, however, he does also weave

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<sup>408</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 33

other major issues effecting American society into his cartoons. In one particular episode bin Laden is depicted calling for his followers to pursue stem cell research<sup>409</sup> thus invoking two of America's greatest fears in the early twenty-first century: terrorism and genetic engineering.

A number of subversive interventions have also been made with the specific intention of undermining the public image that bin Laden had carefully begun to construct of himself after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks. These subversive interventions go further than government and military attempts to discredit bin Laden's public image (for example the videos of bin Laden released by the Pentagon to the media). This is also further compelling evidence showing how in the rhizomatic media age an increasing number of new media actors with diverse and unpredictable intentions are now able – independently of Al Qaeda, government and military – to pick up bin Laden counter-image munitions insert them into surprising new contexts and redeploy them over the internet.

A key outlet has been internet based jokes. Jokes have circulated through email, and more recently through *YouTube*, with images and video footage of bin Laden doing the most unlikely things. These jokes range from the subtitles in his videos being changed to surreal ramblings, to famous speeches, to extracts from comedy shows, to bin Laden doing Karaoke, ordering a takeaway meal to his cave or phone voting for the latest reality TV show. Bin Laden has also become the subject of an internet joke which parodies a *MasterCard* advert:

Trip to Afghanistan: \$800

High powered sniper rifle: \$1000

Hotel stay with accessible roof: \$100

Scoring a head shot on Osama bin Laden: Priceless

For everyone else there's Cruise Missiles

Bin Laden has become the subject of a parody of the *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* movie poster 'Tali Wars: America Strikes Back', where he appears as Darth

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<sup>409</sup> Mitchell, 'Cloning Terror'

Vader. Members of the Bush administration appear as Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Yoda and Han Solo. *Star Wars* is essentially a story about good versus evil and it operates here as a metaphor for the war on terror. The person who produced 'Tali Wars' was clearly mindful of this and also the fact that by superimposing the face of bin Laden onto Darth Vader (the bad guy) and the faces of President Bush and other senior members of the Bush administration onto the faces of the good guys they were intentionally subverting Al Qaeda's official message and reinforcing the Bush administration's official message.

Other subversive interventions include a *Finding Nemo* film poster parody 'Finding Osama' – which is a clear criticism of the Bush administration's failure to find bin Laden – and a *Teletubbies* parody 'Tali-tubby' – which operates from a position of heteronormativity and also reinforces colonial discourses about Islamic terrorists being immoral and exotic.<sup>410</sup> The image shows Tinky Winky (the purple *Teletubby*) with his red leather bag – which has courted controversy in the past because it looks very much like a woman's handbag – and this character has been criticised for being a children's television character which could be interpreted as gay. Tinky Winky has been Photoshopped with the symbols of bin Laden – his trademark beard, turban and AK-47 – and therefore transformed into a satirical representation of bin Laden. The producer of 'Tali-tubby' in selecting Tinky Winky rather than one of the other *Teletubbies* for inclusion in their image was clearly wanting to pair the criticisms over Tinky Winky's sexuality with bin Laden as the archetypal Islamic terrorist and so present bin Laden as not just immoral but also exotic.

Bin Laden's image has also been appropriated, appearing with Bert from *Sesame Street* on some versions of the infamous 'Bert is Evil' poster. Other versions of the 'Bert is Evil' poster include: Bert with Adolf Hitler, with Ayatollah Khomeini, with Josef Stalin, with Saddam Hussein, with Robert Mugabe, with members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Bert the Unabomber, Bert the Ripper and Bert at the JFK assassination. The Bert and bin Laden poster was first produced by someone called Ignacio who published it on the internet and it has since become something of an international phenomenon. It has been adapted and copied, appearing on numerous

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<sup>410</sup> See Amit S. Rai, 'Of Monsters: Biopower, Terrorism and Excess in Genealogies of Monstrosity'. *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4 (2004), p. 538



websites and printed and used at protests internationally.<sup>411</sup> Thus reflecting the uncontrollable flow of images in the internet age and how even parody images can themselves end up in surprising new contexts which the producers could never have imagined.

Commercially an interesting intervention has been made by Morgan Spurlock in his documentary *Where in the World is Osama bin Laden*. Spurlock takes it upon himself to try and track down bin Laden the mysterious spectral figure who has been haunting society since September 11<sup>th</sup>. Spurlock's search for bin Laden though is a MacGuffin<sup>412</sup> enabling him instead to journey through the Middle East dispelling Western constructed attitudes and prejudices about Muslims, such as the idea that they are all committed to jihad against the West.

A number of artistic interventions have also taken place. Bin Laden's image was appropriated, according to Friend:

by the progressive political activists at TomPaine.com (just as American was laying the groundwork for taking out Saddam). The ad, widely downloaded from the Web, shows bin Laden as Uncle Sam. He points toward the viewer, daring Americans to throw their support behind a war that could, as the ad copy reads, "distract [the U.S.] from fighting Al Qaeda...divide the international community... [and] destabilize the region." The picture's headline: "I WANT YOU TO INVADE IRAQ."<sup>413</sup>

This poster was already familiar to many Americans thanks to its references: J. M. Flagg's 1917 recruitment poster, which in turn references Alfred Leete's 1914 Lord Kitchener recruitment poster, where Uncle Sam (the metonym of the United States) states "I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY."

Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell have also produced an installation entitled: *The House of Osama bin Laden*. Hill has explained how:

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<sup>411</sup> Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, pp. 2-3

<sup>412</sup> A mere plot device to draw us into story but not necessarily central to it – for instance the stolen money in Hitchcock's *Psycho* or, indeed, the Weapons of Mass Destruction that drew us into the war in Iraq (see Slavoj Zizek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 11-19)

<sup>413</sup> Friend, *Watching the World Change*, p. 179

[i]n October 2002 the artists visited Afghanistan and pursued rumours of a house occupied by Bin Laden in the late 1990s. They located the building west of Jalalabad and used the material they gathered there to construct a virtual model of the house and its immediate surroundings that is then projected onto a gallery wall, with a joystick provided for navigation through the virtual abode. The experience of moving through this environment bares close similarity to that of playing a first person shooter game, in which the player moves through an enemy's lair, confronting and destroying them.<sup>414</sup>

This installation gives visitors to the gallery a first person experience – albeit virtual – of the hunt for bin Laden. Bin Laden's image has also found its way onto the walls of many cities, through street art. For example, in one particular graffiti image, bin Laden is the subject of a missing person poster which reads: 'Missing: Have you seen me?' A clear criticism of the Bush administrations ongoing hunt for bin Laden and how their high-tech hunt might just as well be replaced by a low-tech missing person poster campaign.

These numerous interventions reveal the uncontrollable nature of bin Laden's counter-image munitions, they also confirm Hill's view that it is impossible to destroy bin Laden's image<sup>415</sup> and Kampmark's ideas about the spectral nature of bin Laden. These remediated images of bin Laden are also evidence that in the internet age Al Qaeda has successfully been able to bring the war on terror to the attention of new audience demographics as a result of his appearance in surprising new contexts; for example, people who do not watch the news are not free from bin Laden's gaze in fact they are still haunted by bin Laden's image. This is because the free floating nature of his image means that people can now engage with him in surprising new places. People do not need to consume television or print media to come into contact with his image; they need only walk down the street to be confronted by bin Laden staring back at them from a graffiti image on a wall, visit a gallery and see bin Laden's image framed on a wall, check their emails and receive the latest bin Laden joke or go to the cinema and be confronted by bin Laden staring back at them from on the screen. For example, bin Laden has featured in *The Boondocks* cartoon in *The Chicago Tribune*; he has also been paired with *Star Wars*, *Finding Nemo*, *Teletubbies*, Bert from *Sesame Street* and more. These remediated images of bin

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<sup>414</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 36

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42

Laden – which have all been produced and disseminated by new media actors with divergent intentions from Al Qaeda, the Bush administration and the Blair government – show how traditional, top-down information management systems centred around control and censorship (still dominant in America and Britain) are no longer appropriate or indeed relevant in the war on terror; given the fact that once a new bin Laden counter-image munition has been deployed by Al Qaeda it can then immediately be picked up and deployed by multiple, globally dispersed new media actors. Al Qaeda have realised this fact and instead of getting too caught up with trying to control the circulation and remediation of their bin Laden counter-image munitions, after their release, they instead focus all their attention on producing bin Laden counter-image munitions which will have the biggest immediate impact; thus putting them at a strategic advantage in the war of images over the more traditional American and British government and military ways of managing images.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ political communications made by President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and bin Laden in the war on terror. Its main focus, however, has been on the bin Laden tapes and how Al Qaeda has used them to produce and deploy a number of powerful counter-image munitions. To help better understand the significance of bin Laden’s counter-image munitions though I had to place them into a wider political communications context. To this end I briefly discussed how ‘official’ political communications – supported by the work of press offices and spin doctors – play an important role in communicating information in times of war and peace and currently in the war on terror. I also reviewed the development of political communications from the newspaper age, the radio age, the television age to the real-time and the internet age. What emerged from this was a clear understanding of just how important ‘place’ and ‘symbolism’ are within visual political communications. ‘Place’ and ‘symbolism’ were then examined in detail with reference to press conferences, fixed broadcasts and photo opportunities made by both President Bush and Prime Minister Blair in the war on terror.

Having placed the bin Laden videos into a wider political context, attention then turned to examine them chronologically up until 2009. What I discovered was that

Al Qaeda has drawn directly from the style of the political communications of American Presidents and British Prime Ministers and how, in terms of 'place' and analogous to the Oval Office and 10 Downing Street, the Tora Bora caves became significant for bin Laden. 'Symbolism' is also important in the bin Laden videos. The AK-47 has assumed the role of a flag and bin Laden's use of a desk in his October 29, 2004 video is a definite reference to the desk in The Oval Office. My discussion of the bin Laden videos has also revealed the important connections between these videos as political communications and as weapons of war, or counter-image munitions, in the war on terror.

I then turned to Hill's discussion of the bin Laden tapes where he discusses how bin Laden is indeed in control of his presence in the war on terror, having 'effectively engineered his own disappearance,'<sup>416</sup> enabling him to reinsert himself back into the war on terror whenever he likes and also to disappear again whenever he chooses to do so. Hill offers important insights about how to deal with the circulation of bin Laden's counter-image munitions. I then explored the circulation of bin Laden's image with reference to Kampmark's work on bin Laden's 'deauratized'<sup>417</sup> image and I quickly disputed this position, favouring instead Hariman, Lucaites and Mitchell's arguments that auratic presences are not just present in original image munitions but they can also be found in subsequent image appropriations. I then looked at bin Laden's circulation and remediation from news networks to jihadi internet propaganda, to political, subversive, commercial and artistic interventions. What this shows is that the spectacle of war cannot be controlled as Bin Laden's image will always be remediated by people operating beyond the control of governments or Al Qaeda. Furthermore, such political communications are but one feature of the new image theatre of war.

The next chapter will examine another: suicide terrorism, but rather than discussing it as a purely physical tactic I will instead explore the symbolic dimension of suicide bombings and how it is a source of powerful image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles.

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<sup>416</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', p. 40

<sup>417</sup> Kampmark, 'The Spectre of Bin Laden', p. 3

## **Chapter Four**

### **Suicides**

#### **Introduction**

Chapters One and Two outlined the theoretical and methodological basis of this thesis: in the contemporary media environment information and images circulate rhizomatically; they may still sometimes move up and down a single hierarchical structure, but they also, and increasingly, flow across fields laterally and in ways that enable their combination and recombination, deployment and redeployment in uncontrollable and unpredictable ways. I have also shown how America and Britain have failed to recognize the significance of this shift for contemporary war, while Al Qaeda appears to have a more sophisticated understanding of this uncontrollability and of how to deploy weaponized images in the war on terror. To assist IR theorists in understanding what I have called ‘image warfare’ I developed three conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’. These help to map out the stages of image warfare from the launching of weaponized image munitions and the counter-response they provoke, to the complex remediation of such images and the struggle to appropriate and reappropriate them.

In Chapter Three I discussed one form of image warfare, exploring the ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ political communications made by President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and Osama bin Laden in the war on terror, and identifying the launching of image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles. This revealed the complex and unpredictable circulation and remediation of Bush, Blair and bin Laden image munitions.

In this chapter I turn to another, and in many respects more complex, form of image munition – that related to suicide terrorism, a key terrorist strategy. Suicide terrorism might seem an unlikely form of image munition since it is to obviously a physical-force tactic employed by terrorists to gain a military advantage. But suicide terrorism also contains a powerful symbolic dimension which is exploited by

terrorists to manufacture propaganda around acts of terror. I will, then, first seek to conceptualise this symbolic dimension of suicide terrorism with a particular focus on the way in which it may be a source of powerful image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles.

Al Qaeda's suicide terrorism is a perfect counter to RMA techno-war as I will see through a discussion of an indicative case study: the suicide bombing of The Canal Hotel, the UN's headquarters in Iraq, on August 19, 2003. I will then return to September 11, 2001 and a detailed discussion of the symbolism of those attacks, their constitution as image munitions and as counter-image munitions and their subsequent circulation and remediation. This includes the efforts of the Bush administration and also popular forms such as the movie dramatisation of events found in the film *United 93*, and also Al Qaeda's use of suicide video wills. I will also show, in the context of image warfare, that these suicide video wills have become an important means by which terrorists try and control the remediation of their attacks long after the event.

Suicide terrorism – and the image munitions it produces – will be further explored through examination of another case study – the coordinated triple suicide bombing of Firdos Square in Baghdad, a highly symbolic target, on October 24, 2005. Here I will show how a concern with image munitions shapes the strategic planning of such an operation. Then, turning to the July 7, 2005 London Bombings (and the July 21, 2005 Failed London Bombings) I will explore the circulation of image munitions and counter-image munitions. This includes the activities of the Blair government and the UK media establishment and the production and circulation of stories of heroism, like that of Paul Dadge a London commuter turned first aider who helped Davina Turrell another injured London commuter, it also includes the activities of Al Qaeda, and the production and circulation of the suicide video wills of Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer.

After exploring these instances of image munitions and counter-image munitions I will examine a number of interventions produced by new media actors with intentions that are distinct from those of Al Qaeda, the Bush administration and the Blair government and which are further evidence of the complex and unpredictable

rhizomatic flow of images in ways that exceed the control of central authorities and that complicate remediation battles.

### **Conceptualising Al Qaeda's Suicide Terrorism**

The RMA changed contemporary Western ways of warfighting making them more clinical. This new kind of warfare was first unveiled during the 1991 Gulf War in which – as I have shown – airpower played a central role, soldiers were distanced from the conflict theatre by new military technologies and the campaign was a series of powerful media spectacles.<sup>418</sup> RMA inspired techno-war was once again rolled out, this time by NATO forces, in the Kosovo Campaign. This military campaign took the form of a series of internet-based psychological operations, airstrikes and finally the deployment of NATO peacekeeping ground forces<sup>419</sup> (see Chapters One and Two).

Then on September 11, 2001 RMA warfare was dealt a massive blow when suicide terrorism hit America. No longer did technological superiority automatically guarantee success. Instead, Al Qaeda had escalated its use of suicide terrorism striking a significant physical/symbolic blow at the heart of America's warfighting machine and American capitalism. Rather than suicide bombers being a threat only in distant theatres of operation, they were now a real threat to mainland American national security (and a threat also felt by the rest of the West). With suicide terrorism Al Qaeda had found the perfect counter to techno-war.

David R. A. Hatcher has identified the two extremes of suicide terrorism: 'At one extreme, there is the use of a simple single person-borne device and, at the other, is the use of a large passenger aircraft as the bomb, such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001.'<sup>420</sup> Both these suicide terrorism extremes guarantee mass civilian casualties. According to Bruce Hoffman '[s]uicide bombers are inexpensive and effective. They are less complicated and

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<sup>418</sup> See Shaw, *Post-Military Society*

<sup>419</sup> See Ignatieff, *Virtual War*

<sup>420</sup> David R. A. Hatcher, 'Self-Sacrifice Terrorism (the Suicide Bomber): Global Threat or Tactical Weapon?' in *Seaford House Papers*, ed. Lieutenant General Sir Christopher Wallace KBE (London: Royal College of Defence Studies, 2004), p. 75

compromising than other kinds of terrorist operations.’<sup>421</sup> Even when a suicide bombing is conducted on the scale of the 9/11 terror attacks, terrorists do not need to have their own sophisticated technologies. This is because, in the case of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the hijackers exploited America’s own technologies (the commercial planes). Because Al Qaeda cannot compete on traditional military terms against superior military forces they, like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have turned instead to weaponizing their bodies in order to gain a strategic advantage against conventional military forces. According to Renuka Gusain ‘[t]he increased use of suicide bombers is an example of how central the body has become in this proliferation of terror’<sup>422</sup> and Achille Mbembe has described the transformation of bodies into bombs thus:

The candidate for martyrdom transforms his or her body into a mask that hides the soon-to-be-detonated weapons. Unlike the tank or the missile that is clearly visible, the weapon carried in the shape of the body is invisible. Thus concealed, it forms part of the body. It is so intimately part of the body that at the time of detonation it annihilates the body of its bearer, who carries with it the bodies of others when it does not reduce them to pieces. The body does not simply conceal a weapon. The body is transformed into a weapon, not in a metaphorical sense but in the truly ballistic sense.<sup>423</sup>

Once the body of the suicide bomber has undergone its metamorphosis (with the putting on of the suicide bomber vest) the bomber is immediately transformed into an armed ballistic weapon. Hoffman sees suicide bombers as ‘the ultimate smart bomb,’<sup>424</sup> a term that is usually reserved for discussions about the recent RMA and which emphasises the precision capabilities of certain missiles. Hoffman’s appropriation of this term is significant precisely because it emphasises the opposite – the indiscriminate nature of suicide bombings – whilst simultaneously reflecting attention back towards its original mirror-term used within debates about the RMA. As René Girard has remarked. ‘The more a tragic conflict is prolonged, the more likely it is to culminate in a violent mimesis; the resemblance between the

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<sup>421</sup> Bruce Hoffman, 'The Logic of Suicide Terrorism', *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 2003. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200306/hoffman>. Accessed on 21 June 2008, p. 1

<sup>422</sup> Renuka Gusain, 'The War Body as Screen of Terror', in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), pp. 43

<sup>423</sup> Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics' translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003), p. 36

<sup>424</sup> Hoffman, 'The Logic of Suicide Terrorism', p. 1



combatants grows ever stronger until each presents a mirror image of the other.<sup>425</sup>

W. J. T. Mitchell also argues that:

[t]he final result and the whole tendency of the smart bomb and the suicide bomber are the same, namely, the creation of a biocybernetic life-form, the reduction of a living being to a tool or machine, and the elevation of a mere tool or machine to the level of an intelligent, adaptable creature.<sup>426</sup>

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have eloquently described the ‘violent mimesis’ of suicide terrorism and RMA warfare: ‘The suicide bomber is the dark opposite, the gory doppelgänger of the safe bodyless soldier’<sup>427</sup> – certainly distinct from post-heroic warfare.<sup>428</sup>

It is clear, then, that a symbolic element can be found at the very heart of suicide terrorism. The very gesture of turning a body into a weapon, devastatingly effective against even the most sophisticated of technological weapons, confronts ‘safe’ techno-war with its perverse mirror-image. It is thus not surprising that such an act lends itself easily to deployment within the theatre of image warfare. Suicide bombings are not just planned to maim and kill the most people. They are also designed as political communications that maximise symbolic potential (see Chapter Three). Al Qaeda understands that the media is an important front in its war with the West and when used effectively it can be a significant tool for gaining a strategic advantage. According to Chase Laurelle Knowles:

the current wave of would-be Al Qaeda-style martyrs understand the mass media – particularly the internet – as one of the most important fronts in their jihad: to quote bin Laden, ‘It is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods; in fact, its ratio may reach 90% of the total preparation for the battles’. Furthermore, it has a ready audience.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 50

<sup>426</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, p. 313

<sup>427</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 45

<sup>428</sup> See Luttwak, ‘Towards Post-Heroic Warfare’, pp. 109-22 and Luttwak, ‘A Post-Heroic Military Policy’, pp. 33-44

<sup>429</sup> Chase Laurelle Knowles, ‘Towards a New Web Genre: Islamist Neorealism’. *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 1, no. 3 (2008), p. 360

Consequently, Al Qaeda takes great care when planning its suicide attacks. Al Qaeda appears to select its targets with two key factors in mind: they often select targets that have some kind of pre-existing symbolism (an important building or a landmark – because their symbolism can be hijacked and used to produce powerful image munitions) or targets with immediate surrounding areas that the media will be able to report on. This allows journalists to report on a bombing while it is still unfolding or to report on its immediate aftermath and so quickly disseminate image munitions through the media.

A significant example of an attack conducted more for its symbolic impact than for its immediate physical impact is the suicide bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003. A single suicide bomber drove a truck at The Canal Hotel, the UN's headquarters in Iraq since 1991. The building was of course subject to high levels of security. If suicide bombings were committed solely to maximise casualties then the UN headquarters would not have been a target. But the Canal Hotel was targeted for its symbolism. It was a metonym for the UN's presence in Iraq and any attack against it would immediately be seen as an attack against the wider presence of the UN in Iraq. Indeed, in the wake of the attack the UN began to withdraw all UN staff from Iraq. The timing of the attack was also significant: coming just five days after the formation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) it coincided with a news conference, as a consequence of which news crews were already on the scene and able to immediately report on the aftermath of the bombing.

One of the fatalities was the newly appointed Special Representative of UNAMI, Sérgio Vieira de Mello, a Brazilian born UN diplomat. Some media reports have since claimed that the target of this attack was de Mello himself. Whether de Mello was the target for attack or whether The Canal Hotel was the target, the bombing was clearly a success – not because of the number of casualties or deaths, but rather because of the fact that the bombing was symbolically powerful and thus received massive international media attention. According to Shaul Shay '[a] suicide attack, like all other terror attacks in the modern era, is primarily meant to provide its

perpetrators with maximum media coverage, thus magnifying “a powerful self-image.”<sup>430</sup>

Suicide bombers have three distinct media presences. The first comes through footage of their attacks (image munitions); the second through footage released by the authorities in the aftermath of their attacks (counter-image munitions); and the third through their suicide video wills (counter-image munitions). These three different media presences offer compelling evidence that fierce image battles are currently being fought through the media. For example, after the footage of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks had been circulating for a while information about each of the nineteen hijackers and footage – including CCTV images showing their final moments before boarding the four planes – was made public and the media then used this information to reconstruct the lives of the hijackers. This information was then widely circulated.

After the London Bombings again information about the lives of the four suicide bombers and also footage – including CCTV images showing their final moments on the day of the attacks – was released to the media in an attempt to help reconstruct the lives of the bombers and also to help construct a timeline of the bombers movements on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Gillian Rose has discussed this process as follows:

One [piece of information] was a photograph from a closed circuit television camera of the four men at Luton station on their way to London, carrying the rucksacks which contained the bombs. The papers also used school photos, or photos from family events; and *The Times* found photographs of one, Mohammad Sidique Khan, at work as some sort of teacher. These photos were usually cropped into headshots and used again and again by all the papers, in report, analysis and commentaries.<sup>431</sup>

This was one way for the authorities and the media to try and gain control of the circulation of suicide terrorism.

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<sup>430</sup> Shaul Shay, *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks*. Translated by Rachel Lieberman (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), p. 2

<sup>431</sup> Gillian Rose, 'Spectacle and Spectres: London 7 July 2005'. *New Formations* 62 (2007), p. 7. This links in with Sontag's work regarding the repackaging of images. See Sontag, *On Photography* and Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2004)

I have discussed how suicide terrorism in the war on terror is a 'violent mimesis' of clinical RMA warfare and how there is more to suicide terrorism than committing mass casualty attacks. It also contains a significant symbolic dimension which is integral to the production of image munitions. The following section will discuss the September 11, 2001 attacks, their symbolic impact and the production of powerful image munitions.

### **September 11, 2001 and United Airlines Flight 93**

The September 11, 2001 terror attacks killed 2,749<sup>432</sup> and injured thousands more. 9/11 was also significant symbolically. In fact these attacks are responsible for creating a number of powerful image munitions – which have since been widely circulated – and represent the spectacular opening scenes of Al Qaeda's image war against the West. This section will discuss the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the attacks' symbolic impact and the resulting counter-image munitions (especially over *United Airlines Flight 93*).

September 11<sup>th</sup> started, like any other day, in New York and Washington D.C., with people going about their daily lives – travelling to work, to school and to the shops (this is represented in the film *World Trade Center*) – this everydayness, however, was soon interrupted by the first plane hitting the North Tower of the WTC at 08.46am. This plane was *American Airlines Flight 11*. It had taken off from Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts and was scheduled to fly to Los Angeles International Airport. Immediately news of this event and footage of the towering inferno were shown in the international media at the same time journalists were also starting to speculate about the nature of the event. At this time there was no mention of terrorism. The event was initially reported as a horrible accident.

While journalists were still speculating on the accident and while TV cameras were still being trained on the Twin Towers, a second plane was captured on camera as it crashed into the South Tower at 9.03am. This plane was *United Airlines Flight 175*.

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<sup>432</sup> Jenny Edkins, 'Missing Persons: Manhattan, September 2001', in *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving*, eds. Elizabeth Dauphinee and Christina Masters (New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 38

It had also taken off from Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts and was also scheduled to fly to Los Angeles International Airport. According to Rosalind C. Morris:

When the second plane hit the World Trade Center in New York, it not only proved that this was not an accident but an intentionally produced event, it inaugurated a period of constant imagistic repetition, the function of which was not to explain the event but to declaim it as having occurred and, thus, to produce a reality effect.<sup>433</sup>

This attack was unlike anything America had ever witnessed before, other than in Hollywood fiction. Historically when hijackers have taken control of planes they have diverted them to isolated runways and then made demands (see Chapter Five). Never before had commercial airplanes been hijacked and then transformed into kinetic weapons of mass-destruction. According to Douglas Kellner:

The live television broadcasting brought a “you are there” drama to the September 11 spectacle. The images of the planes striking the WTC, the buildings bursting into flames, individuals jumping out of the windows in a desperate attempt to survive the inferno, the collapse of the towers, and the subsequent chaos provided unforgettable images viewers would not soon forget.<sup>434</sup>

9/11 was manufactured specifically as a powerful media spectacle by Al Qaeda precisely because (as already discussed) they could not hope to compete militarily with America and had to mobilize what they could – their bodies, commercial airplanes, the media and images – in order to gain a strategic advantage.

The coordinated terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> were planned and executed with mass media coverage in mind. The level of Al Qaeda’s planning of 9/11 is still contested. What is clear though is that ‘place’ was important when the WTC was selected as a target. The terrorists knew that the financial district of New York City would have a large concentration of cameras and journalists. They also knew that

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<sup>433</sup> Rosalind C. Morris, 'Images of Untranslatability in the US War on Terror'. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 6, no. 3 (2004), p. 405

<sup>434</sup> Kellner, *Media Spectacle*, p. 28

this strong media presence would guarantee the attack immediate media coverage. The choice of target was also important. As Fuery and Fuery write:

[t]he Twin Towers were already established images, existing in so many of the visual representations of New York (and synecdochally, the USA), and the terrorists would have known that their acts would be captured by a variety of media. And it is the images of the towers that remain most vivid in people's minds.<sup>435</sup>

What is still unclear is the significance of the seventeen minute gap between the first plane hitting the North Tower and the second plane hitting the South Tower. Whether deliberate or otherwise, this seventeen minute gap – as with the collapsing of the WTC towers – certainly worked in Al Qaeda's favour. It has been suggested though, by W. J. T. Mitchell, that the seventeen minute gap was manufactured 'in the full expectation that hundreds of video cameras would capture the event live, and broadcast it over and over again around the world.'<sup>436</sup>

The Pentagon was also attacked at 09.37am on September 11<sup>th</sup> by a hijacked commercial airplane which was transformed into a kinetic weapon of mass destruction. This plane was *American Airlines Flight 77*. It had taken off from Washington Dulles International Airport and was scheduled to fly to Los Angeles International Airport. In targeting the Pentagon 'place' was again an important issue. The Pentagon is the headquarters of the US Department of Defense and symbolically this target represented a strike against the heart of the American military machine, 'Fortress America'. In targeting the Pentagon the hijackers were guaranteed that the event would receive extensive media coverage and send a strong political message to the Bush administration and to the rest of the world about just how vulnerable America actually was. For all of the billions of dollars that the American government had spent on developing a technologically sophisticated military machine (with a supposedly impenetrable headquarters) it only took five hijackers taking control of a commercial airplane and transforming it into a kinetic weapon of mass destruction to threaten this military machine.

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<sup>435</sup> Fuery and Fuery, *Visual Cultures*, p. 69

<sup>436</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, p. 324

The fourth attack was supposed to be a suicide bombing of the White House (the official residence of the President of the United States of America).<sup>437</sup> Instead *United Airlines Flight 93* which had taken off from Newark International Airport and was scheduled to fly to San Francisco International Airport crash landed in a field near Shanksville, Somerset County, Pennsylvania at 10.03am – killing all on board. If *United Airline Flight 93* had been successful and had crashed into the White House then Al Qaeda would have succeeded in coordinating its planned quadruple attack against the three symbols of American power: capitalism, the military and democracy. Al Qaeda would also have succeeded in manufacturing a complete set of powerful image munitions. But the passengers of *United Airlines Flight 93* prevented Al Qaeda from completely succeeding on 9/11 and this particular attack was a massive strategic failure. Not only did the plane fail to reach its target (the White House) but it also failed to crash anywhere near cameras and journalists and so Al Qaeda's opportunity to manufacture and circulate a powerful image munition of the crash was lost.

However, the Bush administration immediately seized upon the tragedy of *United Airlines Flight 93*, and used it to construct a counter-attack to 9/11, circulating counter-image munitions and stories about the heroism of the crew and passengers on board the doomed flight. Cynthia Weber has noted that:

[w]hile conspiracy theories about faked phone conversations, doctored transcripts based on the plane's recovered voice recorder, and military intervention to shoot down the plane unofficially circulate, an official story of the self-sacrificing heroism of the passengers and crew of UAF93 began to take hold.<sup>438</sup>

She has also argued that:

The uniqueness of what happened on UAF93... lies in its location as an historical, linear, meaning-making event that was narrated as such as the very moment it was occurring by the passengers and crew who experienced it even though it took place in the broader context of trauma time. All of this makes

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<sup>437</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York, NJ: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 14

<sup>438</sup> Weber, 'Popular Visual Language', p. 139. For more information about 'trauma time' see Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

the story of UAF93 more easily recoverable as a centrepiece of official American history.<sup>439</sup>

Weber's point is supported by the fact that in the days following September 11<sup>th</sup>, and as more and more information became available, further stories of heroism about *United Airlines Flight 93* circulated through the international media. A significant counter-image munition was manufactured when President George W. Bush addressed a Joint Session of Congress and the American people on September 20, 2001. In this address Bush talked about Todd Beamer, a passenger on *United Airlines Flight 93*, before then introducing his widow Lisa Beamer – amid rapturous applause – to Congress and the American People. Weber discusses how:

Beamer [had] reportedly used a GTE air phone while in flight to ring his wife but was connected instead to GTE supervisor Lisa Jefferson. Beamer reported the hijacking as it was taking place, and Jefferson gave him information about what was happening with other airplanes. When her conversation with Beamer ended, Jefferson claims that Beamer dropped the phone, leaving the line open, and it was then she heard him say 'Let's roll', a phrase that soon stood for the rallying cry of the passengers and crew.<sup>440</sup>

According to Weber, '[b]y naming Todd Beamer, the President provides the American people not only with a figure through whom they could access first-hand what had occurred on UAF93, but an action hero who stood for the activities of all Americans.'<sup>441</sup> The story of *United Airlines Flight 93* has since been reported within *The 9/11 Commission Report*<sup>442</sup> and circulated via documentaries such as *The Flight That Fought Back, Flight 93* and the film *United 93*. *United Airlines Flight 93*, therefore, quickly became a powerful counter-narrative of heroism to the dominant 9/11 narrative of death, destruction and terror and so helped to shift the meaning/status/significance of the event with the public. At the same time though, Al Qaeda have continued to try and hijack the media with their own counter-image munitions, such as suicide video wills, thus shifting attention away from counter-narratives of 9/11 and back onto the dominant 9/11 narrative. Attention will now turn to discuss such suicide video wills, their roles and their symbolic impact.

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<sup>439</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142

<sup>442</sup> See *The 9/11 Commission Report*



## The 9/11 Suicide Video Wills

Suicide video wills appear when media attention starts to ebb away in the aftermath of an act of suicide terrorism. They are an important form and also a source of image munitions and a central element of the strategy of suicide terrorism and image warfare. They form an essential part of the final preparations for a suicide bombing and, according to Bruce Hoffman, '[a] film crew makes a martyrdom video, as much to help ensure that the bomber can't back out as for propaganda and recruitment purposes.'<sup>443</sup> But suicide video wills are, perhaps above all, an information and recruitment tool. They give terrorists media coverage without the threat of being found by intelligence officials; help to cement the reputations, as martyrs, of suicide bombers; and afford an opportunity to place an act of suicide terrorism into a wider political context – such as, for example, the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Through such video wills, in Andrew Hoskins' and Ben O'Loughlin's phrase, '[m]aximum exposure of terror acts is guaranteed through use of minimum media.'<sup>444</sup> This 'minimum media' comprises a digital video camera, a computer, some domestic video editing software and an internet connection. The production team do not have to have taken video production or computer courses. They can produce suicide video wills at isolated terrorist training camps and also in their own homes before releasing them in the name of the As-Sahab Foundation and Al Qaeda either through internet remailers to Arabic news networks such as Al Jazeera or directly to jihadi propaganda websites. At this point they can be understood as an attempt to lift an act of suicide terrorism back up the news agenda.

But to understand the place of suicide video-wills in the larger theatre of image war we need to consider more than the process of their production and dissemination. These videos communicate using powerful symbols, and take an almost generic form repeating stylistic elements: the bomber sits in front of a set position camera and delivers a monologue (echoing the political communications of leaders). This repetition has developed continuity in form, style and aesthetic between suicide video-wills and this has helped to construct it as a genre that is drawing heavily on

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<sup>443</sup> Hoffman, 'The Logic of Suicide Terrorism', p. 3

<sup>444</sup> Hoskins, and O'Loughlin, *Television and Terror*, p. 127

both ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ political communications (see Chapter Three). The manner in which suicide bombers deliver their addresses – straight to camera – helps give the impression that, to refer to Benjamin again, bombers are also able to see their audience<sup>445</sup> and address them individually. The content of the statements in suicide video wills is also clearly structured: bombers give praise to Allah, talk at length about their enemy and justify their actions to international audiences and their families.<sup>446</sup> This is visible in the video wills of the 9/11 hijackers.<sup>447</sup>

The first 9/11 suicide video will was released on April 16, 2002. This video will features Ahmed Ibrahim al-Haznawi (one of the *United Airlines Flight 93* hijackers). The fact that al-Haznawi was a hijacker onboard *United Airlines Flight 93* and that his suicide video will was the first to be released is perhaps no coincidence. As the Bush administration’s counter-image munitions of *United Airlines Flight 93* were a powerful counter to the other 9/11 suicide spectacles, so al-Haznawi’s video will was a calculated counter-counter-response. This video will was the first opportunity for audiences to see a 9/11 hijacker, other than in grainy CCTV footage or in old pictures. It was also the first opportunity for audiences to hear from one of the suicide bombers. The ‘place’ where al-Haznawi’s address was filmed is anonymous; however, he does appear sitting in front of a background showing an image, from September 11<sup>th</sup>, of the WTC towers on fire. The insertion of an image of the burning WTC towers into the background of this video will is symbolically representative of an Al Qaeda declaration of war against America and Western infidels. It also helps to remind Western audiences of their vulnerability to attack from Al Qaeda and adds authenticity to this attempt to appropriate the event. The video also features images of the other 18 9/11 hijackers. Al-Haznawi’s statement can thus be understood as delivered on behalf of all the hijackers. Further, their appearance, united within a single suicide video will, is a mimetic counter of the stories of the heroism of the passengers and crew onboard *United Airlines Flight 93* – especially Todd Beamer – and by the emergency services on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>445</sup> Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, p. 244

<sup>446</sup> Meir Hatina, *Islam and Salvation in Palestine: The Islamic Jihad Movement* (Ramat Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2001), p. 123

<sup>447</sup> Many believe that all 19 hijackers have pre-recorded suicide video wills and that al Qaeda intends to keep releasing them, thus inserting the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> back into international news agendas.

In September 2002 another 9/11 suicide video will, or counter-image munition, was released to the media this time featuring Abdulaziz al-Omari (one of the *American Airlines Flight 11* hijackers). The timing of the release of this video was significant because it aired around the time of the first anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. In this video al-Omari made his address in a set-piece to camera – echoing the style of so many previous suicide video wills and also the political communications of leaders. To paraphrase Hill, suicide video wills are like weapons with the power of ‘extramission’, functioning like ‘the evil eye’.<sup>448</sup> Al-Omari’s video will also enabled Al Qaeda – paraphrasing Susan L Carruthers – ‘to hijack the news agenda’<sup>449</sup> and partake in the first anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. In the background of this video was an image of The Pentagon on 9/11, symbolically powerful and reemphasising the fact that there is no longer a ‘Fortress America’. The image of The Pentagon also helps to immediately frame al-Omari’s video will in relation to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

On October 1, 2006 a new counter-image munition was released to the media this time featuring the 9/11 ringleader Mohamed Atta, who was a hijacker on *American Airlines Flight 11*, and Ziad Jarrah, a hijacker on *United Airlines Flight 93*. Although this video is not a perfect stylistic match with previous suicide video wills, because two suicide bombers appear in the same video and the footage is also cut with footage of bin Laden, this video should still be considered a video will. This video will is evidence that suicide video wills have evolved over time as editing capabilities have become increasingly sophisticated. Also, it shows the flexibility of the 9/11 suicide wills and their ability to be repackaged. This video will is similar symbolically to bin Laden’s political communications, particularly that which featured al-Zawahiri and was released to Al Jazeera on September 10, 2003 to coincide with the second anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks (see Chapter Three). But the Atta/Jarrah video will is also symbolically similar to other suicide video wills and bin Laden videos because it features an AK-47, a symbol of Al Qaeda’s continuing struggle against Western infidels, echoes of Cold War struggles and, in

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<sup>448</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', p. 41

<sup>449</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 171

the case of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, a symbol of the ongoing struggle with Israel. Also, as the AK-47 has assumed the role of a flag – within bin Laden’s political communications – so, the AK-47 again here assumes the role of a flag.

To conclude, the 9/11 suicide video wills as well as being important for raising September 11<sup>th</sup> back up the international news agenda, are also important examples of counter-image munitions, manufactured and released by Al Qaeda with the intention of striking a significant blow at America and thus giving Al Qaeda an advantage in the new image theatre of war. I will explore this further as I move on to look at, firstly, a coordinated suicide bombing from Iraq in 2005, secondly, the London bombings, the Failed London Bombings and the 7/7 suicide video wills. I will focus on the symbolic aspects of each attack and on how they ‘hijacked’ the news agenda and became powerful image munitions.

### **Iraq, 7/7 and 21/7**

The triple suicide bombing of Firdos Square in Baghdad on October 24, 2005 is an important example of suicide terrorism from Iraq. It shows terrorists actually executing an attack and also manufacturing powerful image munitions. In Iraq itself, Firdos Square and specifically the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels, have increasingly become known, according to Kirk Semple, as ‘symbols of the foreign presence in Iraq.’<sup>450</sup> It is thus not surprising that this ‘place’ was specifically targeted by a coordinated suicide bombing. Firdos Square was also a centre of high media activity during the 2003 Iraq War – it was where the statue of Saddam Hussein had been pulled down – and the site of the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels where many Western journalists based themselves during the first phases of military operations and when reporting from Baghdad.

Firdos Square is thus a ‘place’ of familiarity for international news audiences because numerous news reports, filed by many different journalists, have the square as their backdrop. This familiarity with ‘place’ is important because it immediately

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<sup>450</sup> Kirk Semple, '3 Bombers Strike at Baghdad Hotels', *The New York Times*, 25 October 2005. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/25/international/middleeast/25iraq.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/25/international/middleeast/25iraq.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin). Accessed on: 12 May 2008, Unpaginated

frames these commentaries for news audiences. These commentaries are framed as dispatches directly from the conflict theatre rather than as dispatches from neighbouring neutral territories. By attacking Firdos Square with suicide bombers the terrorists were guaranteeing themselves mass media coverage. All of the elements needed to transform a terrorist attack from an isolated incident into a media spectacle were already set-up in the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels. When the first of three coordinated suicide attacks exploded the media were able to respond immediately to the situation and report on the events as they were happening.

The triple suicide bombing at Firdos Square – which has yielded a number of powerful image munitions – unfolded in a staged sequence. When the first suicide bomber exploded the attention of journalists in the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels was immediately caught. While the journalists were still reeling from the first attack a second suicide bomber struck causing even more confusion. This time, however, the cameras were already filming and caught on camera the moment of the bomber's detonation. Then, while cameras were trained on the sites of the first and second suicide bombings a cement mixer broke through the perimeter of the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels. International audiences and journalists watched the cement mixer as it got caught up in the barbed wire fencing protecting the main entrances of the hotels and as the bomber then blew himself up.

This coordinated suicide bombing has been singled out (along with The Canal Hotel bombing) for discussion, over other acts of suicide terrorism which have rocked Iraq since the war in 2003, because it was played out through the media in real-time rather than reported after the fact. The Firdos Square bombings were almost a textbook example, like September 11<sup>th</sup>, of how to commit a coordinated suicide bombing: Firdos Square and the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels were symbolically powerful; the terror attacks were audacious and 'spectacular' (even though the third suicide bomber failed to fully break the perimeter of the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels); and the international media were also present, ready to mediate the attack. These suicide attacks were perpetrated more for their symbolic impact – designed specifically for image warfare – rather than for their capacity to maim and kill large numbers. The media, able to report on it while it was still happening, thus

participated in the manufacture of a reality effect, rather than merely reporting on the chaotic aftermath of the three suicide bombings.

July 7, 2005 was when something which New York and Washington D.C. had already experienced, finally struck London. The capital was no stranger to bombings – having already survived the Blitz (something journalists made frequent reference to in the immediate aftermath of the bombings) and also IRA bombing campaigns. However, suicide terrorism was a completely new phenomenon. The London Bombings confirmed that the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were not just an isolated incident but part of a wider Al Qaeda strategy to deploy suicide bombers in the West and to manufacture ‘spectacular’ and powerful image munitions for immediate circulation by the media.

July 7<sup>th</sup> was the day after London had won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games. It was also just after the Live 8 Concerts had taken place and the first full day of the 31<sup>st</sup> G8 Summit at the Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. Britain was, therefore, already the focus of much of the world’s media and, with hindsight, it makes perfect sense that suicide bombers would choose July 7<sup>th</sup> to attack London. It was the perfect opportunity for Al Qaeda to hijack the news media, disrupt the G8 Summit and also divert attention away from the recent international focus on the 2012 Olympics and poverty and instead refocus attention back on the war on terror.

The four coordinated suicide attacks on 7/7 were planned to cause maximum damage and destruction to the London Underground and maximum chaos for commuters. This is why the bombers struck during the morning rush hour. Three of the four bombers detonated themselves within seconds of each other at 8.50am (presumably the bombers had earlier synchronized their watches). The first bomber, Shehzad Tanweer, hit an eastbound Circle Line train travelling between Liverpool Street and Aldgate Station. The second bomber, Mohammad Sidique Khan, hit a westbound Circle Line train which was departing Edgware Road for Paddington Station. The third bomber, Germaine Lindsay (a Jamaican born Muslim convert) hit a southbound Piccadilly Line train travelling between King’s Cross St. Pancras and Russell Square Station. The fourth bomber, Hasib Hussain, was originally supposed to hit a Northern Line train but on the morning of July 7, 2005 the Northern Line was

temporarily suspended. Instead Hussain hit a number 30 red double-decker bus, at 09.47am, in Tavistock Square.<sup>451</sup>

During the planning stages of the London Bombings the bombers would have been aware of the fact that, in contrast to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, in choosing to target the London Underground system there would be no media coverage directly from the scenes of the explosions. Therefore, no powerful image munitions of the attacks themselves would exist. However, there would be powerful image munitions of the aftermath of the bombings. This runs counter to the other examples of suicide terrorism which I have already discussed, where media coverage directly from the bombing scenes has been a key concern for Al Qaeda. Julian Stallabrass has argued that the London 'bombings were not meant primarily to create images, but to spread the terror of living burial among the city's populace.'<sup>452</sup> The bombers were aware that the media would be able to get to the ground level of the scenes quickly and also that it would take time for survivors to start emerging from the London Underground. They calculated that the media would instead be able to report on the walking wounded as they emerged from the exits of London Underground stations. Two particular image munitions showing these were: firstly, a picture of Davina Turrell with an emergency burns pack on her face with a concerned man (Paul Dadge) guiding her away from the scene; secondly, an image of a man with a bloodied and bandaged face being led to an ambulance by Paramedics. This man was later identified as John Tulloch, a Professor in the School of Social Sciences and Law at Brunel University who has since been vocal against certain appropriations of his image. He has also written a book about his experiences of the London Bombings.<sup>453</sup>

What the London Bombers had not factored into their planning, and something which has ultimately worked in their favour, was the fact that many London Underground commuters had camera-phones and, like Adam Stacey,<sup>454</sup> took pictures

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<sup>451</sup> See House of Commons, 'Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005'. Available at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc0506/hc10/1087/1087.pdf>. Accessed on 11 May 2006, pp. 1-41

<sup>452</sup> Julian Stallabrass, 'Spectacle and Terror', *New Left Review* (2006), p. 4

<sup>453</sup> See John Tulloch, *One Day in July: Experiencing 7/7* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2006)

<sup>454</sup> Reading, 'The Global and the Mobile', p. 8

and videos of the scenes and then circulated this User Generated Content (UGC) to newsrooms to be circulated internationally. The advent of camera-phones now means that anyone with access to this technology can potentially now become a media actor and produce a powerful image munition which they can then send immediately into a news broadcaster for circulation. This is a significant example of 'sousveillance.'<sup>455</sup> Sousveillance has since become an important dimension in the rhizomatic media world because the advent of new media technologies and the 'multi-directional flows'<sup>456</sup> of information and images now means that ordinary citizens are today not just witnesses but reporters of events – citizen journalists. In Douglas Kellner's phrase, the UGC footage brought a "you are there" drama to the July 7<sup>th</sup> spectacle.<sup>457</sup> The camera-phone footage has since been widely circulated and one particular image showing passengers making their way in an orderly fashion through the dark, smoke-filled tunnels and to the surface became the front cover of Crispin Black's book *7-7 The London Bombings: What Went Wrong?*<sup>458</sup>

Hasib Hussain – who bombed the number 30 red double-decker bus, at 9.47am, in Tavistock Square – unintentionally, with his last minute change of target, manufactured a powerful image munition of a bombed bus which has since become a metonym for the London Bombings. This particular bombing is proof of just how adaptable suicide bombers can be when they are faced with real-time challenges that cannot be factored into their original plans. When Hussain realized that the Northern Line was temporarily suspended he quickly adapted his plan in order to successfully carry out his bombing. He targeted the next available mode of public transport. This last minute change of plan, coupled with the fifty seven minute delay between the first wave of attacks and his suicide bombing, worked in Al Qaeda's favour and had an impact on the symbolism and the media afterlife of the London Bombings. The bus was above ground and the media were able to report and to circulate footage

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<sup>455</sup> 'Sousveillance (roughly French for oversight) is the opposite of surveillance (roughly French for oversight).' See Steve Mann, 'Secrecy, No Privacy, May Be the True Cause of Terrorism', 2002. Available at: <http://wearingcam.org/sousveillance.html>. Accessed on 8 February 2009, Unpaginated, Steve Mann, Jason Nolan, and Barry Wellman, 'Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments'. *Surveillance & Society* 1, no. 3 (2003): pp. 331-55 and Steve Mann, "'Sousveillance": Inverse Surveillance in Multimedia Imaging'. *MM'04* (New York, NJ, 10-16 October 2004), pp. 620-27

<sup>456</sup> Thussu, 'Mapping Global Media Flow and Contra-Flow', p. 12

<sup>457</sup> Kellner, *Media Spectacle*, p. 28 and see Reading, 'The Global and the Mobile'

<sup>458</sup> See Crispin Black, *7-7: What Went Wrong?* (London: Gibson Square, 2005)



directly from the scene (as in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks). In reporting from the scene, a 'place' of focus for journalists on the ground and for news audiences at home was immediately established. In the aftermath of the attacks, the number 30 red double-decker bus in Tavistock Square became the backdrop of many news reports. In the weeks following the attacks, 7/7 continued to be framed in the media through the use of the image muniton of the bombed number 30 red double-decker bus.

On July 21<sup>st</sup> another British based Al Qaeda cell launched what was planned to be another 'spectacular' coordinated series of suicide attacks against London – thankfully though the five would-be suicide bombers bombs failed to explode. Later, after analysis, it was determined that all the bombs had failed to detonate correctly because the bomb maker had used faulty detonators. But each bomb contained enough explosives to cause massive damage and potentially maim and kill many casualties. Muktar Said Ibrahim, Yasin Hassan Omar, Hussein Osman, Ranzi Mohammed and Mafo Asiedu wanted to play on the horror of commuters being buried alive and thus strike fear into the hearts of Londoners. They targeted trains at Shepherd's Bush, Warren Street, Oval Station and a bus on the Hackney Road. The fact that another coordinated suicide bombing was able to be planned and executed (even though the bombs did not detonate properly) so soon after 7/7, was a major embarrassment for MI5 and the London Metropolitan Police.

### **The July 7<sup>th</sup> Suicide Video Wills**

In the weeks and months following the London Bombings media interest in the attacks began to fall away. But Al Qaeda has released suicide video wills – counter-image munitions – featuring the London Bombers in order to raise the London Bombings back up the international news agenda. These suicide video wills were also a way of framing the London Bombings in terms of wider political contexts, such as the ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine.

The first video will featured Mohammed Siddique Khan, the so called ringleader of the London bombers, and was released on September 1, 2005. This video was the first opportunity for audiences to see one of the London bombers (other than in

grainy CCTV footage or old pictures) and to hear their reasons for the attacks. In his video statement Khan assumed the role of both leader and spokesman for the London bombers. Stylistically there is a strong parallel between his address and the addresses made by other leaders, like President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and Osama bin Laden (see Chapter Three). Stylistically Khan's address is similar because he delivers his statement in a set piece to camera thus making it appear as though Khan is addressing audience members individually.

The 'place' where this suicide video will be filmed is anonymous. Khan appears sitting in front of a crimson, white and black horizontal striped patterned wall covering. Symbolically Khan's video will make a direct visual connection with the Arab-Israeli issue. He appears wearing a red and white check keffiyeh (similar to the black and white check keffiyeh's worn by Yasser Arafat). The sophistication of this video will be evidenced by the fact that Khan's statement has been edited together with footage of Al Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Zawahiri's own statement is made in front of a generic brown sheeting background (similar to that in many bin Laden videos) and he has an AK-47 over his right shoulder (again similar to bin Laden). The presence of the AK-47 in this video is again as a flag for Al Qaeda.

Khan's statement also shows that he is acutely aware of the way in which the Western media will have already framed him. He says: 'I'm sure by now the media's painted a suitable picture of me, this predictable propaganda machine will naturally try to put a spin on things to suit the government and to scare the masses into conforming to their power and wealth-obsessed agendas.'<sup>459</sup> Khan's statement also shows that he is politically savvy and fully aware of the globalized nature of the media because he immediately frames his action, and the actions of the other London bombers, in terms of the wider struggle between Islam and the West rather than limiting their struggle to just Britain:

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<sup>459</sup> Mohammad Sidique Khan, London Bomber: Text in Full, *BBC News*, 01 September 2005. Available at: <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>. Accessed on 30 May 2008, Unpaginated

I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam – obedience to the one true God, Allah, and following the footsteps of the final prophet and messenger Muhammad... This is how our ethical stances are dictated. Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetrate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation.<sup>460</sup>

With this statement Khan is addressing two distinct audiences: to Western audiences his words are meant as a threat; to the 'global ummah' his words are meant to mobilize and radicalize. This suicide video will has been widely circulated since its release and it has also produced a powerful counter-image munition of Khan which has disrupted the circulation of the grainy CCTV footage of the London bombers at Luton station on the morning of July 7<sup>th</sup>. With this suicide video will Al Qaeda have successfully been able to reinsert Khan back into the current news-cycle.

The next battle over 7/7 began on the eve of the first anniversary of the London bombings (July 6, 2006) when another video will, or counter-image munition, was released to the media by Al Qaeda featuring Shehzad Tanweer, one of the other London bombers. Tanweer's statement is filled with Al Qaeda rhetoric: 'What you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a string of attacks that will continue and become stronger... until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq.'<sup>461</sup> Like Khan's earlier video, Tanweer's video will was also constructed as an address to two distinct audiences: Western infidels and the 'global ummah'. Stylistically and symbolically this video will is also similar to Khan's suicide video will. Tanweer delivers his statement in a set piece to camera. Tanweer also appears sitting in front of a crimson, white and black horizontal striped wall covering (this background looks exactly like the wall covering in the background of the earlier Khan video) and like Khan he is wearing a red and white check keffiyeh. The visual continuities between Khan and Tanweer's suicide video wills mean that 'place' (although anonymous in

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<sup>460</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>461</sup> Shehzad Tanweer, Video of 7 July Bomber Released, *BBC News*, 06 July 2006. Available at: <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5154714.stm>. Accessed on 30 May 2008, Unpaginated

the Khan video) after the release of the Tanweer video becomes important – this crimson, white and black background has become the London bomber's equivalent to bin Laden's cave background or the American President's Oval Office or the British Prime Minister's 10 Downing Street. The presence of the red and white check keffiyeh in both videos also clearly helps to frame both statements within an international context, specifically the Arab-Israeli issue. The Tanweer suicide video will is also edited together with a video message from al-Zawahri and with footage purportedly showing Al Qaeda fighters celebrating after hearing news of the 7/7 bombings.

The release of Tanweer's suicide video will was timed to coincide with the first anniversary of the London bombings, to take control the news agenda, divert attention away from official remembrance ceremonies and an address by Prime Minister Blair about 7/7, and to enable Al Qaeda to hijack the first anniversary of the July 7<sup>th</sup> attacks. It is further evidence that Al Qaeda has a sophisticated understanding of the new image theatre of war.

To conclude, paraphrasing Hill, following the release of the Tanweer video will it may be the case that the other London bombers have recorded their own suicide video wills which are awaiting their own release date and opportunity to hijack the news agenda.<sup>462</sup> In the future maybe suicide video wills, or counter-image munitions, by Lindsay and Hussain will also be released. But the image of the suicide bomber produced by news footage and video wills also circulates uncontrollably. It is to this circulation and proliferation that I now turn.

### **Circulating Suicide Terrorism Footage**

This section will explore the remediation of footage of suicide terrorism beyond news networks and jihadi internet propaganda. In the new image theatre of war such footage is remediated and copied by varied individuals and groups with divergent motivations, and appearing across multiple media platforms testament to the uncontrollability of the spectacle of war.

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<sup>462</sup> Hill, 'The Bin Laden Tapes', p. 45

For instance, political cartoonists have made a number of political interventions that attempt to demonstrate the ridiculousness of suicide terrorism. I will here examine six cartoons or image munitions, the first two of which formed part of the 2005 Danish cartoon controversy which has been the subject of much international political, media and academic debate and commentary. I will firstly though discuss some of the key events which contributed to these cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad becoming a global controversy. The origins of the Danish cartoon controversy lie with a children's book by Kåre Bluitgen called *Koranen og profeten Muhammeds liv (The Qur'an and the Life of the Prophet Mohammad)*. This book was written as an introduction for children to both the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Mohammad. Bluitgen initially struggled to find someone willing to illustrate his book and in the end he found an illustrator who would only do so anonymously. This reluctance to draw the Prophet Mohammad is closely linked with Islamic doctrine for which His greatness cannot be captured within an image. There is also a noted history of strong reaction to controversial representations of Islam. In 1988, Salman Rushdie published the novel *The Satanic Verses* and, in 1989, in response to the book's publication, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* against Rushdie and anyone associated with the book. On November 2, 2005 Theo van Gogh, the director of the film *Submission*, was murdered in Amsterdam by Mohammed Bouyeri a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim. Van Gogh's film controversially featured a scene where Koranic verses appear on the bare flesh of a woman. It was against this backdrop that Flemming Rose editor of the Danish daily newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* responded to Bluitgen's difficulties to find an illustrator and commissioned cartoonists to draw images of the Prophet Mohammad. In an article for *The Washington Post*, Rose described his intentions:

I commissioned the cartoons in response to several incidents of self-censorship in Europe caused by widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues related to Islam. And I still believe that this is a topic that we Europeans must confront, challenging moderate Muslims to speak out. The idea was not to provoke gratuitously – and we certainly didn't intend to trigger violent demonstrations throughout the Muslim world. Our goal was simply to push self-imposed limits on expression that seemed to be closing in tighter....At the end of September, a Danish stand-up comedian said in an interview with *Jyllands-Posten* that he had no problem urinating on the Bible in front of the camera, but he dared not do the same thing with the Koran.

This was the culmination of a series of disturbing instances of self-censorship.<sup>463</sup>

On September 30, 2005 twelve cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad were published in the newspaper, soon afterwards a number of Danish Imams complained about the publication of the cartoons and on October 19, 2005 protesters gathered outside *Jyllands-Posten's* offices. On October 17, 2005 the Egyptian newspaper *El Fayr* published an article denouncing the Prophet Mohammad cartoons and it also reprinted six of them, however, this article and the reprinting of some of the Prophet cartoons were not subject to an international backlash. On October 19, 2005 the Ambassadors of ten Muslim countries requested a meeting with Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister, to discuss the Prophet cartoons but Rasmussen declined to meet with them. In October 2005 Muslim groups in Denmark also lodged a legal complaint against *Jyllands-Posten*, citing blasphemy, but their complaint was dismissed. This illustrates how the Prophet cartoons were not immediately controversial in fact there was a delay between their publication and the Danish Imams complaining about them and the subsequent chain of events being set in motion which would result in a full blown international controversy. Also, up until this point the controversy surrounding the Prophet cartoons was largely contained within Denmark.

However, in November and December 2005 a delegation of Danish Imams set off on a tour of the Middle East with a forty three page document ('Dossier About Championing the Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him') which included the twelve Prophet Mohammad cartoons, examples of anti-Muslim hate mail, a television interview with Ms. Ayaan Hirsi Ali a Danish MP and three other images: First, a cartoon which portrays the Prophet Mohammad as a demonic pedophile – an image which was clearly meant to cause insult to Muslims. Second, an image showing a Muslim man being mounted by a dog whilst praying – an image which was probably shot spontaneously and finally, an image of a contestant in a French

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<sup>463</sup> Flemming Rose, 'Why I Published Those Cartoons', *The Washington Post*, 19 February 2006. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/17/AR2006021702499.html>. Accessed on 17 April 2009, Unpaginated

pig-squealing contest accompanied by the caption 'Here is the real image of Mohammad'. This particular image of a contestant at a French pig-squealing contest is further evidence of the uncontrollability of images in a rhizomatic media system. The fact that this image was taken to document a French pig-squealing contest, it was then picked up and paired with the caption 'Here is the real image of Mohammad' – which immediately transformed it into a controversial image about the Prophet Mohammad – and it was then circulated and was finally inserted into the Danish Imams forty three page document about the Prophet Mohammad cartoons. It was this tour and this document which helped to transform the cartoon controversy from a controversy which was largely contained within Denmark into an international controversy. This is evidenced by the fact that on January 26, 2006 Saudi Arabia recalled its Ambassador from Denmark and called for a boycotting of Danish products. In response, on January 29, 2006 *Jyllands-Posten* printed a statement again defending its decision to publish the Prophet Mohammad cartoons and the publication of this statement was quickly met by the burning of Danish flags in Palestine. On February 2, 2006 Prime Minister Rasmussen appeared on the Saudi Arabian news channel Al-Arabiya in an attempt to calm the situation. Also, on February 2, 2006 the Jordanian newspaper *Al-Shihan* reprinted the twelve Prophet Mohammad cartoons and the editor was quickly sacked. On February 3, 2006 the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* printed a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammad made of the words 'I must not draw Muhammad' – a show of support for *Jyllands-Posten's* decision to publish the Prophet Mohammad cartoons and for freedom of expression.<sup>464</sup>

A new controversial chapter in the Danish cartoon controversy came to light around the time of the first anniversary of the publication of the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten*. A video was released which showed young members of the Danish People's Party (DPP), an anti-immigration party, drawing satirical images of the Prophet Mohammad. One of the cartoon images featured in this video depicts a camel with

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<sup>464</sup> See 'Timeline: The Muhammad Cartoons'. *The Times*, 06/02/2006 2006, Unpaginated. See also Tariq Modood, Randell Hansen, Erik Bleich, Brendan O'Leary, and Joseph H. Carens, 'The Danish Cartoon Affair: Free Speech, Racism, Islamism, and Integration'. *International Migration* 44, no. 5 (2006), pp. 3-62. Sune Laegaard, 'The Cartoon Controversy: Offence, Identity, Oppression?' *Political Studies* 55, no. 3 (2007), pp. 481-99 and Shawn Powers, 'Examining the Danish Cartoon Affair: Mediatized Cross-Cultural Tensions?' *Media, War & Conflict* 1, no. 3 (2008), pp. 339-59

the head of the Prophet and with beer cans for humps – offensive not only for its depiction of the Prophet, but also for its linking of the Prophet with alcohol (something which Islam strictly forbids).<sup>465</sup> This video and the images featured in it are further evidence of the uncontrollability of images and the proliferation of images into new and surprising contexts in the information age. The Danish cartoon controversy also shows how cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad have been deployed by all sides: by *Jyllands-Posten* in the name of freedom of expression, by Danish Imams to promote the cartoon controversy in the Middle East and by members of the DPP in an attempt to denigrate Muslims. The Danish cartoon controversy has been the subject of much academic debate. For example in 2006 the journal *International Migration* published a debate between Tariq Modood, Randall Hansen, Erik Bleich, Brendan O’Leary and Joseph H. Carens about whether *Jyllands-Posten* should or should not have published the Prophet Mohammad cartoons.<sup>466</sup> I will now turn to discuss two of the twelve Prophet cartoons commissioned by Fleming Rose.

Two of the image munitions from *Jyllands-Posten* establish a connection between the image of the Prophet Mohammad and suicide terrorism. The first, by Kurt Westergaard, is a headshot of the Prophet Mohammad with a bomb as his turban. This cartoon has frequently been misinterpreted. It does not depict the Prophet Mohammad as a suicide bomber but it is meant to be a wider statement about militant jihadism. However, Kurt Westergaard was clearly aware of the confrontational nature of his choice of composition and also the possibility that his cartoon’s meaning would become lost in translation. This is also evidenced by the fact that in February 2008 Westergaard was the subject of a foiled assassination plot when three men of North African origin were arrested by Danish police. In response, *Jyllands-Posten* decided to reprint Westergaards controversial Prophet Mohammad cartoon.

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<sup>465</sup> See Stephen Castle, 'Anti-Muslim Video Sparks New Outrage against Denmark'. *The Independent*, 10 October 2006. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/antimuslim-video-sparks-new-outrage-against-denmark-419392.html>. Accessed on 18 February 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>466</sup> Modood, Hansen, Bleich, O’Leary, and Carens, 'The Danish Cartoon Affair', pp. 3-62. See also Laegaard, 'The Cartoon Controversy', pp. 481-99 and Powers, 'Examining the Danish Cartoon Affair', pp. 339-59



The second cartoon, by Jens-Julius, depicts the Prophet Mohammad standing on a cloud at the entrance to Heaven. On the same cloud are four suicide bombers, stood in a line, looking disappointed. Having been promised seventy-two virgins when they get to heaven they are instead met by the Prophet announcing: ‘STOP STOP we have run out of virgins!’ This cartoon has also frequently been misinterpreted. It should not be read as suggesting the sanctioning of suicide terrorism but as a comment on the farcical reward for those men willing to blow themselves up in the name of Allah.

These are just two examples of political cartoonists representing suicide bombing, but those which have not featured the Prophet Mohammad have not attracted international controversy. However, they all present a similar satirical view of suicide terrorism. For instance, a cartoon by Karsten Schley shows a taxi with the number plate ‘Tel Aviv’ parked up at the side of the road with the driver stood in front, talking to a potential passenger, the former wearing a suicide bomber belt. The caption reads: ‘No, thanks. I’ll take a bus.’ This cartoon is a clear statement about the indiscriminate nature of suicide attacks.

Another, by Canary Pete, depicts a customer and a shop assistant in front of a full length mirror in a gent’s outfitter. The scene is fairly ordinary except that the customer is wearing a suicide bomber belt. The caption reads: ‘This model really sells like hot cakes.’ Canary Pete, with this cartoon, is showing how suicide terrorism is becoming increasingly popular, almost an industry in itself, in certain parts of the Arab world. Another Canary Pete cartoon is set on a bus and shows two men (one sitting behind the other). The man sitting in front is turning back and talking to the man sat immediately behind him and who is wearing a suicide bomber vest. The caption reads: ‘Are you sure that this bus does not go all the way to Jerusalem?’ The suicide bombers replies: ‘Yep.’ This cartoon, like the first cartoon, draws attention to the fact that suicide bombers intentionally target places where they can maximise civilian casualties, like buses.

A fourth cartoon, by Chris Grosz, shows a group of coalition soldiers in an observation post watching a group of men wearing suicide bomber vests walking under a banner which reads ‘Martyr Brigade’. The caption says: ‘Oh...Oh I think

we've found their weapons of mass destruction.' Grosz here is drawing attention to the fact that the real weapons of mass destruction, in the war on terror, are not nuclear, biological or chemical weapons but rather suicide bombers and their weaponized bodies.

A number of other interventions have also been made about suicide terrorism. The interventions show that suicide terrorism has indeed been remediated by groups and individuals for a variety of different reasons. One image circulating on the internet for a number of years features a Palestinian baby boy (maybe 18 months old) dressed up as a suicide bomber, with red wires leading to a fake suicide bomber belt around his waist, and a red Hamas bandana on his head. This image has been widely condemned because it shows the staged initiation of a child into a martyr brigade; it is similarly condemned because it suggests that his innocence has been tainted by his association with suicide terrorism. This image has come to embody the lifelong Palestinian struggle.<sup>467</sup> Another image circulating on the internet shows a boy wearing a suicide bomber Halloween costume. This costume is comprised of two red rectangular blocks labelled TNT strapped to his chest and a detonator switch, with a black wire leading back to the suicide bomber-belt, in his right hand. The boy is also shown wearing an Islamic style keffiyeh. This image is particularly interesting because Halloween today is mainly about turning scary mythical figures like ghosts, witches and horror film characters into objects of comedy-horror through the wearing of comedy-horror costumes by children out trick-or-treating, or by adults at Halloween themed fancy dress parties. The suicide bomber comedy-horror costume is a way for people to turn the credible threat of suicide terrorism, during Halloween, into a comedy-horror figure.

In January 2005, an unauthorized viral advert for *Volkswagen* cars appeared on the internet. As Stephen Brook explains, it 'shows a man hopping into a car wearing the distinctive check scarf made famous by the late Yasser Arafat. He drives around the city before blowing himself up – apparently killing himself but leaving the car intact

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<sup>467</sup> See Mark Robson, 'The Baby Bomber'. *Journal of Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2004), pp. 63-76

outside a restaurant. Then the slogan, “Polo: small but tough”, appears.’<sup>468</sup> *Volkswagen*, according to Brook, was eventually able to distance itself from ‘the spoof ad – which was made by London-based advertising creatives Lee Ford and Dan Brooks for their show reel but was emailed around the world – creating a public relations headache for the German car maker.’<sup>469</sup>

In 2008, a free video game – developed by an anonymous man in Houston, Texas – appeared on the internet, featuring, as Matthew Moore explains, ‘an Arab-looking cartoon man who players direct along a busy street. Points are awarded for every man, woman and child who dies when the bomber detonates the hidden grenades strapped to his body.’<sup>470</sup> The video game was immediately criticised by the families of victims of suicide bombings. The games creator responded, according to Moore, by stating that his intention ‘was to satirise rather than celebrate terrorism.’<sup>471</sup>

A number of artistic interventions about suicide terrorism have also been made. The artist Simon Tyszko has produced *Suicide Bomber Barbie* a Barbie doll with a suicide bomber-belt around her waist and a detonator switch in her right hand, with wires leading directly to the bomber-belt.<sup>472</sup> Tyszko has taken the Barbie Doll, a popular girls toy for over fifty years (famous for such dolls as Southern Belle Barbie and Marilyn Monroe Barbie, dolls that little girls can aspire to), and linked her with suicide terrorism.

In 2004, suicide terrorism was again the subject of artistic intervention, when Zvi Mazel, the Israeli Ambassador to Sweden attacked an art installation at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm. The installation entitled *Snow White and The*

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<sup>468</sup> Stephen Brook, 'Spoof Suicide Bomber Ad Sparks Global Row', *The Guardian*, 20 January 2005. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2005/jan/20/media.newmedia>. Accessed on 5 February 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>469</sup> Stephen Brook, 'Spoofers to Apologize for VW Suicide Bomber Ad', *The Guardian*, 31 January 2005. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/jan/31/newmedia.advertising/print>. Accessed on 16 June 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>470</sup> Matthew Moore, 'Suicide Bomber Video Game Condemned by Terror Victims', *The Telegraph*, 06 November 2008. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/3388318/Suicide-bomber-video-game-condemned-by-terror-victims.html>. Accessed on 8 March 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>472</sup> Suicide Bomber Barbie. Available at: <http://www.theculture.net/barbie/index.html>. Accessed on 08 March 2009

*Madness of Truth* by the Israeli-born Swedish composer Dror Feiler and his Swedish artist wife Gunilla Sköld-Feiler consisted of a long rectangular pool filled with red coloured water (representing blood). Floating around in this pool was a little white boat named 'Snow White' and sitting on this boat was a picture of the sixth female Palestinian suicide bomber, Hanadi Jaradat, who had blown herself up on October 4, 2003 inside the Maxim restaurant in Haifa, Israel. Accompanying the installation was Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata 199, *Mein Herze Schwimmt im Blut (My Heart Swims in Blood)*, playing in a loop in the background. Also, accompanying the installation was a reworking of the narrator's opening words from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*:

**Once upon a time in the middle of winter**

For the June 12 deaths of her brother, and her cousin

**and three drops of blood fell**

She was also a woman

**as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony**

Seemingly innocent with universal non-violent character, less suspicious of intentions

**and the red looked beautiful upon the white**

The murderer will yet pay the price and we will not be the only ones who are crying

**like a weed in her heart until she had no peace day and night**

Hanadi Jaradat was a 29-year-old lawyer

**I will run away into the wild forest, and never come home again**

Before the engagement took place, he was killed in an encounter with the Israeli security forces

**and she ran over sharp stones and through thorns**

She said: Your blood will not have been shed in vain

**and was about to pierce Snow White's innocent heart**

She was hospitalized, prostrate with grief, after witnessing the shootings

**The wild beasts will soon have devoured you**

After his death, she became the breadwinner and she devoted herself solely to that goal

**"Yes", said Snow White, "with all my heart"**

Weeping bitterly, she added "If our nation cannot realize its dream and the goals of the victims, and live in freedom and dignity, then let the whole world be erased"

**Run away, then, you poor child**

She secretly crossed into Israel, charged into a Haifa restaurant, shot a security guard, blew herself up and murdered 19 innocent civilians

**as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony**

And many people are indeed crying: the Zer Aviv family, the Almog family, and all the relatives and friends of the dead and the wounded

**and the red looked beautiful upon the white.**<sup>473</sup>

Zvi Mazel attacked the installation because he saw it as being anti-Semitic and as glorifying suicide terrorism. The artists have, however, rejected this interpretation claiming that the installation is essentially about tolerance.

Suicide terrorism has also been the subject of commercial interventions. In October 2007, an episode of *South Park* called 'Imaginationland – Episode 1' featured a scene showing the coordinated suicide bombing of Imaginationland. The bombings began when the Mayor of Imaginationland introduced Stan, Kyle, Cartman, Kenny and Butters to the waiting crowd made up of iconic figures from the imaginations of children: *Santa*, *Ronald McDonald*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Cheetara* and *Snarf* (from *ThunderCats*), a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle*, *Mario* (the Italian-American plumber from *Nintendo* video games) and a host of other characters, past and present.<sup>474</sup> Thus again reflecting the indiscriminate nature of suicide terrorism.

In 2007, Chris Morris (creator of the highly controversial *The Day Today* and *Brass Eye* series of satirical programmes about: animals, drugs, science, sex, crime, decline and paedophilia) announced that he was 'preparing to demolish one last comic taboo – suicide bombers.'<sup>475</sup> The title of this film is *Four Lions* and it is about a group of Pakistani suicide bombers, aged between 17 and 38, living in Britain.<sup>476</sup> Cahal Milmo, reporting in *The Independent*, has discussed how Morris 'told an audience... [at Bournemouth University] that he wanted to make "the comedy version of United 93"'<sup>477</sup> Initially this idea may seem like a pretty unsympathetic plan by Morris. However, Morris has justified his plans by arguing that he seeks 'to do for Islamic terrorism what Dad's Army, the classic BBC comedy, did for the Nazis by showing

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<sup>473</sup> Snow White and the Madness of Truth, Available at: [http://backspin.typepad.com/backspin/2004/01/text\\_of\\_swedish.html](http://backspin.typepad.com/backspin/2004/01/text_of_swedish.html). Accessed on 08 March 2009

<sup>474</sup> A comprehensive list of the citizens of 'Imaginationland'. Available at: <http://www.spscriptorium.com/Season11/ImaginationlandGuests.html>. Accessed on 10 February 2009

<sup>475</sup> Cahal Milmo, 'Now Chris Morris Sees the Funny Side of Suicide Bombers', *The Independent*, 17 March 2007. Available at: <http://license.icopyright.net/user/viewFreeUse.act?fuid=MjYwOTE4OA%3D%3D>. Accessed on 5 February 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

them as “scary but also ridiculous”.<sup>478</sup> *Four Lions* was premiered at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival in January and received mixed reviews. Kaleem Aftab for *The Independent* wrote: ‘Morris does a great job of balancing poignancy and comedy in a hard-hitting finale that shows a humanity and observational brilliance.... In doing so he exposes a myth of terrorist bombers being trained assassins but instead exposes them as being confused young men.’<sup>479</sup> While Jeremy Kay for *The Guardian* wrote: ‘It takes serious guts to poke fun at terrorists, sheer idiots or not.... So for this, Morris must be applauded as he tries to shed some light on an aspect of terror – the farcical cock-ups – that has slipped through the wall-to-wall media coverage of the past decade.’<sup>480</sup> However, Kay believes that ‘the switching back and forth from jihadi thriller to farce suggests *Four Lions* doesn’t really know what it wants to be.’<sup>481</sup> The film’s UK premiere was held at the Bradford International Film Festival in March 2010 and it is set for a nationwide release in the UK in May 2010.

These image remediations reveal the uncontrollable and unpredictable nature of the spectacle of suicide terrorism in the information age. They also show how the liberation of information and images from the control of top-down information management systems (concerned with controlling and censoring the flow of information and images) allows suicide terrorism footage to now circulate globally, beyond the mainstream media and jihadi internet propaganda: thus bringing them to the attention of new audiences. The free floating character of suicide terrorism image munitions also allows people to come into contact with suicide terrorism in surprising new places; for example, online in games and email jokes (a picture of a baby suicide bomber, a suicide bomber Halloween costume and an unofficial *Volkswagen* viral advert), in art galleries (*Suicide Bomber Barbie* and *Snow White and The Madness of Truth*), on the television screen in *South Park* and on the cinema

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<sup>478</sup> Richard Brooks, 'Satirist Turns Terrorists into Dad's Army', *The Times*, 13 January 2008. Available at:

[http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/film/articles3177654.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/articles3177654.ece).

Accessed on 5 February 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>479</sup> Kaleem Aftab, 'First Night: *Four Lions*, Sundance Film Festival'. *The Independent*, 25 January 2010. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/reviews/first-night-four-lions-sundance-film-festival-1877852.html>. Accessed on 13 April 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>480</sup> Jeremy Kay, 'Chris Morris's *Four Lions*: A Mixed Dish That Fails to Satisfy'. *The Guardian*, 25 January 2010. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/jan/25/four-lions-chris-morris>. Accessed on 13 April 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

screen in *Four Lions*. The ability of new media actors to pick up, play with the context of and deploy suicide image munitions with their own intentions that are entirely distinct from Al Qaeda's original objectives means that suicide terrorism footage can indeed no longer be controlled or censored following its initial dissemination. This is a lesson that is still to be learnt by both America and Britain in the war on terror, whilst Al Qaeda appears to have already learnt this important lesson. Instead of getting bogged down with trying to control their image munitions after their initial deployment Al Qaeda have focussed attention on making the biggest impact with their suicide terrorism image munitions.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the central role of suicide bombers in the new image warfare theatre of war. My discussion of Al Qaeda's suicide terrorism began by situating it in relation to techno-war, showing that Al Qaeda is fully aware that they cannot compete on traditional military terms against technologically superior military forces. In order to gain an advantage, they have instead weaponized their bodies, images and the media through their use of suicide terrorism. Attention then turned towards an examination of the symbolism and image munitions of suicide terrorism, with reference to the bombing of The Canal Hotel in Baghdad (the UN's headquarters in Iraq) on August 19, 2003. This discussion was then expanded into an examination of the coordinated September 11, 2001 terror attacks. The failure of *United Airlines Flight 93* to attack its target (the White House) was singled out specifically here because of its important role as a counter-image munition in the battle over 9/11 between the Bush administration and Al Qaeda and their counter-image munition suicide video wills.

Suicide terrorism, and its symbolism, was further explored with reference to the coordinated triple suicide bombing of Firdos Square in Baghdad on October 24, 2005 – a metonym for the continued presence, in Iraq, of coalition forces and a place where many international journalists were based. The introduction of suicide terrorism to the streets of Britain on July 7, 2005 (and the Failed London Bombings on July 21, 2005) were discussed with particular attention given to the symbolism and image munitions of both attacks. The battle over 7/7 between the Blair

government and Al Qaeda – the circulation of counter-image munitions of acts of heroism by the emergency services, ordinary members of the public, along with the Khan and Tanweer suicide video wills were discussed. Finally, a number of political, subversive, commercial and artistic interventions were explored. Revealing how the spectacle of suicide terrorism cannot be controlled because people other than governments and Al Qaeda now have the power to remediate suicide terrorism footage for their own purposes.

The next chapter will examine another feature of the new image warfare theatre of war: executions. I will explore the symbolism of hijackings, hostage-takings and hostage executions and how they are all sources of powerful image munitions. I will also discuss how, in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of Iraqis, the Bush administration mistakenly transformed the killing of Uday and Qusay Hussein into a media spectacle, producing damaging image munitions. Similarly, the capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein was also transformed into a series of misjudged media spectacles and damaging image munitions by the Bush administration and the new Iraqi government.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Executions**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapters One and Two I developed the theoretical part of this thesis, identifying the increasing uncontrollability of the circulation of images and how this has impacted on contemporary war. I then moved onto explore the empirical part of this thesis. In Chapter Three, I focussed on the production, circulation and remediation of ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ political communications made by President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and Osama bin Laden in the war on terror – all sources of image munitions. In Chapter Four, I moved onto examine how suicide terrorism is not just an important physical tactic for Al Qaeda in the war on terror but how it also contains a significant symbolic dimension that facilitates the production of powerful image munitions which can then be deployed in the war of images.

In this chapter I am interested in executions in the war on terror, another source of powerful image munitions. This discussion will, however, include an examination of three related though distinctive terrorist tactics which are each symbolically powerful: hijackings, hostage-takings and hostage executions. Hijackings and hostage-takings are tactics traditionally employed by terrorists so as to gain a media presence where a strong distinction is manufactured between us and them and so media interest is maintained for the duration of the crisis via the release of images and footage. These may be thought of as early image munition experiments. Hostage executions are a tactic also employed by terrorists to manufacture a strong media presence and emphasise the distinction between us and them, but they are also designed with the intention of producing and deploying sophisticated image munitions.

The chapter begins by situating executions historically with reference to pre-9/11 airplane hijackings, the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship hijacking, the hostage-taking and murder of Aldo Moro and the 1980s Beirut hostage crisis. In examining this recent

history I show the ever increasing sophistication of hijacking/hostage-taking visuals. I will then conceptualise hostage-taking and hostage execution with reference to ‘voluntary’ and ‘involuntary’ hostages and Jean Baudrillard’s discussion of ‘symbolic exchange’ in relation to hostages. I then turn to a lengthy discussion of four contemporary hostage situations – specifically Daniel Pearl, Nick Berg, Kenneth Bigley and Alan Johnston – showing how hostage image munitions have become increasingly sophisticated. However, although hostage executions appear to have now been abandoned in Iraq over fears that they may be counterproductive, the Johnston hostage-taking, in the Gaza Strip, offers strong evidence that these kinds of hostage-takings are still symbolically powerful. Such hostage-takings could still take place in Britain and are now even being referenced in popular culture. Hostage execution image munitions are also subject to uncontrollable and increasingly unpredictable circulation and this will be explored via a number of image remediations, produced by people with objectives that are totally distinct from Al Qaeda’s original intentions.

Attention will then shift to discuss the hunt for Uday, Qusay and Saddam Hussein. In turning these into image munitions, the Pentagon and the new Iraqi government made serious misjudgements in their attempts to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi public. The airing of Uday and Qusay Hussein death images produced a number of damaging image munitions which have since been picked up and used by Al Qaeda and also by new media actors with intentions that are distinct from both the Bush administration and Al Qaeda. Similarly, the transformation of the capture, trial and execution of Saddam Hussein into a series of media spectacles also produced a series of damaging image munitions which have been redeployed by Al Qaeda against the Bush administration and the new Iraqi government, and also reused by various new media actors who’s intentions are, again, distinct from those of both the Bush administration and Al Qaeda.

### **Hijackings and Hostage-takings in History**

Hijackings and hostage-takings are important terrorist strategies because, like suicide terrorism (see Chapter Four), they allow terrorists to gain a strategic advantage against conventional military forces and guarantee a strong media presence. The

important role of the media in communicating hijackings and hostage-takings is represented by the taking hostage of the Israeli Olympic team at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. The authorities failed to take into account the fact that there were televisions in the Olympic village and that the hostage-takers (members of Black September) were able to watch journalists reporting from the scene and so keep abreast of events taking place outside the compound, such as an attempt by West German authorities to storm the Olympic village. This event was also a potential turning point for terrorists as they drew important lessons from it, realizing that they could use the media to their advantage and manipulate it for their own purposes. To properly explore this issue a selection of historical cases will now be discussed, starting with airplane hijackings.

On September 11, 2001 four airplanes were transformed from hijack targets into spectacular kinetic weapons, changing the complex relationship between terrorists and airplanes. Prior to this airplanes were routinely hijacked. According to Luca Ricolfi:

From the 1950s to the late 1970s, air hijackings were frequent. Over 200 episodes have been counted in three decades, almost one a month, with peaks of almost one hijacking per week in 1969-72. Then, as of 1980, resort to this type of action started to fall, and almost completely ceased during the 1990s.<sup>482</sup>

During this period, rather than being hijacked and transformed into kinetic weapons airplanes were hijacked specifically because terrorists knew that such events on isolated runways produced good media spectacles and were good sources of images and footage and thus guaranteed mass media attention for the event and their particular cause. Brigitte L. Nacos has described the TWA aircraft hijacking of June 1985:

During the entire incident, the three networks [ABC, CBS, and NBC] opened most of their early evening broadcasts with the hijacking drama... The networks devoted an average of nearly two thirds of their entire evening broadcasts to the TWA spectacular.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Luca Ricolfi, 'Palestinians, 1981-2003', in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 101-102

<sup>483</sup> Brigitte L. Nacos, *Terrorism & the Media: From the Iran Hostage Crisis to the Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 56-57

She puts this high level of media coverage ultimately down ‘to an unprecedented degree of news management by the TWA hijackers and their allies in Beirut.’<sup>484</sup> The aim of pre-9/11 airplane hijacker’s was to stretch out their hijacking, maximise media attention and transform the event into an episodic event that would capture the attentions of the media, the authorities and news audiences for the duration of the hijacking. A hijacked airplane situated on an isolated runway also quickly becomes a powerful ‘place’ of focus and familiarity for news audiences because it is seen night after night on the news.

Violence, during pre-9/11 airplane hijackings, was often symbolic. This is because the hijackers had to negotiate a fine balance where violence was concerned. Airplane hijacking violence could easily get out of control and therefore escalate the crisis to such a degree that the authorities would be forced to storm the plane, thus ending the hijacking sooner than the terrorists would have wanted.

A real challenge for hijackers in such situations was to consistently provide the media with new dramatic stories and footage to refuel media interest in the ongoing crisis and therefore counter the somewhat monotonous situation of an airplane sitting on an isolated runway, while simultaneously avoiding escalating the crisis to the point where the plane would be stormed. One way in which hijackers achieved this was through the issuing of new threats of violence which in turn enabled the media to constantly keep updating their news-cycle and their news audiences with breaking news items.

Airplane hijackings were a central weapon in the military arsenal of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). This is emphasised by the fact that the PFLP’s founder George Habash, in 1970, in *Der Stern*, famously remarked: ‘When we hijack a plane it has more effect than if we kill a hundred Israelis in battle.’<sup>485</sup> Clearly, Habash saw airplane hijackings as having a powerful force multiplier effect

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<sup>484</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64

<sup>485</sup> Edmund L. Andrews, and John Kifner, 'George Habash, Palestinian Terrorist Tactician, Dies at 82'. *The New York Times*, 27 January 2008. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/world/middleeast/27habash.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/world/middleeast/27habash.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin). Accessed on 15 April 2008, Unpaginated

over Israel, a superior conventional military force. Hijacked airplane passengers and crew were, pre-9/11, also more valuable alive than dead to the terrorists (especially to the PFLP). After a hijacking had been concluded – because they were eyewitnesses – these passengers and crew could help stretch the media afterlife of a hijacking event with their testimonies, initially through media interviews and again later through autobiographies and much later through feature films.

Another example of the pre-9/11 media strategy behind hostage-takings is provided by the hijacking of the cruise ship *Achille Lauro* off the coast of Egypt by members of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF), on October 7, 1985. This is interesting precisely because of its media presence and the way in which it unfolded as an episodic drama which news audiences kept tuning into for the latest news updates. Cruise ship hijackings are rare events, when compared with the number of airplane hijackings in the second half of the twentieth century. Ships seizures are usually the reserve of pirates. For instance, Somali pirates operating in the Indian Ocean are increasingly the focus of international media attention.<sup>486</sup> However, the same conventions which govern pre-9/11 airplane hijackings also apply to cruise ship hijackings. The hijackers of the *Achille Lauro* were aiming to manufacture a powerful media presence and thus draw international media attention to the event and to their cause. The hijackers were quick to issue a demand – the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli custody and simultaneously threatened to use violence against the passengers and crew if their demands were not met. The hijackers were mindful, however, like airplane hijackers, not to escalate the crisis to a degree where authorities would be left with no other option than to board the ship and bring the hijacking to a swift conclusion. Also, instead of an isolated runway the *Achille Lauro* was ordered to sail to the port of Tartus, Syria. However, when the hijackers were nearing Tartus they were forced to quickly change their plans because Syrian authorities refused to let the ship enter the port. The hijackers response was hasty. They panicked escalating their violence from symbolic to actual with the execution, on October 8<sup>th</sup>, of Leo Klinghoffer, a wheelchair bound Jewish-American businessman who was on holiday with his wife celebrating their wedding

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<sup>486</sup> See Roger Middleton, 'Piracy in Somalia: Threatening Global Trade, Feeding Local Wars', *Chatham House*, October 2008. Available at: [http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/12203\\_1008piracysomalia.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/12203_1008piracysomalia.pdf). Accessed on 11 April 2009, pp. 1-12

anniversary. His execution gave the media a new angle from which to report on the hijacking: the execution of a hostage.

Klinghoffer was singled out because he was American and also because he was Jewish. The hijackers shot him dead and then threw his disabled body overboard. This escalation of violence sealed the fate of the hijackers. Because an American citizen had been murdered and because of the Reagan administration's increasingly aggressive stance towards terrorism orders were given to capture the hijackers dead or alive. After Klinghoffer's execution the *Achille Lauro* sailed back towards Port Said. Two days later the hijackers agreed that the passengers, crew and cruise ship could be exchanged for a getaway airplane. On October 10<sup>th</sup> the exchange was made and the hijackers boarded a plane for Tunisia. However, before the hijackers could reach Tunisian airspace American air fighters intercepted the plane, forced it to land at a NATO airbase in Sicily and thus concluded the hijacking.

The Munich hostage-taking, the TWA hijacking of 1985 and the seizure of the *Achille Lauro* are all early examples of image munitions. They were carried out with the intention of manufacturing a strong media presence. Terrorists had realized that they could exploit the media and use it to their own advantage by releasing new demands, new images and new footage which would then help to transform the hijacking into an episodic drama and would also circulate widely within the media. However, the extent to which this could predominate in the planning and carrying out of such actions was limited, in large measure because of the structure and technology of media systems. As media technologies have become more adaptable and accessible and as access to media outlets have become simpler so too the image munition strategies of terrorists have also changed as I will now see as I turn from a consideration of hijackings to hostage-takings.

### **From Hijacking to Hostage-taking**

Unlike airplane and cruise ship hijackings which were played out through the media with a strong emphasis on 'place' – an isolated airplane or a cruise ship – pre-9/11, individual hostages' periods in captivity usually took place out of sight and therefore without a 'place' of focus. This is because if authorities knew where a hostage was

being held then they could launch a rescue mission, thus bringing the hostage-taking to a swift conclusion. Hostage-takers need to keep the locations of their hostage's secret because this enables them to stretch out the hostage-taking for days, weeks, months and even years – thus giving the terrorists' cause consistent international publicity. News-cycles are another important factor here because the longer a hostage crisis goes on the more news-cycles it has to pass through and the greater the chances that it will drop off the news-cycle altogether unless inventive ways can be developed to keep the crisis current and newsworthy. A solution which hostage-takers had found to counter this problem, guaranteeing a hostage crisis remained newsworthy as it passed through multiple news-cycles, was to produce and disseminate early image munitions which helped to keep the hostage-taking current.

Aldo Moro, a twice former Italian Prime Minister and a Christian Democrat politician, was kidnapped on March 16, 1978, held captive for over fifty days and later murdered by members of the Red Brigades. During his period in captivity a photograph, or image munition, was released to the media which showed Moro sitting on the floor, holding a copy of the April 20, 1978 edition of the newspaper *La Repubblica*, looking straight into the camera, with a wall covering behind him.<sup>487</sup> The way in which Moro appears in this image looking straight into the camera links with Benjamin's conception of figures gazing out of images creating the illusion of being able to actually see their spectators,<sup>488</sup> thus capturing the audiences' gaze and eliciting emotional responses. This black and white photograph was released to prove that Moro was indeed still alive and also to help refuel media interest in Moro's lengthy hostage-taking.

The wall covering in the background of this Moro photograph is particularly important because it is the unofficial flag of the Red Brigades. It comprises a yellow five point star within a yellow circle and the words *Brigate Rosse*, in yellow, above and below the logo, all set against a red background. Because the Red Brigades were

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<sup>487</sup> This image immediately appeared on the front pages of over forty international newspapers on April 21, 1978. The photographer and artist Sarah Charlesworth – as part of her *Modern History* series – has since collected together these front pages, removed the text (or copy), kept the newspaper titles and dates and reproduced the images on each of these front pages in their original context. Sarah Charlesworth's reworked front pages are available at: [http://www.sarahcharlesworth.net/series-view.php?album\\_id=34&subalbum\\_id=53](http://www.sarahcharlesworth.net/series-view.php?album_id=34&subalbum_id=53). Accessed on 28 May 2009

<sup>488</sup> Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, p. 244

unable to produce a hostage video as contemporary hostage-takers do, the presence of the unofficial Red Brigades flag in the background of the Moro hostage photograph is vital precisely because the media and news audiences were made immediately aware that Moro had been kidnapped by the Red Brigades. This then enabled the media to quickly insert the Moro photograph into existing news frames, particularly about the Red Brigades. The Moro hostage photograph was singled out for discussion here because it shares a number of parallels with contemporary hostage videos: his appearance in a set-piece to camera and also the symbolic presence of the unofficial Red Brigades flag in the background of this image. The Moro photograph is also echoed by other image munitions from the war on terror, like political communications (see Chapter Three) and suicide video wills (see Chapter Four).

During the 1980s Beirut hostage crisis a number of Western hostages were held, sometimes for years, and some were even executed. The majority of this hostage crisis was conducted out of sight (unlike airplane and cruise ship hijackings). The absence of hostage images during the Beirut hostage crisis was because the available technology prevented the hostage-takers from producing and releasing images and videos like hostage-takers often do today. But it was also due to the fact that hostage locations needed to be kept secret so that the authorities could not attempt rescue missions, as hostage images could quite easily give the authorities visual clues to the locations of hostages. However, the Beirut hostage-takers were also mindful that they needed to provide the media and authorities with some visuals so as to kick-start and maintain interest in the hostage-taking.

Often, the hostage-takers compromise was to release mug shot images of the hostages, early examples of image munitions. Traditionally mug shots are taken of prisoners by both the police and prison authorities as a way of cataloguing their prisoners. Mug shots show prisoners looking straight into the camera and behind them are generic backgrounds. The mug shots of hostages produced by the Beirut hostage-takers are similar stylistically to prisoner mug shots. The hostages appear looking straight into the camera, sitting in front of a generic background, giving the



authorities no visual clues as to the 'place' where the hostages are being held. There is also a similarity here between these hostage images and obituary photographs.<sup>489</sup>

The impact and wide circulation of hostage mug shot images within the international media is evidenced by the fact that a selection of thirteen hostages – including mug shots of Joseph Cicippio and Terry Waite – appeared on the front cover of the August 14, 1989 edition of *Time* magazine. On a couple of other occasions the Beirut hostage-takers managed to release more sophisticated image munitions. In fact the hostage-takers managed to produce and release gruesome hostage videos which can be understood as something of a benchmark for subsequent videos. Hostage videos, back in the 1980s, were neither easy to produce nor easy to disseminate and they risked leaving authorities with an information trail which could potentially lead right back to the hijackers (after all there were no anonymous internet remailers).

The first hostage video featured Alec Collett – a British journalist assigned to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees. He was kidnapped in Lebanon on March 25, 1985 and just over twelve months later, in April 1986, a video was released to the media which showed his gruesome hanging. Zaid Hassan Safarini, an eyewitness to Collett's execution, has since recounted how:

Collett was dragged from his cell, hooded and handcuffed. The guards shuffled him towards the gallows where a group of gunmen had gathered. As the rope was placed around Collett's neck, he realised his fate. "What, what, no," he cried.<sup>490</sup>

Significantly, what this video shows is that even back in the 1980s terrorists had an acute awareness of the media – 'the oxygen of publicity'<sup>491</sup> – and how to manipulate it. The Collett video was prepared with the intention of being widely circulated throughout the mainstream media. The main lesson to be drawn from the Collett

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<sup>489</sup> See Bridget Fowler, 'Collective Memory and Forgetting: Components for a Study of Obituaries', *Theory, Culture & Society* 22, no. 6 (2005), pp. 53-72

<sup>490</sup> Roger Beam, 'Executed Briton's Last Terrified Words: Witness Solves 19-Year Mystery', *The Times*, 01 May 2005. Available at: <http://www.timeonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article387164.ece>. Accessed on 27 March 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>491</sup> This phrase was used by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher with reference to the appearance of Sinn Fein and the IRA on British media.

case is that his hostage execution video today is echoed throughout contemporary hostage videos.

Another Beirut hostage, Lt. Col. William Richard (“Rich”) Higgins, who was kidnapped in Lebanon on February 17, 1988, was (like Collett) the lead in his own gruesome hostage execution video. Again, the Higgins hostage execution video is echoed within contemporary hostage videos. The Higgins execution video surfaced in July 1989 and it was clearly a copy of the earlier Collett video. However, after detailed examination the authorities later concluded that the video was a fake. The video, according to Richard Lacayo, does indeed feature Higgins – ‘bound and gagged, dangling from a makeshift scaffold’<sup>492</sup> – but it is not an execution video. Rather Higgins had died earlier and his hostage-takers had simply staged his body in the video to make it appear as though they had executed him after authorities had failed to take their threats of violence seriously. The hostage-takers had clearly shown initiative turning the death of Collett into an opportunity to release a new image munition which would in turn keep Collett in the news-cycle for a while longer. The Collett execution video was also used to remind the media, authorities and news audiences once again that threats of violence made by Beirut hostage-takers against hostages were not to be dismissed as merely symbolic but should be taken seriously. The Collett execution video again shows that Beirut hostage-takers did indeed have a sophisticated understanding of the media and just how to produce a video which could circulate widely throughout the international media.

The Moro photograph, the mug shots of hostages and the Collett and Higgins hostage execution videos are all early examples of image munitions. They also show an escalation of violence which has since become commonplace in contemporary hostage videos. These particular hostage executions videos are a part of the same publicity dynamic as the Moro photograph and the hostage mug shots. The aim of the Beirut hostage-takers was always to transform the hostage crisis into an episodic drama which the media would continue to report on and that news audiences would continue to consume. Thus guaranteeing the hostage-takers’ cause consistent

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<sup>492</sup> Richard Lacayo, 'Not Again a Grisly Image of a Dead Hostage Outrages the U.S.', *Time*, 14 August 1989. Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,958340,00.html>. Accessed on 24 March 2009, Unpaginated

international media publicity across a number of news-cycles and for the duration of the hostage crisis.

What each of the above cases shows is that terrorists – with their careful selection of targets and careful use of violence – are acutely aware of how to manufacture media drama, something which Pierre Bourdieu has theorized: ‘Television calls for dramatization, in both senses of the term: it puts an event on stage, puts it in images. In doing so, it exaggerates the importance of that event, its seriousness, and its dramatic, even tragic character.’<sup>493</sup> Hijackings and hostage-takings call for dramatization in the same way. This is because ‘[w]ith television, we are dealing with an instrument that offers, theoretically, the possibility of reaching everybody.’<sup>494</sup> Television also helps to transform events into media events.<sup>495</sup> Media events also construct a sense of community as audiences collectively watch events as they unfold. So, to paraphrase Susan L. Carruthers, the intention of terrorists is ultimately to hijack the news agenda with their made-for-media dramas<sup>496</sup> such as hijackings and hostage-takings. However, as these image munitions were produced before the internet age and as the media operated within a delayed news-cycle their accurate dissemination could not be guaranteed, like bin Laden videos (see Chapter Three), the Moro, Collett and Higgins image munitions were guaranteed though to be picked up and circulated by the media. Thanks to their newsworthy content. What the hostage-takers had little control over was when the media would get hold of these image munitions. Therefore, the Moro, Collett and Higgins image munitions could not be timed to coincide with and hijack a particular news-cycle – featuring say an important anniversary or an important speech by a political leader – instead they were inserted into whatever news-cycles were around when the media received the image munitions. Attention will now turn to look at the ways in which the Beirut hostage crisis was kept in the media spotlight when the hostages were so often out of sight.

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<sup>493</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television and Journalism*. Translated by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 19

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14

<sup>495</sup> See Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*

<sup>496</sup> Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 171

On April 17, 1986, John McCarthy, a British journalist, was taken hostage. Jill Morrell, his then girlfriend, was quick to mobilize journalist colleagues and friends to raise awareness for his plight. Morrell was acutely aware of the fact that John McCarthy's absence as a hostage meant that the media would be likely more quickly to lose interest in his hostage crisis than say a murder investigation (where the media are able to focus on the body of the victim and the police search for the killer). Murder investigations usually unfold as episodic dramas which suit the news media as the story can be inserted and reinserted into multiple news-cycles as new information about the case is made public. Because of the media's bias towards stories which unfold as episodic dramas Morrell committed herself to transforming his hostage-taking into a series of episodic events which helped to keep his plight and the plights of the other Beirut hostages newsworthy. She sought to replace the absent John McCarthy with a series of media spectacles which would give the media something tangible to focus their reporting on. Through her actions Morrell quickly assumed the role of a new media actor. Morrell also enlisted the help of the advertising agency *Bartle Bogle Hegarty*. One of their first jobs was to come up with a series of powerful slogans to capture media and public attention. One such slogan was: 'Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind',<sup>497</sup> a clever play on words which emphasised that although the Beirut hostages, other than in mug shots and rare gruesome hostage execution videos, were kept largely out of sight they had definitely not been forgotten.

However, Morrell soon realized that keeping John McCarthy in the news was going to be a full time job and in February 1988 she officially set up the Friends of John McCarthy (FOJM) campaign to act as the driving force behind the John McCarthy media campaign. The FOJM centred their campaign on a series of carefully choreographed media spectacles, or image munitions, which guaranteed continued media coverage for John McCarthy and the other Beirut hostages: candle lit vigils to mark milestone events, billboard campaigns, printed t-shirts, posters, and banners with updated days in captivity counts. They also disseminated petitions (that were presented to the Thatcher government at 10 Downing Street) and even organized a club night 'An Evening without John McCarthy' at *Sanctuary* in the Camden Palace,

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<sup>497</sup> John McCarthy, and Jill Morrell, *Some Other Rainbow* (London: Corgi Books, 1994), p. 386

on April 17, 1988. They toured the country with a cage containing a blindfolded dummy (representing John McCarthy) and sometimes the dummy was even replaced by a celebrity and for Christmas 1990 they even produced a Christmas card. All of these image munitions successfully kept the Beirut hostage crisis newsworthy, right up until John McCarthy's eventual release on August 8, 1991. The FOJM had also built up enough media momentum to help ensure that the remaining Beirut hostages remained newsworthy.

### **Visualizing Contemporary Hostages**

As I have shown there is a history to hijacking and to the hostage image munitions that circulate through the media. Before moving on to discuss the visualization of contemporary hostages, hostages will firstly be situated within a wider theoretical framework. Irène Herrmann and Daniel Palmieri expound a persuasive argument examining the history of the hostage. In their paper they draw upon a classic dichotomy which, they argue, has determined the role of hostages throughout history. This distinction is the voluntary hostage vs. the involuntary hostage. The voluntary hostage, Herrmann and Palmieri contend, denotes a time 'when high-ranking individuals handed themselves over to benevolent jailers as guarantors for the proper execution of treaties.'<sup>498</sup> This process is now redundant.<sup>499</sup> However, the second term still applies to hostage-taking today. The involuntary hostage

like the voluntary hostage...can serve as a strategic asset in forcing an adversary to make concessions... In this case the involuntary hostage is valuable merchandise for which the abductor hopes to obtain a good price, and is therefore usually well cared for while awaiting the payment of ransom.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Irene Herrmann, and Daniel Palmieri, 'A Haunting Figure: The Hostage through the Ages', in *International Review of the Red Cross*, 2005. Available at: [http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/review-857-p135/\\$File/irrc\\_857\\_Palmieri.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/review-857-p135/$File/irrc_857_Palmieri.pdf). Accessed on 7 March 2006, p. 135

<sup>499</sup>The authors of this paper identify clearly that the defining factors, which finally signalled the end of the voluntary hostage, was a combination between the emergence of 'all-out war' (in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), followed later by the development of the 'laws of war' (in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century). For their original account of this hostage evolution, see Herrmann and Palmieri, 'A Haunting Figure', p. 139

<sup>500</sup> Herrmann and Palmieri, 'A Haunting Figure', p. 240

Herrmann and Palmieri conclude that contemporary ‘hostages no-longer represent any value to their abductors except perhaps the value their own world places on them’<sup>501</sup> through their images circulated within the media.

As the technology deficit has collapsed so the visualization of hostages has increased. The new media ecology – the shift from localized to globalized and centralized to decentralized – now also means that Al Qaeda and Western governments have access to the same media and can respond to events in the West.<sup>502</sup> For example the release of a Kenneth Bigley hostage video was timed to coincide with Prime Minister Tony Blair’s keynote speech at the 2004 Labour Party Conference in Brighton.

Al Qaeda is also fully aware of the power of ‘symbolic exchange’. Baudrillard has written of ‘symbolic exchange’ and terrorism (specifically hostage-taking): ‘The hostage has a symbolic yield a hundred times superior to that of the automobile death, which is itself a hundred times superior to natural death.’<sup>503</sup> This is because, according to Baudrillard, ‘natural death’ is ‘commonplace’ and as a result such deaths do not contain anything worthy of exchange whereas hostage deaths have a ‘symbolic yield’ which can be exchanged.<sup>504</sup> It is clear that Baudrillard’s perspective still resonates within contemporary debates about hostages because, according to Rinella Cere, ‘[t]he circulation of images of hostages, mainly in the form of videos, has become a large part of the Iraq War.’<sup>505</sup> Having situated hostages within a wider theoretical framework attention will now turn to discuss specific contemporary hostage cases.

Jeff Lewis has noted how all contemporary jihadi hostage-takings follow a similar script:

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<sup>501</sup> *Ibid*, p. 143

<sup>502</sup> Thomas L. Friedman in his book has highlighted an instance whereby Osama bin Laden has clearly shown that he holds an intimate up-to-date knowledge of Western news, see Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd eds. (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 489

<sup>503</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Translated by Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Sage, 1998), p. 165

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 164-165

<sup>505</sup> Rinella Cere, ‘The Body of the Woman Hostage: Spectacular Bodies and Berlusconi’s Media’, in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), p. 245

The victim is videotaped, kneeling before three hooded men who are reading their demands. It appears that the captive is not aware whether he [or she] is to be executed at that moment or simply exposed to public scrutiny through the iteration of demands; in a sickening revelation to audiences, however, the kidnappers indicate their intention to execute a victim when they are wearing gloves – demonstrating, no doubt, that they do not want to contaminate their hands with infidels’ blood. On occasions, certain kidnap groups will videotape the victim pleading for his/her life or importuning governments to meet the kidnappers’ demands.<sup>506</sup>

Daniel Pearl, Nick Berg, Kenneth Bigley and Alan Johnston – four contemporary hostages – will now be examined. These four hostages have been singled out for discussion because they each mark a step-change in the course of contemporary hostage-taking in the war on terror. Many other people, from all around the world, have been taken hostage and executed since the start of the war on terror;<sup>507</sup> however, I will not focus on their cases here. Pearl, Berg, Bigley and Johnston each show how new media technologies have changed the way that symbolism is produced, disseminated and repeated. They also point to the weaponizing of hostage images and the manufacture of powerful image munitions.

Daniel Pearl – a journalist with the *Wall Street Journal* – was kidnapped in Karachi, Pakistan, on January 23, 2002, on his way to meet Sheikh Mubarak Ali Gilani, whilst researching a story about Richard Reid the ‘Shoe Bomber.’ Pearl was also a Jewish-American and this made him even more of a prime kidnap target (just like Klinghoffer). Contemporary hostage-takings take place today in the internet age and as such new media technologies facilitate the wide circulation of hostage image munitions. As a result, hostage execution videos have become an integral part of contemporary hostage-takings. This is because videos can be produced with ‘minimum media’<sup>508</sup> and uploaded anonymously (often through internet remailers) onto jihadi websites, for immediate international circulation and remediation.

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<sup>506</sup> Jeff Lewis, *Language Wars: The Role of Media and Culture in Global Terror and Political Violence* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p. 224

<sup>507</sup> Including Edwin Dyer, Margaret Hassan, Paul Marshall Johnson, Jr., Seif Adnan Kanaan, Shosei Koda, Piotr Stańczak, Kim Sun-il and Fabrizio Quattrocchi.

<sup>508</sup> Hoskins and O’Loughlin, *Television and Terror*, p. 127

Pearl's hostage-taking and execution, however, marks an important step-change in terms of contemporary hostages. Where traditionally hostages have been taken to produce media presences and episodic dramas, Pearl was instead kidnapped and executed to produce image munitions which Al Qaeda could then deploy in the war of images. The way Al Qaeda chose to achieve this was through breaking a Western taboo. Foucault has explored how, in the West, 'torture as a public spectacle'<sup>509</sup> and 'punishment as a spectacle'<sup>510</sup> has been removed from public view. Al Qaeda reversed this trend though by making Pearl's execution a public spectacle, with the release of his hostage execution video over the internet.

What made this execution video even more shocking was the fact that it was so unexpected even though not long after Pearl had been kidnapped an email was sent to the *Wall Street Journal* demanding that all Pakistani prisoners be released from Guantanamo Bay and that Pearl would be killed if these demands were not met. Also, attached to this same email were a series of image munitions of Pearl. The Pearl hostage-taking had so far followed the same script as previous hostage-takings. These Pearl image munitions were like so many other hostage mug-shot images that are released to prove that hostage-takers have hostages and that their hostages are still alive. In order to help date these images, in a couple, Pearl can be seen holding an English edition of the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* (a visual mimetic of the Aldo Moro image where he appeared holding a copy of the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*).

The hostage-takers were also mindful, as in so many previous hostage-takings, not to give away Pearl's location. Therefore, in all of these images Pearl appears sitting in front of a generic blue background, thus echoing the background in bin Laden's videos (see Chapter Three). However, these image munitions are strikingly different from other hostage mug shot images, in one important respect. Two show Pearl being threatened with a handgun. With hindsight the presence of this handgun was perhaps an allusion to the fact that the hostage-takers already intended to escalate their violence against Pearl from the symbolic to the actual by executing him, rather than

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<sup>509</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 7

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8



merely threatening it in their email to the *Wall Street Journal*. However, at the time no one dared to guess the eventual gruesome outcome of the Pearl hostage-taking. Rather, all thoughts were focussed on Pearl's hostage-takers making his hostage-taking an episodic drama to be concluded by his eventual release.

Instead, on February 21, 2002, a gruesome execution video showing the beheading of Pearl (on February 1, 2002) was released over the internet. Pearl's execution video had been shot in front of the same generic blue background as had been featured in his earlier images, therefore, a continuity of 'place' had been achieved as in other videos, like those featuring bin Laden or indeed the 7/7 London Bombers suicide video wills (see Chapters Three and Five). The video also did not spare audiences any of the gruesomeness. Foucault has argued that historically 'a hidden execution was a privileged execution, and in such cases it was often suspected that it had not taken place with all its customary severity.'<sup>511</sup> Al Qaeda, with the release of the Pearl execution video, could not be accused of carrying out a 'privileged execution' because Pearl's gruesome execution was presented on video for all to see. It also set the trend for future hostage videos. The Pearl execution video was produced with the intention of being circulated widely across multiple media platforms: a powerful image munition, threatening other Western infidels with a similar fate. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a detainee at Guantanamo Bay and the suspected mastermind behind a number of terrorist attacks including the 1993 WTC Bombing and the Bali Bombings, has since also admitted that he executed Daniel Pearl.

Pearl's gruesome execution footage was quickly circulated: becoming the subject of an intense remediation battle between jihadi terrorists and his family, friends and colleagues. Jihadi terrorists located across the world were able – with the use of 'minimum media'<sup>512</sup> – to take the original Pearl image munitions and edit them together with other footage (such as audio from anti-Western sermons, footage of statements being read out by senior Al Qaeda members, footage showing suicide bombings, footage of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, unlawful combatants at Guantanamo Bay and clips from terrorist training videos) and so produce jihadi internet propaganda, new image munitions.

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<sup>511</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58

<sup>512</sup> Hoskins, and O'Loughlin, *Television and Terror*, p. 127

Pearl's family – his parents Ruth and Judea Pearl, his widow Mariane Pearl, a freelance journalist – and his friends and colleagues at the *Wall Street Journal* were shocked and appalled by his gruesome mediated execution, but they were equally disturbed by the proliferation of Pearl related jihadi internet propaganda after his death. All of this jihadi propaganda was having a negative impact on the memory of Daniel Pearl and so his family, friends and colleagues decided to use all of the media resources at their disposal to orchestrate and produce a number of powerful counter-image munitions to disrupt Al Qaeda's representations of Pearl – the execution – and instead shift attention back to representations of Pearl – the man – and use his tragic death to promote a positive message. Here are just a few examples of Pearl counter-image munitions: *The Daniel Pearl Foundation* was set up in his memory to promote understanding and cultural diversity; it employs an image of Daniel Pearl from his wedding day – smiling, wearing glasses, a cream suit, a white shirt, a copper tie, a copper waistcoat and copper handkerchief – featuring it on their website and in all other publicity material. This image is a clear example of a counter-image munition which has been released to rival the gruesome image munitions showing Pearl's kidnapping and execution. His parents (Ruth and Judea Pearl) also decided to use their sons' final words 'I am Jewish' to try and inspire others. They did this by editing a book where famous and influential Jewish people gave personal reflections about being Jewish.<sup>513</sup> Judea Pearl has also contributed a chapter to a book entitled *After Terror: Promoting Dialogue Among Civilizations*,<sup>514</sup> he has also written a number of *op-ed* articles. For example, to mark the seventh anniversary of his sons'

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<sup>513</sup> See Judea Pearl, and Ruth Pearl, eds. *I Am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004). Contributors to this volume include: Ehud Barak, Sylvia Boorstein, Edgar M. Bronfman, Alan Colmes, Alan Dershowitz, Kirk Douglas, Richard Dreyfuss, Kitty Dukakis, Dianne Feinstein, Tovah Feldshuh, Debbie Friedman, Milton Friedman, Thomas L. Friedman, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Nadine Gordimer, David Hartman, Moshe Katsav, Larry King, Francine Klagsbrun, Harold Kushner, Lawrence Kushner, Shia LaBeouf, Norman Lamm, Norman Lear, Julius Lester, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Bernard Lewis, Daniel Libeskind, Joe Lieberman, Deborah E. Lipstadt, Joshua Malina, Michael Medved, Ruth W. Messinger, Amos Oz, Cynthia Ozick, Shimon Peres, Martin Peretz, Dennis Prager, Anne Roiphe, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, Vidal Sassoon, Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi, Daniel Schorr, Harold M. Schulweis, Lynn Schusterman, Natan Sharansky, Gary Shteyngart, Sarah Silverman, Michael H. Steinhardt, Kerri Strug, Lawrence H. Summers, Mike Wallace, Elie Wiesel, Leon Wieseltier, Sherwin T. Wine, Ruth R. Wisse, Peter Yarrow, A. B. Yehoshua and Eric H. Yoffie

<sup>514</sup> See Judea Pearl, 'On Clash, Morality, Renaissance, and Dialogue', in *After Terror: Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations*, eds. Akbar Ahmed and Brian Forst (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), pp. 138-45

murder he wrote an article for the *Wall Street Journal* 'Daniel Pearl and the Normalization of Evil: When Will Our Luminaries Stop Making Excuses for Terror.'<sup>515</sup>

Bernard Henri Levy, a French philosopher and journalist, has published *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?*<sup>516</sup> – a book investigating the events surrounding the kidnap and murder of Pearl. HBO have also produced a documentary: *The Journalist and the Jihad: The Murder of Daniel Pearl* about the events surrounding Pearl's execution. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has also founded 'The Daniel Pearl Memorial Lecture' an annual lecture to be delivered by a leading figure within the media. The *Wall Street Journal* in association with the École de Journalisme de Sciences Politique in Paris have also established 'The Daniel Pearl Prize for Journalism'. Mariane Pearl has also written the memoir *A Mighty Heart*<sup>517</sup> – a personal account of the life and death of her husband.

This intimate portrait of her late husband has been a particularly potent counter-image munition to all the negative Pearl image munitions and it has also helped to bring Pearl's murder to the attention of new audiences. The Daniel Pearl incident has since reached an even wider audience as Michael Winterbottom, the Director of the docu-drama *The Road to Guantanamo*, has directed *A Mighty Heart* the feature film adaptation of Mariane Pearl's memoir in which Daniel Pearl is played by Dan Futterman and Mariane Pearl is played by Angelina Jolie. The film begins with Daniel Pearl going to meet with Sheikh Mubarak Ali Gilani. It then unfolds following Mariane Pearl's desperate attempts to negotiate Daniel Pearl's release, the airing of his gruesome execution video on the internet, the locating of Daniel Pearl's body and the hunt for his kidnappers and murderers. Towards the end of the film Winterbottom represents the ongoing battle between Pearl image munitions and Pearl counter-image munitions. He begins with a heavily pregnant Mariane Pearl (Jolie) lying on a bed with tears welling up in her eyes as Jolie describes the kidnapping and

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<sup>515</sup> Judea Pearl, 'Daniel Pearl and the Normalization of Evil: When Will Our Luminaries Stop Making Excuses for Terror'. *The Wall Street Journal*, 03 February 2009. Available at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123362422088941893.html>. Accessed on 10 February 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>516</sup> Bernard Henri Levy, *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House Publishing, 2003)

<sup>517</sup> Mariane Pearl, *A Mighty Heart: The Brave Life and Death of My Husband, Daniel Pearl* (London: Virago Press Ltd., 2003)

execution of Daniel Pearl in a voiceover. Inserted into this scene are two extracts from the Pearl execution video as reenacted by Futterman. The first extract shows Pearl (Futterman) delivering his final words to the camera 'My name is Daniel Pearl... and I am Jewish,' then Jolie's voiceover describes how Daniel Pearl remained undefeated and defiant as the second extract shows Pearl (Futterman) recalling how there is a street in Israel named after his Great Grandfather. It then cuts immediately to a scene of Mariane (Jolie) giving birth to Adam Pearl and the film ends with a shot of Mariane and Adam walking off into the distance of a French street.

Here Winterbottom is drawing attention to the fact that Pearl's execution image munition is undermined by the fact Pearl remained proud of his Jewish heritage right to the end. This is emphasized by the fact that Jolie clearly states that he remained undefeated. The film could have ended there but instead Winterbottom offers a compelling counter-image munition: the birth of Adam Pearl (Daniel's most precious legacy) and shows how Mariane and Adam continue to live their lives after his death. Footage from this film – including clips and still images – has since been used to help advertise the film at film festivals, film premiers, awards ceremonies, at cinemas and to mark its DVD release. All of this has resulted in the wide circulation of a number of powerful counter-image munitions to counter the negative jihadi image munitions of Pearl. These counter-image munitions, however, are distinct entities from those counter-image munitions produced and deployed by the Bush administration in response to Al Qaeda's image munitions.

Nick Berg – an American telecommunications worker in Iraq – was last heard from by his family on April 9, 2004. It soon emerged that he had been kidnapped. His kidnapping was later confirmed when he appeared in a video, released over the internet, on May 11, 2004. In this image munition Berg was also shown being beheaded, like Pearl. It was later determined though that Berg had in fact been executed on May 7, 2004. The Berg case has been singled out for discussion here because it marks another important step-change in terms of contemporary hostages. Berg's hostage execution video was the first to be produced by the Iraqi insurgency movement and it started the trend of hostage image munitions being deployed with the intention of gaining a strategic advantage against technologically superior

Coalition forces operating in the Iraqi theatre of war. His hostage-taking is also further evidence of hostages now being taken specifically to produce gruesome image munitions, rather than being taken specifically to manufacture a media presence. The Berg execution video is further evidence of Al Qaeda denying a hostage a 'privileged execution' and instead turning his death into a public spectacle.

The Berg execution video is clearly modelled on the earlier Pearl execution video. In this video Berg is bound, sitting on the floor and looking straight into the camera. Again this links in with Benjamin's idea about figures gazing out of images creating the illusion of being able to actually see their spectators.<sup>518</sup> Therefore, instead of audiences simply being spectators to Berg's execution (with little or no emotional engagement), audiences are instead transformed into witnesses (who register different emotional responses from enjoyment to horror). Behind Berg, in the video, are stood five masked men. The masked man, in the centre, is reading a statement. This statement explains that Berg has been taken hostage in response to the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison facility. This statement thus replaces the usual set of demands which hostage-takers release to authorities through their communications. The nature of this statement also shows that the hostage-takers were not looking to engage in any kind of dialogue. This is also reflected by the fact that only one Berg video was released (his execution video) and therefore the hostage-takers gave authorities no opportunity to try and open up a dialogue. The same man who read out the statement also hacked off Berg's head. Berg is, therefore, transformed with this video into a Baudrillardian 'counter-gift'<sup>519</sup> – due to the retrospective nature of the exchange. This video also shows Berg's hostage-takers striving to frame the execution video in a global context. He is shown wearing an orange coloured jump-suit, an apparent allusion to the detainees at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the 'al-Qaida leader in Iraq'<sup>520</sup> until his death in June 2006, has also confirmed that he executed Berg.

Kenneth Bigley (a British civil engineer) was taken hostage, along with Eugene Armstrong and Jack Hensley, two American civil engineers, in Iraq, on September

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<sup>518</sup> Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, p. 244

<sup>519</sup> See Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange*

<sup>520</sup> Hoskins and O'Loughlin, *Television and Terror*, p. 128

16, 2004. On September 18, 2004, a video, or image munition, was released showing that the hostage-takers did indeed have Bigley, Armstrong and Hensley and that they were still alive (a mimetic of earlier hostage mug shot images). This video showed the three hostages blindfolded and bound, sitting on the floor, with a masked man standing behind them reading a statement calling for the immediate release of Iraqi women from US custody, a demand that the hostage-takers knew neither the American nor the British government would accede to. This video was already familiar to the media and news audiences, primarily because of its mimetic qualities and was able to be quickly inserted into existing news frames. This video was only the start of a hostage drama which would be played out through five further videos released to the international media.

On September 20, 2004, as America and Britain had not acceded to the hostage-takers earlier demand for the immediate release of female Iraqi prisoners from US custody, a video was released which showed the gruesome execution of Eugene Armstrong. This image munition was reminiscent of the earlier Berg execution video. Armstrong appeared bound, sitting on the floor, wearing an orange coloured jump-suit (a reference to Guantanamo Bay detainees), looking straight into a set piece camera, with five masked men holding AK-47s stood behind him and with the masked man in the centre reading a statement. One striking difference between this video and the earlier Berg video is the presence of the al-Tawhid wal-Jihad banner hanging on the wall. Whereas it was only confirmed afterwards that Berg had been executed by al-Zarqawi, the presence of the al-Tawhid wal-Jihad banner in the background of the Armstrong video made it immediately clear that al-Zarqawi (founder of al-Tawhid wal-Jihad) was involved in this execution. Armstrong's execution video was quickly followed, on September 21, 2004, by the release of another image munition showing the beheading of Jack Hensley. The Hensley execution video was a direct mimetic of the Armstrong execution video.

On September 22, 2004 Kenneth Bigley appeared in his second video. This Bigley video was similar stylistically to the earlier Armstrong and Hensley videos (thus helping to manufacture a continuity of 'place') only he was not executed. Instead he was shown making a direct plea to Prime Minister Blair. This image munition marks another important step-change in contemporary hostage-taking as Bigley was able to

address the British Prime Minister directly via the media. Bigley appeared in a third hostage video, on September 29, 2004. This image munition was a departure from previous hostage videos because this time Bigley appeared, as Rory McCarthy describes it, 'sitting hunched on the floor in a shiny orange jumpsuit. His hands and feet were shackled with a metal chain that hung round his neck and he sat in a cramped, steel mesh cage built against a brick wall.'<sup>521</sup> This video was a further allusion to the Guantanamo Bay detainees because the official Camp Delta images show detainees being held bound in cages in orange coloured jump-suits, so Bigley's kidnappers here had reproduced the same scenario but with Bigley now assuming the role of an 'unlawful combatant'. This image munition was also timed specifically to coincide with Prime Minister Blair's keynote speech at the 2004 Labour Party Conference in Brighton. This once again shows how in a global media age terrorists are indeed able to keep abreast of events in the West and also that they can confidently produce and disseminate footage for release to coincide with Western events. This echoes bin Laden's November 1, 2004 video where he timed his image munitions release to coincide with the US Presidential election (see Chapter Three). I identify these interventions into the regular affairs of politics as image munitions rather than as examples of propaganda because they are clearly weaponized images which are meant to elicit a political response rather than propaganda designed to elicit a purely emotional response.

On October 7, 2004 Bigley appeared in his fourth and final video. This video was a return to a more familiar style of hostage video, which once again reproduced a continuity of 'place' for the media and news audiences. In this image munition Bigley again appeared sitting bound, on the floor, in an orange coloured jump-suit, looking straight into the camera, with five masked men – holding AK-47s – stood behind him (with the man in the centre reading out a statement) and the familiar al-Tawhid wal-Jihad banner on the wall. As in previous execution videos Bigley was decapitated, evidence again of hostage executions being turned into media spectacles and nothing more than a source of powerful image munitions.

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<sup>521</sup> Rory McCarthy, Sophie Arie, and Sandra Laville, 'Caged and Chained, Bigley Makes New Plea: Kidnappers Should Contact Us, Says PM as Video Shows Hostage's Plight', *The Guardian*, 30 September 2004. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,5028011-103681,00.html>. Accessed on 15 March 2006, Unpaginated

According to Heather Nunn and Anita Biressi:

Mr. Bigley's predicament (and others like it) [were] transmitted around the world and claimed audience attention not only through written and spoken reportage, but also through the circulation of video footage and stark photographic stills produced by the kidnappers, which arguably took on iconographic status. In these images Kenneth Bigley was bound and surrounded by his captors, or chained and trussed in a cage (reminiscent of images of those held at Guantanamo Bay), forced to address the camera and plea for help, and finally killed on camera. The kidnapped body can be used for propaganda, its vulnerability and imminent death transposed into portraits of the victim marshalled for political rhetoric about the impossibility of compromised intervention.... The Bigley case was dissected in the British media as one that offered insights into how individual trauma can be deployed for propaganda purposes and also as a prompt in expanding the ongoing public political dialogue on the War against Terror. This footage (video images of the kidnapped body) was regarded variously as a vehicle of propaganda and evidence, defiance and insult.<sup>522</sup>

Nunn and Biressi argue that Bigley's videos (and those of other hostages) are important sources of propaganda for Al Qaeda. They explore this with reference to the way in which Bigley's hostage-takers carefully manufactured his videos and packed them with symbolic references to the wider war on terror, for example Guantanamo Bay, and with the specific intention of circulating them internationally through the media. They also argue that the kidnapped body in the war on terror has become an important vehicle of propaganda for Al Qaeda. However, it is important to recognise that such images are not only pieces of powerful propaganda but weaponized images that are designed specifically to elicit responses from Western governments and militaries.

The apparent abandoning – by Al Qaeda – of jihadi hostage execution videos is often explained by the release of a letter, by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's second in command, in late 2005. In this letter al-Zawahiri suggests that hostage execution videos could actually be counterproductive.<sup>523</sup> Lentini and Bakashmar have concluded that this letter suggests

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<sup>522</sup> Heather Nunn, and Anita Biressi, 'The Kidnapped Body and Precarious Life: Reflections on the Kenneth Bigley Case', in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), p. 227

<sup>523</sup> Pete Lentini and Muhammad Bakashmar, 'Jihadist Beheading: A Convergence of Technology, Theology, and Teleology'. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 4 (2007), p. 317



that the jihadists do not always live by the maxim that they would prefer more casualties than publicity. It is doubtful that the Al Qaeda leadership disagrees with the tactic in principle. Rather, the leadership views it as counterproductive to its overall objectives. Although there is no guarantee that beheadings may not resume elsewhere or in Iraq, the letter's appearance and delivery appear to suggest that although it is important for jihadists to demonstrate commitment to potential recruits and supporters, it is in effect preaching to the converted. Beheadings in the context of the Iraq conflict, therefore, may have had limited tactical value. By 2005 they appear to have served their purposes, at least for Al Qaeda.<sup>524</sup>

As sources of jihadi propaganda hostage execution videos did not get Al Qaeda many new supporters. Those who agreed with their use of such gruesome tactics were already jihadist followers. Therefore as sources of propaganda and as recruitment tools the hostage videos possibly backfired because instead of recruiting more moderate potential jihadists the extreme tactics employed in these videos alienated wavering jihadists, having a potentially negative effect on Al Qaeda's support base. They are also evidence of the unpredictability of images in the information age, how image munitions can have a damaging 'own goal effect' (see Chapter Six) and they also point toward the success of some of the counter-image munitions. Attention will now turn to the kidnapping of Alan Johnston which shows how certain aspects of Al Qaeda's hostage execution video script have since been picked up and used by other terrorist groups.

Alan Johnston was kidnapped on March 12, 2007 – whilst working as a BBC journalist in the Gaza Strip – and later released on July 4, 2007. Johnston's hostage-taking is distinct from that of Pearl, Berg and Bigley because he was kidnapped primarily for financial gain and Hamas actually intervened playing an instrumental role in his release. However, Johnston's hostage-taking did still result in the production of a series of powerful image munitions and counter-image munitions which have since circulated widely throughout the international media. According to Karen Randell:

In early May a tape was released by his alleged kidnapers, a group called Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) showing not Johnston but his BBC pass,

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<sup>524</sup> *Ibid*, p. 319

presumably his only ID on the day, but also a symbol of the British institution, a history of imperialist power.<sup>525</sup>

Then, on June 1, 2007, Johnston's kidnappers released a second video which actually featured Johnston himself. This image munition was a mimetic of the earlier hostage image munitions from Iraq. In the video Johnston appeared sitting on the floor, wearing an orange coloured jump-suit, delivering a statement in a set piece to camera in front of a generic black background. His kidnappers were clearly mindful not to give away any visual clues as to his location. This mimetic of the Iraq hostage videos was more to do with making sure that the video would fit neatly into existing news frames, rather than for its overt references to the Guantanamo Bay detainees. Following Johnston's kidnapping colleagues at the BBC mobilized a media campaign (reminiscent of the earlier FOJM media campaign) which produced powerful counter-image munitions. Randell has recounted how:

[o]n April 12, 2007, a group of journalists gathered in Trafalgar Square, London, to mark the anniversary of, and to protest at, the kidnapping of the BBC correspondent Alan Johnston on March 12, 2007. Giant pictures of Johnston hung in the square as a reminder of the loss but also as a means of ownership of Johnston, as a means to care about one man whose life few knew about on March 11, 2007.... The face of Alan Johnston has now become *the* face of the hostage in Britain: symbolic of loss and symbolic of our powerlessness to do anything.... Johnston was literally absent. His AWOL status prompted marches, petitions, special BBC Radio programs – one in particular “From Our Own Correspondent” renamed “To Our Own Correspondent” aired on BBC Radio 4 and the World Service on May 17, in the hopes that Johnston could access it and know that he was being cared for in his family's and colleagues' thoughts. Vigils were held to commemorate his forty-fifth birthday on May 17, and over 100,000 people worldwide signed a BBC-organized petition urging that he be freed.<sup>526</sup>

On June 25, 2007, another Johnston hostage video was released. He again appeared sitting on the floor, in an orange coloured jump-suit, in front of a generic black background, thus manufacturing a continuity of 'place' and helping to immediately frame this latest video with the media and news audiences. However, in this video, his kidnappers chose to escalate the level of symbolic violence by making Johnston wear a suicide bomber vest. This video was another powerful image munition for

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<sup>525</sup> Karen Randell, 'Introduction: The Body of the Hostage', in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), p. 217

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 217-218

their cause. Following his release Johnston has also given his hostage-taking a strong media afterlife by recounting his hostage experiences in interviews.<sup>527</sup> This is reminiscent of the earlier Beirut hostage crisis where former hostages went on to do interviews and write autobiographies.<sup>528</sup>

In Iraq, hostage execution videos may now have become counterproductive but the possibility that Al Qaeda cells will make use of this same strategy in other parts of the world is still a very real threat. In fact, in January 2007, Parviz Khan, Basiru Gassama, Hamid Elasmr, Mohammed Irfan, Zahoor Iqbal and Amjad Mahmood were arrested in Birmingham whilst planning to kidnap and behead – on video – a British Muslim soldier. Parviz Khan, the leader of the cell, had planned to befriend a British Muslim soldier and whilst on a night out on Broad Street (Birmingham's entertainment district), with the help of local drug dealers, kidnap him, behead him 'like a pig' and then release the gruesome video footage over the internet.<sup>529</sup> Just as the introduction of suicide terrorism into the West, on 9/11 and 7/7, brought Al Qaeda's fight to the streets of America and Britain (see Chapter Four), so a hostage execution video, made in Britain, would again take Al Qaeda's fight to the streets of Britain rather than to the streets of some distant conflict theatre (like Iraq).

Andrew Hill has argued that,

[because] of the relative absence of Western casualties in media coverage of the War on Terror, these videos offer the opportunity to see death, in a culture in which – while fictive depictions of death proliferate (in cinema, photography, and film), pointing to the desire to witness death – real deaths are rarely seen.<sup>530</sup>

The symbolic power of hostage execution videos can also be measured by the fact that writers and directors of fictive depictions of death are now drawing on and even directly copying the symbolism contained in real hostage execution videos. These fictional depictions from popular culture are evidence of the success of hostage

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<sup>527</sup> For example Alan Johnston appeared in conversation with Stephen Sackur in an episode of the BBC programme *HARDtalk* that was aired on December 25, 2007

<sup>528</sup> See Brian Keenan, *An Evil Cradling* (London: Vintage, 1993), McCarthy and Morrell, *Some Other Rainbow* and Terry Waite, *Taken on Trust* (London: Coronet Books, 1994)

<sup>529</sup> David Byers, 'Gang Plotted to Behead Muslim Soldier 'Like a Pig'', *The Times*, 29 January 2008, Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article3269848.ece>. Accessed on 21 April 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>530</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, pp. 63-64

image munitions. For example, *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*, a show about a fictional American late night sketch-comedy show, from the creators of *The West Wing*, in 2007, ran a four episode storyline about the fictional kidnapping of three US airmen in Afghanistan (one of whom was the younger brother of *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip* regular cast member Tom Jeter). At the centre of this storyline was a fictional hostage video which contained all of the now familiar symbolic elements of real hostage videos: the hostages sat on the floor looking straight into the camera, while five masked men – armed with AK-47s – stand behind them and a statement is read out. Also, on the background wall is the terrorist group’s flag.

Contemporary hostage-taking was again fictionalised, on October 27, 2008, this time for the opening episode of the seventh series of the hit BBC drama *Spooks*. *Spooks*, since first airing back in 2002, has successfully managed to tap into the zeitgeist of the war on terror. This episode was about the kidnapping of the character Private Andy Sullivan, a British soldier, from the streets of London. Much of this series seven opener was played out as a desperate race against time to find Private Sullivan before his mediated execution. The Private Sullivan hostage video again shares many of the hallmarks of real hostage videos: the hostage sitting before a set piece camera, the wall behind the hostage covered with the Islamic group’s flag, the kidnapers wearing balaclavas and holding AK-47s. These fictional hostage execution videos from *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip* and *Spooks* point toward the circulation and remediation of hostage execution videos: something which I will now discuss.

### **Circulating Hostage Images**

Hostage images have become the subject of a number of interventions as new media actors have reused them. This is not surprising given that hostage images are manufactured by terrorists with the specific intention of being circulated. Parody is of course the next logical remediation phase, after news networks and jihadi internet propaganda. What these interventions help to illustrate are the surprising and unpredictable number of new contexts hostage execution videos are able to appear across in the information age.

Five subversive interventions will now be explored. Pearl's execution video has been remediated on *YouTube* in a mimetic video featuring *Star Wars* figures. Boba Fett (the bounty hunter who captured Han Solo and delivered him to Jabba the Hutt in *Return of the Jedi*) appears playing Daniel Pearl, whilst five Sand People or Tusken Raiders are stood behind him (playing Pearl's executioners). To help give this video a realistic edge it has been edited together with the appalling audio from the original Pearl video. This video parody concludes, like the real Pearl video, with the beheading of Fett (Pearl). The producer of this *YouTube* video was clearly making a satirical comment about Pearl's execution but it is certainly done in bad taste.

Nick Berg has similarly become the subject of a remediation video. Derek Rose writes:

The shocking video was found... on the Web site of supporters of radical hook-handed London preacher Sheik Abu Hamza al-Masri.... Two hooded boys and a girl in what appears to be a Muslim head scarf stand behind a kneeling lad in a sick, twisted parody of the Kim Sun II and Nick Berg beheading videos. The leader of the rugrat pack wags his index finger over his head and shifts what looks like a large stick from hand to hand as he appears to deliver a speech in the silent, chilling movie. The other two brandish what look to be wooden play rifles. Then the ringleader removes a shiny object that was wrapped in his mask, quickly bends over and pretends to saw off the head of his little captive. The girl lends her assistance. The movie ends.<sup>531</sup>

The producer of this perverse video parody was making light of Berg's execution. This disturbing video also shows a dangerous mimetic escalation: a group of children playing at being terrorists and kidnappers. This video also forces Western audiences to confront the fact that just as children have for generations been encouraged to aspire to become soldiers, some children are also encouraged to aspire to become terrorists and kidnappers.

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<sup>531</sup> Derek Rose, 'These Tots Are Terrors Kids Parody Grisly Real-Life Killing in Web Video', *New York Daily News*, 24 June 2004. Available at: [http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/2004/06/24/2004-06-24\\_these\\_tots\\_are\\_terrors\\_kids\\_.html?print=1&viewall=1](http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/2004/06/24/2004-06-24_these_tots_are_terrors_kids_.html?print=1&viewall=1). Accessed on 08 March 2009, Unpaginated

Next, are two interventions about Kenneth Bigley. First, the comedian Billy Connolly has been criticised for making the following joke: ‘Perhaps I shouldn’t be saying this... aren’t you the same as me, don’t you wish they would just get on with it?’ Comedy gives a social commentary on events, often contemporary ones. Sometimes comics do misjudge the situation and this was certainly the case with Billy Connolly’s joke about Kenneth Bigley. Second, the blog: *World of Mr Agreeable* features the following parody, entitled ‘Today’s Third Guest Blogger: Ken Bigley’ posted on October 23, 2004. It features an image of Kenneth Bigley – taken before his kidnapping – wearing a white polo shirt and a smile. This is followed by a fake quote from Bigley: “According to the publicity material around campus, the blog is mightier than the sword. Well I beg to differ, frankly!” Below this is the poster from the 1966 *Carry On* film: *Don’t Lose Your Head* (which is a parody of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*) it shows five *Carry On* stars with their heads under the blade of the guillotine. Underneath this the blogger has added: [Oh come on, you’re laughing on the inside...]. This subversive intervention again misjudges the situation because it makes light of Bigley’s execution – with its reference to *Don’t Lose Your Head* – when audiences are still reeling from the news of his gruesome mediated beheading.

Finally, a hostage execution video parody was also produced by American, Benjamin Vanderford, back in 2004. This video contains many of the hallmarks of real hostage execution videos: a hostage (Vanderford) appearing bound, sitting in a plastic chair, looking straight into a camera, while a disembodied hand – holding a knife – appears and proceeds to cut the hostages’ head off. So convincing was this video that it was mistaken for a real hostage execution video and actually found its way onto a number of jihadi internet propaganda websites, appearing alongside actual hostage execution videos.<sup>532</sup> This video is therefore an important example which illustrates just how uncontrollable the spectacle of execution actually is in the war on terror, the fact that a new media actor – such as Vanderford – was able to produce his own fake hostage execution video and for it to be mistaken for a real one and end up where he could never have expected (on websites alongside real hostage execution videos).

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<sup>532</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 67

Vanderford's fake hostage execution video also supports my earlier claims about remediated images carrying strong auratic presences.

These interventions which parody contemporary hostage images – produced by new media actors with distinct intentions from Al Qaeda – are proof of the unpredictable trajectories of hostage image munitions, beyond their initial deployment, in the image warfare theatre of war. The ability of hostage image munitions to float freely today means that they now appear in surprising new places and as a result reach out to new audiences. For example, people are confronted with remediated hostage footage when they go online (and receive email jokes or go on *YouTube* and view a spoof Pearl hostage execution video reenacted with *Star Wars* figures and view a video featuring children reenacting the execution of Berg or see Vanderford's fake hostage execution video) and also when they watch live comedy (Billy Connolly's misjudged joke about Kenneth Bigley). These remediations of contemporary hostage images also highlight the fact that mass media information systems (centred on controlling and censoring the flow of information and images and still popular with America and Britain) are outdated in the war on terror, following the advent of the rhizomatic condition. Al Qaeda has instead embraced and adapted to the challenges of image warfare, focussing their attention on producing image munitions that will have a maximum impact when deployed rather than misdirecting their attention towards trying to keep control of hostage image munitions following their release. Attention will now turn to examine the spectacular hunt and killing of Uday and Qusay Hussein.

### **Hunting, Killing and Circulating Uday and Qusay Hussein**

During the opening phase – the military phase – of the 2003 Iraq War the Bush administration once again rolled out its familiar RMA way of warfighting, still believing that they could control the spectacle of war. Initially this strategy proved successful. However, the *Saving Private Lynch* episode, the spectacle of Saddam's falling statue and President Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech were all quickly discredited. These manufactured media spectacles were soon shown to be, according to Mirzoeff, 'literally re-runs: of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), the revolutionary

destruction of statues since 1776 and the action film *Top Gun* (1986).<sup>533</sup> Also, to help US troops identify members of Saddam's government the Pentagon also produced and disseminated a set of playing cards ('Personality Identification Playing Cards') which were issued to soldiers in the Iraq theatre, who could then play with them during their down time and also use them to familiarise themselves with the fifty two most senior members of Saddam's government. However, these playing cards can also be read as an unintended allusion to the uncontrollability of the spectacle in contemporary war and a sign of the surprising contexts that images of Uday, Qusay and Saddam Hussein would eventually end up in. Al Qaeda's manufactured media spectacles from Iraq, which include gruesome hostage videos, however, are not merely mimetics of popular culture (like the Pentagon produced spectacles) rather they mark a return to public execution as a spectacle. Attention will now turn to discuss the insurgency phase of the war in Iraq and specifically the misjudged transformation into a media spectacle of the hunting and killing of Uday and Qusay Hussein, on July 22, 2003, and the misfiring of damaging image munitions.

Coalition forces were aware that to capture or kill Saddam's two sons would be a major blow to Saddam's power base. This was because, after Saddam, they were the most potent symbols of Saddam's reign of terror. Uday Hussein, Saddam's oldest son, the Ace of Hearts in the Pentagon's 'Personality Identification Playing Cards', used to be the heir apparent to Saddam, however, in 1988, he beat to death one of Saddam's bodyguards and during the same period he also shot in the leg one of his uncles. Saddam was forced to briefly exile Uday to Switzerland. According to Suzanne Goldenberg, Uday was 'a sadist with a taste for cruelty so extreme that even his father was forced to acknowledge that his first-born son would not be a worthy heir.'<sup>534</sup> In 1996, Uday was also injured in an assassination attempt that left him with a limp and having to walk with a cane. This, in the eyes of Saddam, had a further detrimental effect on Uday's public image because the cane symbolised weakness something which Saddam had to distance himself from. Another factor which contributed to his falling out of favour with his Father was his extravagant playboy

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<sup>533</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, pp. 67-68

<sup>534</sup> Suzanne Goldenberg, 'Uday: Career of Rape, Torture and Murder'. *The Guardian*, 23 July 2003.

Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/jul/23/iraq.suzannegoldenberg>.  
Accessed on 21 February 2010, Unpaginated



lifestyle. While many Iraqis were surviving in poverty Uday was instead flying around the world on a private jet, he had a collection of expensive cars and he also had his own private zoo. He also had a reputation for kidnapping women off the streets and raping them. His extravagances and taste for cruelty caused tensions with Saddam and Qusay Hussein. However, Saddam did try and channel Uday's sadistic tendencies by appointing him as head of the Fedayeen Saddam, who were responsible for the disappearance of members of the political opposition to Saddam's government – who were often interrogated, tortured and murdered. Uday was also made head of the National Iraqi Olympic Committee and he used this position to deal out sadistic punishments to Iraqi sportsmen who failed to deliver on the international sporting stage. For example, he routinely imprisoned athletes and when the Iraqi football team failed to qualify for the 1994 World Cup finals they were forced to kick concrete balls.

Qusay Hussein, the Ace of Clubs in the Pentagon's 'Personality Identification Playing Card', who was the heir apparent to Saddam, was the total opposite of his brother Uday. He did not live an extravagant playboy lifestyle (in fact he was a family man) and he also did not share in his brothers' taste for cruelty. This does not mean though that Qusay was afraid to order punishments, rather it meant that he was able to keep a cool head when under pressure and not lose control like his brother. For example when Uday killed one of Saddam's bodyguards or when Uday shot one of his uncles in the leg. Because of this Qusay was appointed as the head of the Republican Guard and also head of the secret police and in both these positions he was responsible for the interrogation, torture and murder of many people. As heir apparent Qusay also took an active role in the day-to-day running of Iraq and the Ba'ath Party. In the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War the country was divided up into four military zones and Qusay was put in charge of the Baghdad-Tikrit zone. After Saddam, Qusay was in fact the most powerful man in Iraq.

Therefore, after the conclusion of major combat operations the capture or killing of Uday and Qusay Hussein was made a top priority, along with the hunt for Saddam Hussein (see the next section). This is evidenced by the fact that big rewards were put up for information leading to their capture. Coalition forces then searched Iraq using a combination of intelligence reports and tip-offs. This eventually resulted in

Uday and Qusay being tracked down to Mosul, on July 22, 2003, and so ensued a fierce fire fight between Coalition forces and Saddam's two sons; the result of which saw the killing of Uday, Qusay and also one of Qusay's sons. The Pentagon hoped that the deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein would send a strong message to the Iraqi people that the Saddam regime had been dealt a considerable blow and this would be a significant move in winning over the hearts and minds of Iraqis. However, instead the announcement of the deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein was immediately met by scepticism from sections of the Iraqi public who thought that news of their deaths was the result of some sophisticated Pentagon produced hoax rather than the result of a real military operation.

To try and counter this scepticism, prove that Uday and Qusay Hussein were indeed dead, win the hearts and minds of Iraqis and regain control of the spectacle of war the Pentagon hastily transformed their deaths into a media spectacle (still thinking that they could control the circulation of information and images in the internet age) by releasing death images of Uday and Qusay to the media. This move was justified by the Bush administration as necessary in order to win over the hearts and minds of Iraqis. The Pentagon also stressed that they had initially announced the deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein without publishing their death images but that this had been met by strong scepticism in Iraq and therefore it was felt that the only way to prove once and for all that Uday and Qusay were in fact dead was to release the gruesome images of them lying on autopsy slabs to the media. However, this episode marked a dangerous escalation by the Pentagon. It meant that the Bush administration no longer held the moral high ground over Al Qaeda regarding, what Foucault has termed, 'the disappearance of punishment as a spectacle.'<sup>535</sup> Instead these image munitions opened up a new visual chapter in the war on terror which saw the Pentagon breaking its taboo of showing death images in the media.

Because the death images of Uday and Qusay were designed specifically to be circulated it is not surprising then that these image munitions have gone on to remediate uncontrollably beyond news networks and jihadi internet propaganda and have been deployed, by new media actors, in criticism of the Bush administration.

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<sup>535</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 8

For example, Peter Nicholson drew a cartoon to mark the release of the death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein. The cartoon shows President Bush and Colin Powell in The Oval Office with the dead bodies of Uday and Qusay Hussein propped up against the wall. A speech bubble from Powell reads: ‘You’re right Dubya. We could have them stuffed and mounted...’ The hunt for Uday and Qusay is thus presented here as a sport, their bodies as souvenirs of the kind taken by rich imperial aristocrats hunting ‘big game’ in Africa. This political cartoon is a clear criticism of the Bush administration and the somewhat arrogant way in which it has operated in Iraq and Nicholson also draws a link here between this display of arrogance and the arrogance displayed by imperial aristocrats who plundered Africa for game souvenirs without a care for the local populations.

Again, in response to the release of death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein, Jay Leno, host of *The Tonight Show*, made the following joke: ‘A number of Arabs say they do not believe Uday and Qusay are dead. They said they want more proof, so today we shot them again.’ Jay Leno is here drawing a clever cognitive link between the act of shooting someone with a gun and the act of shooting someone with a camera. Leno is also making satirical reference here to the fact that it was a mistake by the Bush administration to release death images of Uday and Qusay to the media because they were never going to satisfy every Iraqi on the street and stop conspiracy theories from circulating about their deaths. These Uday and Qusay remediations are also displayed in surprising places and so bring news of their deaths to the attention of new audiences: in a political cartoon and in a joke on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. The problems encountered by the Bush administration in their response to the deaths of Uday and Qusay – the misjudged transformation of their deaths into a media spectacle and the launching of self-defeating death image munitions which have gone on to be remediated by new media actors – are even more pronounced in relation to the hunt/capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein, something to which I will now turn.

### **Hunt/Capture/Trial/Execution and Circulation of Saddam Hussein**

After media attention about the Uday and Qusay Hussein death image controversy had died down, according to Nicholas Mirzoeff, ‘[t]he hunt for Saddam himself

continued with the release of several digitally altered photographs, suggesting what the deposed leader might look like,<sup>536</sup> thus reflecting elements of the earlier hunt for bin Laden<sup>537</sup> (see Chapter Three). However, it was not until December 14, 2003 when Coalition forces picked up Saddam's scent and finally tracked him down to a 'spider hole' near the town of Tikrit. Saddam – the Ace of Spades in the Pentagon produced 'Personality Identification Playing Cards' – was found hiding in a claustrophobic underground space with a large sum of money. When confronted he showed no resistance and was immediately placed into coalition custody. To document and turn his capture into a media spectacle an image munition was quickly released, to the media, which showed the dishevelled former Iraqi Presidents' capture. This image showed Saddam with his face in the dirt and with an American soldier restraining him whilst also posing for the camera.<sup>538</sup>

This image munition was quickly followed by the release of a further image munition, footage showing the former Iraqi President undergoing a somewhat humiliating medical examination. This medical examination video showed a weary and slightly stunned looking Saddam Hussein with a military physician checking his matted hair (both facial and head) for fleas, shining a light in Saddam's eyes and inside his mouth. Finally, the military physician could be seen swabbing Saddam's mouth for a DNA sample. The turning of Saddam's capture into a media spectacle and a source of image munitions was again justified by the Bush administration in terms of winning Iraqi hearts and minds and also in terms of proving, so there could be no doubt, that Saddam was indeed in coalition custody.

Anthony Barnett, in an *OpenDemocracy.net* article, conveys what many people were thinking when they first witnessed Saddam's capture. 'I was delighted. It didn't feel to me like the improper humiliation of a prisoner of war. I felt absolutely no pity. Saddam Hussein is quite beyond any regular calculation of innocence. I revelled in his reduction to ordinariness and the stripping away of illusions and myths.'<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 87

<sup>537</sup> McVeigh, *The American Western*, p. vii

<sup>538</sup> The pose in this image of Saddam's capture shares parallels with some of the poses in the Abu Ghraib and Camp Breadbasket prisoner abuse images (see Chapter Six).

<sup>539</sup> Anthony Barnett, 'Inside Saddam's Mouth', *OpenDemocracy*, 18 December 2003. Available at: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy/article\\_1652.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy/article_1652.jsp). Accessed on 6 April 2009, Unpaginated

However, this does not take into account the views of Saddam's supporters. In releasing image munitions of Saddam's capture the Bush administration had neglected to fully take into account the ripple effects of Saddam's capture. In turning Saddam's capture into a humiliating media spectacle, the coalition had unwittingly transformed their hunt for Saddam into a possible Al Qaeda recruitment tool because it showed him being persecuted and humiliated by American military personnel. Saddam was indeed well on his way to becoming a martyr.

After his spectacular capture the former Iraqi President again disappeared from public view. On May 20, 2005, he appeared on the front page of *The Sun* newspaper. The front cover featured a new humiliating image munition of Saddam Hussein in a pair of white Y-front pants, folding up his trousers, and the accompanying headline stated: 'THE TYRANT'S IN HIS PANTS.' This served to reinforce the dishevelled and broken man image which had been constructed with his capture. It is also further evidence of the uncontrollability of image munitions in the information age. Following this, Saddam again disappeared from public view. He did not appear again until the start of his trial on October 19, 2005.

During his trial, Saddam seized the opportunity to try and repair some of the damage which had been done to his image since his capture. Throughout the trial he always appeared in court wearing a suit and with well kept hair, he was hoping to produce a powerful counter-image munition to replace the image munitions of him looking dishevelled. He also remained defiant throughout his trial by refusing to recognize its legitimacy. His trial was finally concluded on November 5, 2006 when he was found guilty of committing crimes against humanity: specifically for ordering the killing of 148 Shias in Dujail in 1982. As a result he was sentenced to be executed by hanging. Again he disappeared from public view.

Saddam Hussein once again, on December 30, 2006, became the subject of further image munitions when he was hanged at 'Camp Justice' in Kazimain. Al Qaeda had already made execution the subject of public spectacle following their release of numerous hostage execution videos. However, having taken inspiration from hostage execution videos rather than the many recent misguided MIME-NET inspired media spectacles, the new Iraqi government decided to up the mimetic ante

by recording Saddam's execution and then screening it on the Iraqi state television station *Al Iraqiya*. From here Saddam's execution then circulated internationally from one media platform to another. Vian Bakir believes that:

[g]iven the complexity of the political situation, for Saddam Hussein's execution to convey the appropriate political message, maximum control over the imagery was needed – including who should execute him, and where, and when. The execution was the result of an Iraqi-governed trial, itself a response to the groundswell of support for “Iraqi ownership” of the state-building process and a signal of Iraq's capacity to self-govern.... When the execution should happen was [also] the subject of debate between Iraqi officials as, under Iraqi law, no execution could be carried out during religious holidays. The Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha began on Saturday for Sunnis and Sunday for the Shi'a, who now controlled Iraq's government. As such, the decision to execute Saddam Hussein on the Saturday could well have been interpreted by Sunnis as a major sectarian slight.... Whether or not the timing was wise is another matter, but what is clear is that such decisions were carefully deliberated, with the aim of exercising political control over a volatile situation.<sup>540</sup>

Bakir's points align with my own about image munitions because she describes how the new Iraqi government were aware throughout the planning of Saddam's execution that footage of his execution had the potential to function positively or negatively as a weapon, depending on how it was managed. Bakir's argument also clearly points out just how much the new Iraqi government misunderstood the uncontrollability of images in the information age by thinking that in pre-planning all aspects of the execution they would be able to somehow control its dissemination and circulation and so control its political message. In fact the new Iraqi government were always going to lose control of Saddam's execution and its political message, beyond the initial deployment of his execution image munition.

Although Saddam's execution was not public in the way described by Foucault<sup>541</sup> (no large crowds gathered) it was public in another way: transmitted to an audience of millions through the media. Audiences' were given ‘ringside seats’<sup>542</sup> in front of their television and computer screens to watch Saddam's execution. The new Iraqi government had not accounted for the fact that this same audience would also be able

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<sup>540</sup> Vian Bakir, 'Tele-Technologies, Control, and Sousveillance: Saddam Hussein - De-Deification and the Beast'. *Popular Communication* 7, no. 1 (2009), p. 10

<sup>541</sup> See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 58

<sup>542</sup> Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 168

to redeploy and remediate his execution footage for their own political purposes, distinct from the original political message of the new Iraqi government. The *Al Iraqiya* execution image munition will now be examined more closely.

*Al Iraqiya's* Saddam Hussein execution video was filmed, according to Bakir, by 'Ali Al Massedy normally Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki's official videographer.'<sup>543</sup> It began with the former Iraqi President being led into the execution chamber, by his executioners, who each wore black balaclavas to help disguise their identities – a modern twist on the traditional executioner's mask. His executioners can then be seen leading the shackled former Iraqi President up the steps of the scaffold and out onto the platform, positioning him carefully over the trapdoor. Saddam can then be seen staring at the floor. In a final act of defiance Saddam had refused to wear the traditional black hood. This garment is traditionally placed over the head of the condemned thus shielding audiences from the actual moment of death. However, Saddam wanted to be transformed into a martyr and a 'privileged execution'<sup>544</sup> – like the wearing of a black hood – would have threatened this. Parallels can be drawn here with Hannah Arendt's account of Adolf Eichmann's execution: "I don't need that", he said when the black hood was offered him. He was in complete command of himself, nay, he was more: he was completely himself.'<sup>545</sup> The noose was then placed around Saddam's neck. To help spare audiences from witnessing Saddam's actual moment of death, and to indirectly ensure that his execution was privileged,<sup>546</sup> the video then cuts to a later scene of a dead Saddam wrapped in a white death shroud. Despite attempts by the Iraqi government to control the spectacle of Saddam's execution (by limiting video access to Ali Al Massedy) a remediation battle soon ensued following the release of an unofficial Saddam execution video over the internet.

This video was, according to Bakir, 'an act of user-generated content, illegally and secretly filmed through the railings of the scaffold by a security guard at Saddam Hussein's execution on a mobile phone and uploaded to the Web 12 hours later that

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<sup>543</sup> Bakir, 'Tele-Technologies', p. 11

<sup>544</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 58

<sup>545</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, NJ: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 252

<sup>546</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 58

same day.<sup>547</sup> This unofficial video or image munition – which spared audiences none of the gruesome details of Saddam’s final moments and also did not afford him a privileged execution – then quickly circulated virally on *YouTube*, through emails and mobile phones and therefore reached a massive international audience. Bakir believes:

this [video] showed that rather than being “frightened and terrified” in the moment before his death, Saddam Hussein repeatedly denounced the Americans and called for all Iraqis to resist them, stating that he was unafraid of death and shouting “the Muslim Ummah [community] will be victorious,” and “Palestine is Arab.”... As Saddam Hussein stands on the gallows, one observer is heard to tell him to “go to hell.” Saddam replies, “The hell that is Iraq?” Amid such exchanges, a man appeals for propriety, pleading, “Please, stop. The man is facing an execution.” Saddam begins to recite the Shahadah, an act of faith performed by Muslims prior to death, but before he has completed the second recitation the trap door is opened and he falls to his death. Approximately 15 seconds after Saddam Hussein is seen falling through the trap door, the camera phone lingers on his forcedly upturned face, lit from above, swinging from a rope.<sup>548</sup>

What this illicit footage reveals – like the official footage – is that Saddam was defiant to the very end, but what this footage also reveals – unlike the official footage – is that Saddam also faced admonishment from some of those present in the execution chamber and attempts were also made to try and maintain a sense of decency around his execution. However, although this image munition has circulated widely – for obvious reasons, the fact that it shows the gruesome scene of Saddam’s lifeless body swinging from a rope – it has not received as large a mainstream circulation as the official *Al Iraqiya* execution image munition. Instead the footage has been widely denounced by the Iraqi government, the Bush administration, the Blair government and beyond. Regardless, this image munition has been – and continues to be – damaging for both the Iraqi government and Coalition forces. It works in Al Qaeda’s favour because it shows the new Iraqi government in a bad light humiliating Saddam Hussein and therefore it could bring wavering jihadists over to Al Qaeda’s cause. Saddam’s reputation as a martyr was indeed cemented with his very public execution as it was the ultimate humiliation.

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<sup>547</sup> Bakir, 'Tele-Technologies', p. 12

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12



Sean Redmond has remarked of the unofficial Saddam execution video that it enabled him to bring the war body home and engage fully with the footage:

I could rewind and fast-forward, I could re-edit the footage, and I could copy it and send it to others, partaking in the trade of images of the war body on screen. I could kill and kill again; and I could reanimate, give life to, Hussein the Tryant. I could give life and death to the war body on screen. I too could be a warrior tyrant.<sup>549</sup>

Redmond also argues: 'I also knew that the war body on screen can never be disappeared: a billion mobile phones and low-end digital cameras will see to that. *YouTube* will see to that.'<sup>550</sup> Since Saddam's execution, and the ensuing remediation battle, the Iraqi government have also realized that they cannot control the spectacle of execution. Members of Saddam's former government who have since been found guilty of committing similar crimes against humanity have been executed without becoming the subjects of media spectacle: as official photographers, mobile phones and digital cameras have all been banned from the execution chamber.<sup>551</sup>

What the above discussion has revealed is that the insurgency phase of the war in Iraq has indeed been dominated by misjudged media spectacles, or misfired image munitions, once again proving that the Pentagon – and more recently the new Iraqi government – has failed to respond effectively to the new security challenges posed by the new image warfare theatre of war. Because in reality the Bush administration and the new Iraqi government were always going to loose control of the image munitions featuring the capture, trial and execution of Saddam Hussein after their initial deployment. I will now turn to discuss some examples which describe the uncontrollable remediation of Saddam image munitions beyond news networks and jihadi internet propaganda.

For example, a screen-grab from Saddam's medical examination video, where an army physician can be seen shining a medical torch into his mouth, has been edited

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<sup>549</sup> Sean Redmond, 'Introduction: The War Body on Screen', in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), p. 18

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 18-19

<sup>551</sup> This reflects the lawful execution of prisoners in the US and beyond. For an account of American lawful executions see Stephen Trombley, *The Execution Protocol: A Controversial and Shocking Look into America's Capital Punishment Industry from the Inside* (London: Century, 1993)

together with the following caption: ‘The U.S. military searches Saddam for weapons of mass destruction.’ This is a satirical attack against the Bush administration who built their case for going to war in Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein from power around the fact that Iraq had WMD that were a threat to Western security. At the end of what the Bush administration called major combat operations no WMD had been found. The producer of this image parody is making a comment about the absence of WMD in Iraq and how the only place left to search for them is seemingly on Saddam’s person, specifically in his mouth.

Four political cartoons will now be examined. Kevin Robertson has drawn a cartoon of Saddam’s execution which shows him, to the right, with a noose around his neck, asking: ‘What are you doing?’ To the left is a masked man with a camera-phone, answering: ‘Playing “Hangman.”’ The caption reads: ‘During the execution of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, a cell phone camera was used to spread the “noose” around the world...’ This cartoon depicts Saddam’s execution as justice, as sport and as souvenir. It also, with its caption, explains how the spectacle of his execution quickly became news around the world.

A cartoon by Martin Rowson shows three masked men (Saddam’s executioners) sitting down while Saddam’s rotting legs, surrounded by flies, hangs from a rope. A speech bubble coming from the side of the cartoon reads: ‘Do it again! It still ain’t dignified enough...’. This cartoon points to the conflicting relationship the West currently has with representations of death. People wanted to witness the spectacle of his execution/death but they also wanted to make sure that his execution was dignified. It is almost as though in striving to make his mediated execution more dignified this somehow raises Saddam’s executioners morally above Al Qaeda who have executed hostages on video in Iraq.

In another cartoon Matt Glover has drawn the lower half of a bound Saddam Hussein hanging from the scaffold, while two spectators look on. One of the spectators asks the other. ‘Remind me how this makes us any better than him...’ This cartoon makes the argument that through mediating the execution of Saddam Hussein any moral divisions which previously separated the Iraqi, American and British governments from him have now been eroded.

Harley Schwadron's cartoon shows a school boy sat at home in front of his computer, while his Mum is standing in the doorway – presumably telling her son to get on with his homework. The boy responds: 'I'm not goofing off. I'm watching Saddam's hanging on *YouTube* for my current events class.' This cartoon shows how through mediating Saddam's execution, and because unauthorized camera-phone footage of his execution also exists, the subject of execution has now become normalized to the point where it could be the subject of a child's current events class at school. All of these political cartoons are aimed at attacking the Bush administration and the new Iraqi government over their ill-thought-out attempts to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people by releasing humiliating images of Saddam Hussein's capture, trial and execution.

A number of subversive interventions have also been made. A selection of them will now be explored. Saddam Hussein has become the subject of a mock *Norelco* electric razor advert. The advert shows two images of Saddam Hussein – one of him looking dishevelled just after his capture and the other shows him clean shaven with a moustache. The advert reads: 'A shave fit for a dictator! Try the new Norelco Spectra, the razor of choice by the US Special Forces!... Ideal for even the most stubborn beards!' The producer of this image parody is making reference to the fact that following his capture American Special Forces were able to completely control Saddam. The *Norelco* razor is employed here to show just how Saddam has been transformed, since his capture, from a wild and unpredictable figure (looking dishevelled) back into his familiar figure (clean shaven and with a moustache) the subject of so much international derision and hatred.

Another parody features the image of President Bush presenting the troops, in Iraq; with a Thanksgiving turkey (an image which has been widely criticised because of the fact that the turkey was manufactured as a photo-opportunity by the military) only the turkey has been photoshopped out and replaced instead with the dishevelled head of Saddam just after his capture. This image makes reference to the fact that the Bush administration presented Saddam to the waiting world following his capture but how this was, like the Thanksgiving turkey, merely a manufactured photo-opportunity designed by the military to win over the hearts and minds of Iraqis.

Saddam's dishevelled head can also be seen peaking out of the first 'o' in the *Google* logo, whilst two US soldiers stand and look on. This image is ironic because it shows Saddam hiding in the first 'o' of the *Google* logo, *Google* being the world's most popular internet search engine. The producer of this image parody was making a sarcastic reference to the fact that the Bush administration's hunt for Saddam was still ongoing.

The dishevelled head of Saddam has also been superimposed onto the body of a *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* makeover participant. Thus making it seem as though the 'Fab Five' have made over Saddam: styling his hair, trimming his beard and giving him a manicure and also giving him a new identity. This image parody is yet another sarcastic reference to the fact that Saddam has still not been caught and somewhat irreverently it shows Saddam on the run turning to a popular American television makeover show for advice on how to change his appearance and so keep evading capture.

Conan O'Brien, host of the NBC show *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, following Saddam's execution, made the following joke: 'A cell phone video has surfaced of Saddam Hussein's hanging and officials are trying to figure out who shot the video. People who were at the hanging say it was probably the guy who kept yelling, "Hey, keep it down. I'm on the phone here.'" O'Brien is making a joke here at the expense of the new Iraqi government over the fact that they thought that they could control the airing of Saddam's execution in the age of video-phones and the internet.

Video parodies of Saddam's execution can also be found on *YouTube*. One titled *Execution of Saddam Hussein: Official video from Iraqi Ministry of Information* features Saddam as a finger puppet pleading for clemency, with a Cartman-like voice, then the finger puppet is shown being hung with a knotted shoelace. Another video mimics the unofficial execution camera-phone footage, reproduced with *Lego* figures. The video features the following subtitles:

Executioner: Do you have anything to say?

Saddam: Anyone up for a game of "Hangman"?

Guards: [Laughter]

Executioner: Pull the Switch!

These particular *YouTube* videos are a satirical reference to the fact that the new Iraqi government mistakenly believed that it could produce, disseminate and control the circulation of Saddam's execution spectacle. All of these subversive interventions make fun of official attempts by the Bush administration and the new Iraqi government to win over the hearts and minds of the Iraqi public via the production and dissemination of Saddam Hussein image munitions.

These interventions parody the image munitions documenting Saddam Hussein's capture/trial/execution. They are produced by new media actors who operate beyond the control and censorship of traditional top-down information management systems, still popular with America and the new Iraqi government, and are further proof that the spectacle of execution cannot be controlled in the information age. These remediations also reveal that because of the free floating and unpredictable nature of image munitions people are increasingly able to come into contact with Saddam's image in surprising new places – beyond the range of the traditional media – thus bringing Saddam to the attention of new audience demographics. For example, people are confronted by Saddam's image when they go online to check their email and go on *YouTube* (and see Saddam in *Lego*, in the *Google* logo or as a contestant on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*). Saddam is also a rich source of material for comedians and as such he confronts people when they watch comedy; for example, Conan O'Brien's joke about Saddam's execution on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*. Al Qaeda again shows here how it has learnt an important lesson in the war of images – unlike America and the new Iraqi government. That it cannot hope to control the flow of image munitions, beyond their initial deployment, as they will get picked up and deployed by new media actors who have their own distinct intentions. Consequently, Al Qaeda instead focussed its attention on maximising the immediate impact for its Saddam Hussein image munitions.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the role of executions in the new image theatre of war. I began by historically situating hijackings and hostage-takings – with reference to a diverse range of examples – showing how they are examples of early image munition experiments, employed to gain a media presence and to promote an us versus them distinction. Then hostages and executions were conceptualized with specific reference to ‘voluntary’ and ‘involuntary’ hostages and Baudrillard’s discussion of hostages through the prism of ‘symbolic exchange’. Attention then shifted to examine the contemporary hostage-takings of Pearl, Berg, Bigley and Johnston, thus showing that contemporary hostages are the subjects of increasingly sophisticated image munitions. The Johnston hostage-taking in the Gaza Strip, the foiled Birmingham hostage plot and the mimetic of hostage videos within popular culture all prove that contemporary hostage-taking is still symbolically powerful. Beyond news network footage and jihadi internet propaganda hostage images continue to circulate and are also remediated by people with distinct intentions from those of governments and Al Qaeda. Indeed further evidence that the circulation of images cannot be controlled in the information age.

I then turned to discuss the hunt for Uday and Qusay Hussein and how the decision to show their death images within the media rather than winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis instead produced a number of damaging image munitions which have since been picked up and deployed by Al Qaeda against the Bush administration and have also been picked up and remediated by new media actors with intentions that are distinct from those of the Pentagon and Al Qaeda. I then discussed how these same mistakes were made, again with the intention of winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis, with the mediated capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein. The Bush administration and the new Iraqi governments decision to transform Saddam into a media spectacle has also resulted in the production of a series of damaging image munitions that Al Qaeda has since deployed against the Bush administration. People with divergent intentions from the Pentagon, the new Iraqi government and Al Qaeda have since also picked up and remediated these Saddam image munitions. The fact that the death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein and the images documenting the capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein now appear in a diverse range of surprising new image contexts is again evidence of the uncontrollability and unpredictability of the circulation of images in the rhizomatic condition.

The next chapter will discuss the role of abuses in the war on terror. This case study is distinct from my previous thematic case studies because rather than examining images that were produced with the original intention of being made publicly available and being weaponized I will instead be exploring prisoner abuses, Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme. These were supposed to remain invisible but have instead been picked up, weaponized and deployed by Al Qaeda, anti-war protesters and NGO's against America and Britain.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Abuses**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapters One and Two I developed the theoretical part of this thesis. Exploring how society has shifted from a mass media age to a rhizomatic media age (defined by the uncontrollable and unpredictable circulation of information and images) and then examining the impact of this shift on contemporary war: a move from techno-war to image warfare. I then embarked on the empirical part of this thesis, a series of four thematic case studies examining the wider theatre of image warfare. Chapter Three explored the ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ political communication image munitions produced by President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and bin Laden and their circulation and remediation in the war on terror. Chapter Four examined the symbolic dimension of suicide terrorism, how it is an important source of powerful image munitions which Al Qaeda produces and deploys in the war of images and how new media actors have also remediated these suicide terrorism image munitions. Chapter Five discussed how the visualising of hijackings, hostage-takings and hostage executions have over time become increasingly sophisticated and how the hostage image munitions produced are also now subject to unpredictable remediation, appearing in surprising new contexts which depart from the original intentions of Al Qaeda. I also saw how the transformation of the hunt for Uday and Qusay Hussein and the capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein into media spectacles were misjudged because instead of winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis they resulted in a number of damaging image munitions being deployed against the Pentagon and the new Iraqi government by Al Qaeda. They have also been picked up and used by new media actors with intentions that are distinct from those of Al Qaeda.

In this chapter I focus on abuses in the war on terror. This case study is distinct from my previous case studies because it examines images which were not originally produced as media spectacles, or image munitions, but were instead later deployed as



damaging image munitions against America and Britain. President George W. Bush, on September 20, 2001, in an address made to Congress and the American people, declared that the war on terror would be ‘unlike any other [war] we have ever seen.’<sup>552</sup> He then proceeded to declaim that this war ‘may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success.’<sup>553</sup> Elsewhere I have argued that ‘[w]hat this paradox shows... is the schizophrenic nature of the Bush administration’s war on terror. Where, at one end, visualization is encouraged, at the other, invisibility is encouraged.’<sup>554</sup> This case study examines a range of ‘covert operations’ which have taken place since September 11<sup>th</sup> and have become subsequently visible, thus proving, once again, that the spectacle of war cannot be controlled because in the information age the spectacle of abuse will not remain out of sight. This uncontrollability is further emphasised by the fact that these abuses – perpetrated by the American and British militaries – were able to be filmed and photographed by military personnel (semi-autonomous agents) and then became unintentionally weaponized against the Bush administration and the Blair government.

I will conceptualise war abuses, showing that although warfare is punctuated by instances of abuse, traditionally they have remained out of sight. Where they have become visible they have been mobilized by anti-war movements and popular culture. This ‘other’/invisible war on terror will then be discussed, in detail, with reference to Nicholas Mirzoeff’s account of ‘The Empire of Camps’ and how it has since become visible and the focus of intense military/political/public debate and has resulted in the production of a number of powerful image munitions and counter-image munitions and continues to be the subject of remediation battles. I will then explore the uncertainty surrounding the weaponizing of the Abu Ghraib images and identify when they actually underwent their transition from unauthorized trophy shots to weaponized images, discussing specific Abu Ghraib image munitions and also exploring their circulation and remediation. Two other features of the invisible war on terror – Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme – will then be surveyed, exploring examples of remediation. I will then explore General Sir

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<sup>552</sup> President George W. Bush, 20/09/2001, Unpaginated

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>554</sup> Roger, ‘Watching Babylon’, p. 95

Michael Jackson's announcement of an investigation into the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by some British soldiers, the publication of faked prisoner abuse images in *The Daily Mirror* (which raises important questions about the relationship between real and faked abuse images and also about the invisibility/visibility of abuses in the war on terror) and the making public of real abuse images from Camp Breadbasket in Iraq. Finally, the 'own goal effect' of abuse images will be explored and reference made to the early steps taken by President Barack Obama to try and exorcise Bush's schizophrenic legacy of simultaneously manufacturing visibility and enforcing invisibility in the new image warfare theatre of war.

### **Conceptualizing War Abuses**

Warfare, especially since the advent of photography, is peppered with accounts of abuse where the laws of war have been violated: the Crimean War,<sup>555</sup> the American Civil War,<sup>556</sup> the Boer War,<sup>557</sup> the First World War; the Spanish Civil War,<sup>558</sup> the Second World War; the Algerian War; the Vietnam War; the Cambodian Civil War<sup>559</sup> and beyond. However, war abuses have largely remained hidden. This is because in the age of mass media communication governments and militaries were better placed to control what images the press reported. When war abuses are visualized this is evidence of governments and militaries losing control of the flow of information. On these occasions these images quickly become mobilized by anti-war movements, as was the case with the My Lai Massacre images, and also the subject of popular culture, like Gillo Pontecorvo's film *The Battle of Algiers* (although this film was made after the Algerian War). With this in mind, at the end of the First Gulf War the American government, the Pentagon and American news networks were all mindful to maintain the clinical narrative of war by self-censoring negative

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<sup>555</sup> See Ulrich Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (London: Routledge, 2002)

<sup>556</sup> See Anthony W. Lee, and Elizabeth Young, *On Alexander Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008)

<sup>557</sup> See Nicholas Riall, ed. *Boer War: The Letters, Diaries and Photographs of Malcolm Riall from the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, 1999)

<sup>558</sup> See Robert Capa, *Heart of Spain: Robert Capa's Photographs of the Spanish Civil War* (London: Aperture Foundation, 1999)

<sup>559</sup> See Craig Etcheson, *After the Killing Fields: Lessons from the Cambodian Genocide* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2005)

war abuse images, such as the infamous Turkey Shoot incident. According to Sontag:

American television viewers weren't allowed to see footage acquired by NBC (which the network then declined to run) of what that superiority could wreak: the fate of thousands of Iraqi conscripts who, having fled Kuwait City at the end of the war, on February 27, were carpet bombed with explosives, napalm, radioactive DU (depleted uranium) rounds, and cluster bombs as they headed north, in convoys and on foot, on the road to Basra, Iraq – a slaughter notoriously described by one American officer as a 'turkey shoot'.<sup>560</sup>

These images were in fact not made public until just prior to the Second Gulf War when they featured in the February 14, 2003 edition of *G2* magazine in *The Guardian* newspaper. These gruesome images were finally published, in an effort to mobilize opposition to the invasion of Iraq. During the 2003 Iraq War abuses were once again hidden, substituted by manufactured media spectacles, like Saving Private Lynch, the fall of Saddam's statue and Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech.

In 2004, war abuses finally made the headlines when images appeared showing the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison facility at the hands of some American military personnel. These images were quickly picked up and used by the anti-war movement and non-government organizations (NGO's), such as *Amnesty International* (and will be the subject of the next section). However, apart from Abu Ghraib, abuses were still largely hidden from view. Unlawful combatants in the Guantanamo Bay internment camp were still shrouded in mystery, appearing only in a limited number of official images. Detainees are shown in these images wearing orange coloured jump-suits. These official images have since been copied by contemporary hostage-takers, where hostages have been made to appear in videos wearing orange coloured jump-suits (see Chapter Five). Since then, unlawful combatants, Extraordinary Rendition and internment centres like Camp X-Ray (now Camp Delta) have also been copied in popular culture: *Rendition*, *24*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Heroes*. According to Randell: 'In an articulating feedback loop, one can [also] read the entire series of *Lost* as a metaphoric, displaced exploration of

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<sup>560</sup> Sontag, *Regarding the Pain*, p. 59

America's rendition policy.<sup>561</sup> These popular culture references to abuses from the war on terror highlight the symbolic power of these abuses and also the fact that they are uncontrollable as they appear in such diverse and unpredictable new contexts.

It is important to also remember that these kinds of abuses are not limited solely to war. Abuses in the war on terror are indeed strikingly similar to the institutionalized forms of abuse found in American prisons. Christopher Reed has pointed out that:

Americans have been mistreating and torturing their fellow Americans in their own lock-ups for decades.... In "liberal" California, horror stories have appeared for years from hellholes such as Pelican Bay prison, where they house "the worst of the worst" -- and also inflict the worst brutalities. A prisoner dumped in scalding water so his skin peeled off like varnish; prisoners left naked outside in rainy and bitter weather for days; multiple beatings and rapes; several unexplained deaths.

In Corcoran prison, California, guards held their own Roman gladiator games with prisoners pitted against each other in fights to the near death. A disliked and defenceless prisoner was placed in the same cell as the biggest and baddest sex criminal -- known as the Booty Bandit -- to be duly raped to the amusement of the prisoner's supposed guardians.<sup>562</sup>

These kinds of abuses now also appear in the prisons and internment camps of the war on terror. This is perhaps unsurprising given that some of the guards, certainly SPC Charles Graner from the Abu Ghraib prison facility, prior to joining the US army had been employed in the American prison system.

'The disappeared' or 'the unseen'<sup>563</sup> indeed played a central role within the Bush administrations war on terror. According to Andrew Hill 'it is possible to point to two broad dimensions of the [empirical] unseen that have weaved their way through the War on Terror.'<sup>564</sup> He sees the first dimension as:

the case of the body of images from Abu Ghraib shown to US senators, but deemed too 'disturbing' to appear elsewhere... The Bush administration's

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<sup>561</sup> Karen Randell, and Sean Redmond, 'Introduction: Setting the Screen', in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), p. 8

<sup>562</sup> Christopher Reed, 'Torture on the Homefront: America's Long History of Prison Abuse', *Counterpunch*, 2004. Available at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/reed05112004.html>. Accessed on 25 February 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>563</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, pp. 117-130

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid*, p. 117

argument on limiting the disclosure of these images centred on their dissemination damaging US interests, and – in yet another example of the duplicity that has so undermined the moral claims made for the War on Terror – that their disclosure would contravene the Geneva Convention against the humiliation of prisoners, by showing prisoners being treated in such a degrading fashion.<sup>565</sup>

And the second dimension:

to deliberately render aspects of the conflict unseen is evident in the injunction against images showing the coffins of US service personnel returning to the United States from Iraq and Afghanistan. Images of this nature have been subject to a Pentagon ruling dating from 1991 – in the wake of the Gulf War – that prohibits the depiction of... [the repatriation of dead US soldiers]. This ruling was however seldom applied, until its strict reinforcement in the wake of the Iraq War, as evinced in the action taken against employees of a cargo contractor in Kuwait whose images of coffins draped in the stars and stripes returning to Dover Air Force base appeared in April 2004 in the *Seattle Times*.<sup>566</sup>

These two dimensions of the unseen, as identified by Hill, the Bush administration's censoring of some of the Abu Ghraib abuse images and its banning of images showing the repatriation of dead US service personnel to Dover Air Force base, are part of a broader landscape of invisibility in the war on terror.

Perhaps the most compelling account of the invisible war on terror has been made by Nicholas Mirzoeff in his discussion of 'the empire of camps.'<sup>567</sup> Mirzoeff has appropriated the term 'empire' from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's book *Empire*<sup>568</sup> which examines 'the new geo-politics of globalization',<sup>569</sup> and appropriated 'hauntology' from Jacques Derrida's work regarding how the spectre of Marx and Communism are still haunting society in the post-Cold War era. Derrida's hauntology is the idea that the present is haunted by the decisions of the past.<sup>570</sup>

According to Mirzoeff:

[t]he undead of the empire of camps remain in an unacknowledged limbo, forced to learn the techniques of the spectre, to replace ontology with

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<sup>565</sup> *Ibid*, p. 117

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid*, p. 118

<sup>567</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, pp. 117-173

<sup>568</sup> See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*

<sup>569</sup> Mirzoeff, 'The Empire of Camps', Unpaginated

<sup>570</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* Translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York, NJ: Routledge, 1994)

hauntology. Such hauntology has its own spectral history and there are lessons to be learnt from the ghosts that have gone before us.<sup>571</sup>

He believes therefore that the empire of camps is a contemporary example of this hauntology as the shadowy spectre of unlawful combatants continues to have an unpredictable impact on the war on terror. This idea relates to my own research about the uncontrollability of image munitions in the rhizomatic condition precisely because 'the undead of the empire of camps' currently haunt the war on terror via image munitions. In fact, Mirzoeff turns to the past where the culture of invisibility has a long history, which can be traced right back to Britain when Jeremy Bentham was proposing his vision of a panoptic prison,<sup>572</sup> in order to learn lessons about invisibility in the war on terror. Bentham's prison idea was one of two plans proposed at the time for dealing with Britain's increasing prison population. Bentham's prison was, according to Mirzoeff, 'characterized... by constant surveillance of the inmates... It took in criminals, prostitutes and other delinquents and turned them into respectable citizens.'<sup>573</sup> Although paradoxically the emphasis here is on scopic power, Mirzoeff's appropriation of the panoptic prison concept is to help him explore invisibility.

The second plan, and the one ultimately adopted, involved the deportation of criminals to the new penal colony which Britain had set up over in Australia. Deportation made these criminals instantly invisible as they had been relocated to the other side of the world. Along with criminals the idea of camps was also exported to Australia where, as Mirzoeff describes, 'in 1860 the Board for the Protection of Aboriginals created internment camps for Aboriginals living in the country in order to separate the category of the native from that of the citizen.'<sup>574</sup> According to Mirzoeff, 'Aboriginals of different peoples and language groups were herded together behind cattle fences in order to quietly die out.'<sup>575</sup> The Board for the Protection of Aboriginals were essentially working to make Aborigines permanently

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<sup>571</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 168

<sup>572</sup> Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)

<sup>573</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, pp. 123-124

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127

invisible. In 1868, Britain stopped sending prisoners out to Australia and instead built more prisons in Britain.

The next phase in the history of camps, discussed by Mirzoeff, was the development of the concentration camp: 'Historians debate whether the first camps to appear were the *campos de concentraciones* created by the Spanish in Cuba in 1896 to suppress the popular insurrection of the colony, or the "concentration camps" into which the English herded the Boers towards the start of the [twentieth] century.'<sup>576</sup>

Then during the Second World War concentration camps were revived by Nazi Germany as a way of rounding up Jews, homosexuals and disabled people and making them invisible. This was when concentration camps fundamentally changed from being places where the visible simply became the invisible, to places where whole populations were exterminated. A single image taken by Margaret Bourke-White, which was published in the May 7, 1945 issue of *LIFE* magazine, of prisoners standing at the fence of Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany has come to act as a metonym for the previously invisible populations of concentration camps during WWII.

As the Cold War ended 'the camps' were again revived, first in Australia, back in 1992, where, according to Mirzoeff, 'everyone seeking asylum or refugee status in Australia... [was] sent to remote refugee camps, which have been convincingly linked to the nineteenth-century camps for Aborigines. The new internment camps are not reforming institutions but simply serve as detention centers.'<sup>577</sup> Similar camps to Woomera, in Australia, also began to appear right across the globe. In Britain at Yarl's Wood refugees and migrants were made invisible and at Sangatte in France refugees also disappeared from view. According to Daniel Joyce: 'This shift has attempted to contain in 'the camp' migrants and refugees whilst encouraging the movement of goods and information.'<sup>578</sup> These new internment camps have been the subject of much public debate and political controversy in the years since they were

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<sup>576</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.166

<sup>577</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 143

<sup>578</sup> Daniel Joyce, 'Book Review: Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture by Nicholas Mirzoeff'. *Global Media and Communication* 1, no. 3 (2005), p. 380

first opened. Mirzoeff has highlighted one particular incident where by way of protest '[t]he poet Abas Amini, a Kurdish refugee in Britain, sewed both his mouth and his eyes closed to protest his ordered deportation to Iran in May 2003.'<sup>579</sup> His protest was particularly symbolic because he denied himself his sight and his ability to speak in order to show how since being detained he had become invisible and voiceless. Reuters photographer Paul Vreeker shot an image munion of Amini's protest which has since circulated internationally. This image also won second place in the 2004 World Press Photo Awards.<sup>580</sup>

The Howard government in Australia possibly received the greatest backlash of all regarding its treatment of refugees when the *MV Tampa* was refused emergency permission to land on Christmas Island in August 2001 following the rescue of hundreds of refugees aboard a sinking ship.<sup>581</sup> This controversy was soon overshadowed, however, by the events of September 11, 2001. Mirzoeff's claim, though, is that, as he summarises: 'September 11 did not create these camps but has engendered a legitimating context in which the empire of camps has emerged in its pomp, generating xenophobia and attacks on multiculturalism around the globe.'<sup>582</sup>

Post-9/11, America quickly adapted its existing detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for housing Cuban and Haitian refugees, and set up a temporary terrorist detention camp, Camp X-Ray. Mirzoeff has picked up on the significance of Camp X-Ray through its name: 'X-Ray, a place beyond normal vision, in which mere flesh cannot be seen.'<sup>583</sup> This detention facility has since been decommissioned and replaced instead by a permanent facility, Camp Delta, also situated in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. According to Mirzoeff, 'the camp is the panopticon for our time'<sup>584</sup> and its new use as a detention facility for terrorist suspects has been adopted by many other countries. Therefore, in the war on terror the panopticon has been reversed.

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<sup>579</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 149

<sup>580</sup> Engin F. Isin, and Kim Rygiel, 'Abject Spaces: Frontiers, Zones, Camps', in *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving*, eds. Elizabeth Dauphinee and Christina Masters (New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 182. This image is reminiscent of a scene in *Silence = Death*, a film by Rosa von Praunheim, where the artist David Wojnarowicz is shown sewing together his closed lips.

<sup>581</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, pp. 143-144

<sup>582</sup> Mirzoeff, 'The Empire of Camps', Unpaginated

<sup>583</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 144

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146



Mirzoeff believes that ‘while the panopticon wanted its prisoners visible at all times, the camps want their inmates to be permanently invisible. The Bush administration has invented a new category of criminal, the “enemy combatant,” who can be detained at will because their presumed actions render them without value.’<sup>585</sup> Judith Butler believes that “indefinite detention” does not signify an exceptional circumstance, but, rather, the means by which the exceptional becomes established as a naturalized norm.’<sup>586</sup>

Following on from this the US government also passed The Patriot Act. Both enemy combatants (also known as ‘unlawful combatants’) and The Patriot Act were a ‘state of exception’<sup>587</sup> response to the events of 9/11 which quickly became the new norm.<sup>588</sup> According to Michael J. Shapiro, this “state of exception” ‘has devolved into an ecology of encampments’<sup>589</sup> and has

proliferated a global patchwork of gulags, zones of incarceration in Afghanistan and Iraq, where prisoners are held, and outsourced spaces of incarceration and interrogation for “detainees” worldwide, the United States has not simply consorted with murderers and sadists; some of its own personnel, who have operated with positive official sanction, fit the description.<sup>590</sup>

Mirzoeff believes ‘Iraq is now functioning as a camp.’<sup>591</sup> He also recognizes that ‘the camps are themselves the center of an expanding transnational industry...a market that has been cornered by the multinational Halliburton.’<sup>592</sup> It is therefore in the interest of the hegemonic powers to maintain the empire of camps.<sup>593</sup>

Mirzoeff also offers the following intriguing response to the Abu Ghraib abuses. He argues that after Abu Ghraib ‘it seems possible to envisage an end to the empire of camps.’<sup>594</sup> Because, he believes, ‘a visual image changes the dynamics of the

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<sup>585</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149

<sup>586</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p. 67

<sup>587</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005)

<sup>588</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 133

<sup>589</sup> Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, p. 46

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50

<sup>591</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 154

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid*, p. 152

<sup>593</sup> Roger, ‘Watching Babylon’, p. 95

<sup>594</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 181

invisibility of the empire of camps.<sup>595</sup> More recently, in 2006, Mirzoeff has pointed out how:

during the subsequent U.S. presidential election campaign, Abu Ghraib never became an issue, so that it was not even mentioned in the debates. Paradoxically, these photographs seem to have remained invisible in the United States even as they were circulated around the world.<sup>596</sup>

With the distance of a couple of years Mirzoeff has rethought his position on the initial impact of the Abu Ghraib abuse images on the empire of camps, in fact he has gone so far as to stress that 'alongside these changes, the empire of camps continues to flourish. The revived insurrection in Iraq has turned cities like Fallujah and Najaf into camps within the camp, reinforcing the sense of intractable moral deviance that motivates the system.'<sup>597</sup>

However, though a compelling account of the history of invisibility, the war in Iraq and the invisible war on terror Mirzoeff's book *Watching Babylon* (which was completed, bar its afterword, prior to the breaking of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal) and his response to Abu Ghraib (published in 2006) do not recognize the proliferation, penetration and remediation of abuse image munitions in the new image warfare theatre of war. His argument does, however, show how America mistakenly – and somewhat arrogantly – believes that they can still control the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror, even following the revelations about abuse at Abu Ghraib. It is to the visual documenting of that abuse that I will now turn.

### **Abu Ghraib: A New Visibility**

On April 28, 2004 the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, at the hands of American military personnel from the 800<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade became the focus of public attention when the controversy was aired on the CBS news show *60 Minutes II*. On April 30, 2004, Seymour M. Hersh (the journalist who first broke the story of the My Lai Massacre) also published an article online for *The New Yorker*

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<sup>595</sup> *Ibid*, p. 180

<sup>596</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle, and Abu Ghraib'. *Radical History Review*, no. 95 (2006), p. 21

<sup>597</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 176

magazine in which he discussed the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. Also, on April 30<sup>th</sup> the Abu Ghraib abuse images were first aired on the Arabic news channels: Al Jazeera and Al-Arabiya.<sup>598</sup>

Now picture the scene. First, a bound prisoner sat in a chair, with a peg on his nose, whilst his open mouth is held under a running water tap – so as to simulate drowning. The process is repeated again and again until the bound prisoner surrenders information. Second, a prisoner is shown kneeling before a large wooden barrel filled with water while his head is dunked under the water for varying periods of time, again simulating drowning. Third, a prisoner has his hands bound above his head, with his arms forming into a ‘v’ shape. A few military personnel can also be seen hanging around in the background of this scene while one soldier handles a blow torch and applies the naked flame to the prisoner’s naked flesh. Fourth, is a prisoner with his hands and feet bound together, lying on his back as he is slowly raised up into the air by a rope that is attached to a length of wood which passes between his bound arms and legs. Fifth, another prisoner, bound to a chair with electrodes attached to both his ear lobes, writhes with pain each time an electric current is passed through his body. The final scene returns to the prisoner suspended from the ceiling, though this time he appears unconscious.

These are not descriptions of abuse from the Abu Ghraib prison facility in Iraq. They are descriptions of the abuse of Algerian detainees depicted within the 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers* by Gillo Pontecorvo. Prior to the breaking of the Abu Ghraib abuse story, back in April 2004, these fictional scenes of abuse formed part of the iconography of torture and abuse along with other sources such as Christ in art. Pontecorvo’s film was also presented as a guide to fighting insurgency operations, by the Pentagon, when it was screened to US military personnel. The Abu Ghraib abuse scandal has successfully managed to create a new iconography of torture – thus replacing these old iconographic representations. This so-called new iconography comprises images depicting actual abuses, rather than the abuses which Pontecorvo so expertly directed within his film or the abuse of Christ which artists have painted and sketched for centuries.

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<sup>598</sup> Lila Rajiva, *The Language of Empire: Abu Ghraib and the American Media* (New York, NJ: Monthly Review Press, 2005), p. 11

Immediately audiences of the Abu Ghraib abuse images were shocked, repulsed, transfixed and left with a 'void of meaning.'<sup>599</sup> Meaning started to be assigned to these abuse images following the publication of Hersh's first Abu Ghraib article for *The New Yorker* magazine. Many thousands of lines of copy had already been written by other journalists, following the airing of the *60 Minutes II* show. Hersh, however, is credited with breaking the Abu Ghraib abuse story. This is because where most journalists were merely reporting specifically on the issues raised by the *60 Minutes II* investigation Hersh drew on his own investigative research, having received a leaked copy of the military report investigating abuse claims at the Abu Ghraib prison facility.

In contrast to the My Lai Massacre, and prior to the abuses at Abu Ghraib being made public, the American military had already begun an investigation following Sgt Joseph Darby anonymously making available a CD-ROM of Abu Ghraib abuse images. This investigation *The Article 15-6 Investigation of the 800<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade*, more commonly known as *The Taguba Report*, was headed up by Major General Antonio Taguba who began his investigations in January 2004. This report is significant because it shows how the Pentagon underestimated the Abu Ghraib abuse images and the uncontrollability of images in the information age; mistakenly believing that it could investigate the Abu Ghraib abuses, keep the report of their investigations secret and also keep the Abu Ghraib images discussed in the report from being made public. The remit for his investigation was as follows:

that between October and December 2003, at the Abu Ghraib Confinement Facility (BCCF), numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees. This systematic and illegal abuse of detainees was intentionally perpetrated by several members of the military police guard force (372<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Company, 320<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade), in Tier (section) 1-A of the Abu Ghraib Prison (BCCF). The allegations of abuse were substantiated by detailed witness statements... and the discovery of extremely graphic photographic evidence. ...In addition to the aforementioned crimes, there were also abuses committed

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<sup>599</sup> Jackson, *Writing the War*, p. 29

by members of the 325<sup>th</sup> MI Battalion, 205<sup>th</sup> MI Brigade, and Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Center (JIDC).<sup>600</sup>

During his extensive investigations MG Taguba and his team of investigators reviewed a number of witness statements, the abuse images themselves, the policy systems and command structures in place during the time period and interviewed many of the military personnel, and some of the prisoners, who were at the Abu Ghraib prison facility at the time. Taguba identified major failings in the command chain, overseen by BG Janis L. Karpinski, and poor morale among the military personnel stationed at Abu Ghraib. For this he gave the following explanation:

Prior to BG Karpinski taking command, members of the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade believed they would be allowed to go home when all the detainees were released from the Camp Bucca Theater Internment Facility following the cessation of major ground combat on 1 May 2003. At one point, approximately 7,000 to 8,000 detainees were held at Camp Bucca. Through Article-5 Tribunals and a screening process, several thousand detainees were released. Many in the command believed they would go home when the detainees were released. In late May – early June 2003 the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade was given a new mission to manage the Iraqi penal system and several detention centers. The new mission meant the Soldiers would not redeploy to CONUS when anticipated.<sup>601</sup>

Coinciding with this new mission was the transition of command from BG Paul Hill to BG Karpinski and new duties and responsibilities pertaining specifically to the overseeing of prisoners. Taguba found that military personnel had not been adequately trained for these new duties and that Karpinski and LTC Jerry L. Phillabaum had little contact with the individual soldiers stationed at Abu Ghraib. Therefore *The Taguba Report* laid most of the blame for this episode with the commanding officers and recommended that each of them be relieved of their command and issued with a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand.<sup>602</sup> Taguba also recommended that LTC Phillabaum's name 'be removed from the Colonel / 0-6 Promotion List'.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Major General Antonio Taguba, 'Article 15-6 Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade', 2004. Available at: [http://www.npr.org/iraq/2004/prison\\_abuse\\_report.pdf](http://www.npr.org/iraq/2004/prison_abuse_report.pdf). Accessed on 10 July 2008, p. 16

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 36-37

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 44-45

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45

However, following the breaking of the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal public pressure soon mounted against even more senior members of the Bush administration. For example, on May 8, 2004 *The Economist* ran a black front cover with the following headline in bold yellow letters: 'Resign, Rumsfeld'. This headline was also accompanied by the powerful image munition of a man in a hood, with his arms out straight holding wires and fearing electrocution.<sup>604</sup> Public pressure was also increasing on those military personnel, who had been directly responsible. As a result a number of military personnel who appeared in the abuse images or who were found to have shot the images were court-marshalled. Two of these, SPC Graner<sup>605</sup> and SPC England,<sup>606</sup> were court-marshalled in January 2005 and found guilty of committing war crimes. Both were sentenced to serve time in military prisons and upon release be Dishonourably Discharged from the US Army. LTC Phillabaum has since received his General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand and he been removed from the Colonel / O-6 Promotion List. In May 2005 BG Karpinski was demoted to Colonel. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld survived the fallout from Abu Ghraib but announced his resignation on November 8, 2006. He has since stated that during the controversial period immediately following the making public of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses he offered President Bush his resignation on two separate occasions but on both occasions the offer was rejected. Colonel Karpinski has since publicly stated that she believes she has been made the scapegoat for this highly embarrassing episode in America's war on terror. The next section will identify when the Abu Ghraib images became weaponized and also discuss several of the Abu Ghraib image munitions.

### **Abu Ghraib: Image Munitions**

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<sup>604</sup> Nathan Roger, 'Abuse and Death in the Media! The Exploitation of Prisoners of War as a Focus Of "Public Curiosity"'. *Aberystwyth Journal of World Affairs*, no. 2 (2004), p. 99

<sup>605</sup> Kate Zernike, 'U.S. Soldier Found Guilty in Iraq Prison Abuse Case', *The New York Times*, 15 January 2005. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/15/national/15abuse.html>. Accessed on 4 June 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>606</sup> Nathan Levy, 'Private England Pleads Guilty to Abuses', *The New York Times*, 03 May 2005. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/03/national/03abuse.html>. Accessed on 4 June 2009, Unpaginated. Lynndie England's official biography has since been written. See Gary S. Winkler, *Tortured: Lynndie England, Abu Ghraib and the Photographs That Shocked the World* (Keyser, WV: Bad Apple Books, 2009)

Two narratives, Mirzoeff on the empire of camps (the so-called invisible war on terror) and the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses (which represent a 'new visibility'<sup>607</sup> that may 'despectralise'<sup>608</sup> or 'de-mystify' war abuses in the war on terror) have already been discussed. These abuse images, according to Mark Danner, 'have long since taken their place in the gallery of branded images, as readily recognizable in much of the world as Marilyn struggling with her billowing dress or Michael dunking his basket ball.'<sup>609</sup> These revelations about Abu Ghraib are, therefore, proof that the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror cannot be controlled.

I will now turn to address the uncertainty surrounding when the Abu Ghraib images actually became weaponized. The abuse images were taken by military personnel on their digital cameras and camera-phones at the prison facility in Iraq as sadistic souvenirs of their tour of duty and also as tools for use in interrogations to threaten prisoners with the use of violence. In the process the soldiers were transformed, according to Sontag, into 'photographers – recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities – and swapping images among themselves.'<sup>610</sup> These images were never meant to become publicly available in fact they were 'private images' and consequently this means that they were not taken with the intention of being weaponized, rather the only intentions behind their production were either to privately document the tour of duty or to scare prisoners into giving up information in their interrogations. When Sgt. Darby made a CD-ROM containing abuse images from Abu Ghraib available to the American military it kick started a military investigation into the abuses, however, Sgt. Darby only made the CD-ROM available to the American military and not the American press. This shows that while Sgt. Darby indeed had grave concerns about the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib facility he also did not want to expose the US military to damaging public scrutiny, rather he wanted the matter of prisoner abuses to be dealt with internally. It does though show the abuse images being transformed from

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<sup>607</sup> John B. Thompson, 'The New Visibility'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 22, no. 6 (2005), pp. 31-51

<sup>608</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 108

<sup>609</sup> Mark Danner, 'Abu Ghraib: The Hidden Story', in *The New York Review of Books*, 07 October 2004. Available at: [http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/abu\\_ghraib\\_the\\_hidden\\_story](http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/abu_ghraib_the_hidden_story). Accessed on 1 May 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>610</sup> Susan Sontag, 'What Have We Done?' *The Guardian*, 24 May 2004. Available at: <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/views04/0524-09.html>. Accessed on 08 September 2006, Unpaginated

private souvenirs and interrogation tools to evidence in a military investigation but it was not when the Abu Ghraib images became weaponized. The leaking of abuse images to the *60 Minutes II* news show and the Taguba report to *The New Yorker* magazine and their exposure to a public audience was not even when these abuse images became weaponized. Although it does mark the transformation of the abuse images and the Taguba report from private military evidence to evidence in the court of public opinion (the media) and ‘public images’. In fact it was not until anti-war protesters and NGO’s, such as *Amnesty International*, appropriated the Abu Ghraib abuse images and deployed them in their campaigns against the war in Iraq and the wider war on terror that these images became weaponized and were finally transformed into image munitions. This feeds into another significant difference between the Abu Ghraib image munitions and the other forms of image munitions explored in this thesis (see Chapters Three, Four and Five). It is concerned with temporality and the fact that the other kinds of image munitions have all been weaponized from the moment of their production. What makes the Abu Ghraib image munitions distinct though is the fact that at the moment of their production they were not weaponized – instead they were either photographed as sadistic souvenirs or interrogation tools – and their eventual weaponization was in fact a totally separate effect from their original production.

Hundreds of images featuring the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib are already in the public domain and many more are still waiting to be put into circulation. I will now turn to examine five of them. Each of these abuse images operate as image munitions because they have all been deployed by anti-war protest groups, *Amnesty International* and others in their campaigns against the war in Iraq and the wider war on terror. They are particularly powerful because they can be inserted into a news-cycle and immediately draw audience attention and political debate back to the issue of abuses at Abu Ghraib. These five image munitions also reveal a rich network of associations which not only helps them to connect more forcefully with as wide an audience as possible but also helps them to circulate in the rhizomatic mediascape as new media actors can exploit these diverse associations and use them to remediate these image munitions for their own purposes. For example, Stephen F. Eisenman, an art historian, has noted how when he was first confronted with these abuse images he was also confronted by



a shock of recognition: even though these brutal images from a prison in occupied Iraq are not works of art – indeed, were never intended to be seen by more than a handful of people – they nevertheless insistently recalled to mind treasured sculptures and paintings from a distant past.<sup>611</sup>

These images also echo testimony which document abuses taking place in the American prison system.

The first image, which has since become the overriding metonym and the most powerful image munition for the Abu Ghraib abuses features a male prisoner standing on a small wooden crate (dressed in a large black smock-like outfit, with a black hood over his head), his arms out straight holding wires as he evidently fears electrocution. It is known as *Accidental Electrocution* and would probably at the time of its production have been an effective tool in interrogations. Eisenman has noted ‘visual similarities between...a drawing by Goya from his *Inquisition Album* and [this] iconic image.’<sup>612</sup> He also sees further ‘visual similarities’ between this iconic image and another Goya image, *Third of May 1808*.<sup>613</sup> Another image, *This is Nazi Brutality* by Ben Shahn, also shares striking ‘visual similarities’ with this iconic image of abuse from Abu Ghraib.<sup>614</sup> This image also references Christ-like symbolism: with the figure holding his arms out straight.

Although Eisenman describes a rich and complex network of associations between this image and iconic images from art history, this does not automatically mean that others will make the same connections. Many who see this image munition will be unfamiliar with Goya and/or Shahn’s work. However, they may create their own network of associations rooted instead in popular culture. Both networks of associations are equally as valid and others who see this image will create their own distinct networks of associations. This fluidity of meaning has enabled this image munition to circulate and remediate widely. Because this image munition is not as overtly violent as some of the other Abu Ghraib image munitions it has also reached a wide mainstream audience.

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<sup>611</sup> Stephen F. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007), p. 11

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. See also Andrew Hill on Goya. Hill, *Re-Imagining*, pp. 71-73

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

The second image or image munition, that has similarly circulated and remediated widely, shows SPC Lyndie England standing in the middle of a prison block at Abu Ghraib, with her left arm out, holding a dog lead. On the end of this dog lead is a naked and helpless male Iraqi prisoner who, like some kind of defiant pet dog, is being dragged along the floor. England has since become the poster girl for the abuses at Abu Ghraib, she has also been widely condemned by feminists who believe that she has set back the progress of women in the military with her actions as an abuser. This image has, therefore, been the subject of much intense debate regarding gender and the military. It has also opened up a network of associations to dominatrix pornography, however, the relationship between BDSM and this image of England is a complex one. Eisenman has attempted to explain it:

BDSM, according to its adepts, transforms the postures, actions and rhetoric of institutionalized violence into a ritualized, privatized and carefully orchestrated costume drama of intimacy, pleasure and mutuality. In actual torture, no safe-words can be used to stop the tormentor from pressing his advantage to the point of excruciating pain or even death. At Abu Ghraib, the chain around a Muslim inmate's neck, attached to a leash held by Lyndie England, is not a BDSM collar, shared symbol of a long-term emotional and erotic bond between the dominant and the submissive partner; it is the expression of the complete emotional alienation of master and slave.<sup>615</sup>

Paul A. Taylor meanwhile has suggested that 'the pornographic nature of the abuse was part of a *ritual humiliation* of the Iraqi prisoners'<sup>616</sup> rather than dominatrix pornography per se. His observation about pornography and Abu Ghraib could equally be used to describe England's relationship with pornography and her ritual humiliation of the prisoner in this image. However, at the moment of its production this image was also probably a powerful tool in interrogations. As an image munition it has since also circulated and remediated widely.

The third image or image munition, the front cover of Eisenman's book *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, shows a naked male prisoner facing forward, with his arms bound to

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<sup>615</sup> Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, p. 34

<sup>616</sup> Paul A. Taylor, 'The Pornographic Barbarism of the Self-Reflecting Sign'. *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 2007). Available at: [http://www.ubishops.ca/BaudrillardStudies/vol4\\_1/taylor.htm](http://www.ubishops.ca/BaudrillardStudies/vol4_1/taylor.htm). Accessed on 18 February 2007, p. 6

the top of a metal framed bunk bed. The prisoner also has a pair of white women's knickers on his head. According to Eisenman:

The purpose of forcing inmates to wear women's underwear, according to the report of General George P. Fay, was what Military Intelligence called 'ego down', a form of sexual humiliation – especially aimed at Muslim men – intended to help establish 'favourable conditions' for interrogation.<sup>617</sup>

The Abu Ghraib images feature a series of similar images where inmates are shown being humiliated by wearing women's underwear. This image as well as opening a network of associations with BDSM also opens a network of associations with racist imagery.<sup>618</sup> Again at the time that this image was produced it would probably have been another powerful tool in interrogations at the Abu Ghraib prison facility. It has since also circulated and remediated widely through the new image warfare theatre of war.

The fourth image or image munition shows SPC England and SPC Graner in the middle of an Abu Ghraib prison block, standing behind a human pyramid – comprising of a number of naked male prisoners that are indistinguishable as individuals rather they appear as a collection of anonymous arms, arses, feet, hands, heads, legs, penises and torsos. England and Graner are stood behind the human pyramid with their thumbs up, smiling for the camera. This pose is confusing, given the context. If England and Graner were stood in front of a holiday landmark – such as the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty or indeed the Taj Mahal – then they would be indistinguishable from any number of other couples posing for a souvenir holiday photograph.<sup>619</sup> However, in striking their thumbs up pose whilst standing behind a human pyramid, according to Lindsay Coleman, this image has 'effectively illustrated the anti-American and the all-American in a single image.'<sup>620</sup> At the time of its production this image was probably taken as a sadistic souvenir of abuse. Also, so striking is the discontinuity of 'place' and 'pose' in this image that it would not look out of place on a website dedicated to documenting Abu Ghraib image parodies.

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<sup>617</sup> Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, p. 98

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid*, p. 97

<sup>619</sup> Thompson, 'The New Visibility', p. 31

<sup>620</sup> Lindsay Coleman, "'Damn You for Making Me Do This': Abu Ghraib, 24, Torture, and Television Sadomasochism", in *The War Body on Screen*, eds. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (New York, NJ: Continuum, 2008), p. 211

The final image or image munition shows a naked male prisoner, with his back against the bars of a cell door, with his hands on the back of his head. Just in front of him are two menacing looking prison dogs that are being restrained by military guards. This image is interesting partly because it depicts Graner as a voyeur rather than as an active participant. It is also interesting and ultimately a damaging image munition because it shows a sanctioned 'Torture Lite' technique, the 'Fearing Up' of prisoners with dogs, being exploited for the personal gratification of the guards at Abu Ghraib. This image also further undermines President Bush's 'bad apples' claim because it shows some of the same guards who – in other Abu Ghraib images – have been depicted choreographing the simulated sex acts also manipulating a sanctioned 'Torture Lite' technique for their own personal gratification. At the time of its production this image would probably also have been used as a tool in interrogations. This image munition has since been circulated and remediated widely.

The Abu Ghraib image munitions also represent the opening up of a new front in the new image warfare theatre of war, where instead of fighting against Al Qaeda manufactured image munitions – America is now also engaged in battles against the blowback of abuse images weaponized by anti-war protest groups and NGO's: the product of their invisible war on terror. According to Slavoj Žižek:

the very positions and costumes of the prisoners suggest a theatrical staging, a kind of tableau viviant, which brings to mind American performance art, "theatre of cruelty," the photos of Mapplethorpe or the unnerving scenes in David Lynch's films.<sup>621</sup>

Abu Ghraib images are also frequently categorized as 'War Porn'<sup>622</sup> because of their pornographic nature. Jeff Lewis argues that 'the wardens at Abu Ghraib were, as much as anything else, ensnared in the momentum of visualization, creating images

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<sup>621</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'What Rumsfeld Doesn't Know That He Knows About About Abu Ghraib', *In These Times*, 21 May 2004. Available at: <http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/747/>. Accessed on 30 July 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>622</sup> See Jean Baudrillard, 'War Porn'. Translated by Paul A. Taylor. *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 2005). Available at: [http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol2\\_1/taylorpf.htm](http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol2_1/taylorpf.htm). Accessed on 08 July 2006, pp. 1-5

that they may have themselves engaged with in dominatrix pornography.<sup>623</sup> The invoking of the term pornography in relation to the Abu Ghraib abuse images is more complex than this though. In fact Taylor has identified two distinct meanings for this single term:

The Abu Ghraib photographs are Pornographic because of their sexual content but they are also pornographic in a more attenuated and abstract manner. The pornographic nature of the abuse was part of a *ritual humiliation* of the Iraqi prisoners. Such ritual abuse is but an extreme example of a ubiquitous, voyeuristic aesthetic that now pervades wider Western society. It is increasingly Pornographic in the obvious literal and quantitative sense that Pornography is much more socially acceptable and widely available.<sup>624</sup>

The orgy of abuse on display in these gruesome images is indeed evidence of a wider policy of abusing terror suspects in the invisible war on terror. Paradoxically this also shows that the RMA principles of distancing military personnel from the theatre of war – that are rigidly followed when operations are visible and a clear propaganda opportunity – do not necessarily apply when the Pentagon thinks no one is watching. Instead the Pentagon orders its military personnel to “take the gloves off.”<sup>625</sup> But the Abu Ghraib abuse images have become weaponized against America and currently remediate uncontrollably. It is to this unpredictable remediation that I now turn.

### **Circulating Abu Ghraib**

The Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse images have continued their circulation in the new image warfare theatre of war. This section will explore their circulation beyond news networks and jihadi internet propaganda and show that the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror is uncontrollable. The Abu Ghraib image munitions have been appropriated by people who have their own reasons for copying, parodying and remediating them.

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<sup>623</sup> Lewis, *Language Wars*, p. 242

<sup>624</sup> Taylor, 'The Pornographic Barbarism', p. 6

<sup>625</sup> Mark Danner, 'We Are All Torturers Now', *The New York Review of Books*, 06 January 2005. Available at: [http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/we\\_are\\_all\\_torturers\\_now](http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/we_are_all_torturers_now). Accessed on 1 May 2008, Unpaginated

A diverse range of political interventions have been made which feature the Abu Ghraib image munitions. The online arts and culture magazine *salon.com*, as a new media actor, was quick to set up an archive of them. This catalogue has since become an important record documenting the abuses at Abu Ghraib and it has also been used by academics, journalists and protesters alike to source abuse images for circulation and remediation. Academics have deployed these abuse images in their discussions of the war on terror, journalists have deployed these abuse images in their commentaries of the war on terror and protesters have also deployed these abuse images in their protests (against the 2003 Iraq War, against the Bush administration and against the wider war on terror). I will now look more closely at some examples of the different ways in which protesters have weaponized and deployed Abu Ghraib image munitions.

Protest artists have remediated the Abu Ghraib image munitions for their own political purposes. Perhaps the most famous series of protest posters about the war in Iraq are entitled: *iRaq* and are a direct parody of *iPod* advertisements. One of these images depicts the hooded prisoner from the *Accidental Electrocutation* image munition from Abu Ghraib in a black silhouette against a fluorescent orange background. The wires from the original Abu Ghraib image munition here appear white, mirroring original *iPod* adverts which all have white wires in them, and at the bottom of this poster is the following powerful statement: '10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.'<sup>626</sup> Inserting *Accidental Electrocutation* into the context of the iconic *iPod* advertisement is clever because it means that the *iRaq* posters can be displayed in all the same spaces and places as the *iPod* posters. At first glance people will think that they are looking at just another *iPod* poster but on closer inspection they will be shocked to discover the true message behind the poster. The fact that the *iRaq* images are also able to be downloaded off the internet for free and printed by anyone also meant that soon the *iRaq* posters were popping up on the walls of cities around the world. Just as the *iPod* adverts are successful in planting the *iPod* lifestyle in the publics' consciousness so the *iRaq* posters are successful in planting the 2003 Iraq War firmly in the publics' consciousness. They have a

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<sup>626</sup> Leander Kahney, *The Cult of iPOD* (San Francisco, CA: No Starch Press, Inc., 2005), p. 141

powerful force-multiplier effect as they force people to confront the real price of the war in Iraq: '10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.'

Street artists have similarly remediated the *Accidental Electrocutation* image munition. Iraqi artist Salah Edine Sallat painted a mural on an Iraqi wall which featured this Abu Ghraib image munition standing alongside the Statue of Liberty (a metaphor for liberty and freedom). Both figures were painted connected by wires, the Statue of Liberty flipping the electric generator switch. This graffiti image was also accompanied by the following powerful statement: *ThaT FRee Dom For Bosh (That Freedom For Bush)*. Sallat with his mural was making a powerful statement against the Bush administration and questioning their liberation of Iraq. With this mural Sallat had successfully produced a powerful image munition which clearly directed blame for the failings of the 2003 Iraq War and the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at America. He had clearly intended to make an impact with his mural, given its controversial subject matter, and he also hoped to draw attention to his mural by painting it in the daytime. Without talking to Sallat it is impossible to know for definite whether he intentionally produced his mural with the intention of having an impact beyond Iraq, unlike the *iRaQ* posters which were clearly produced with the intention of having a global impact. However, I have to assume that in manufacturing an event around his mural (painting it in the daytime) he was hoping that it would be photographed before being painted over and thus would potentially have a global impact.

Another wall in another city – this time Sydney, Australia – and the *Accidental Electrocutation* image munition appears again in back silhouette, this time alongside the words *FREEDOM NO LONGER FREES YOU*. This graffiti image munition is further evidence of Abu Ghraib being remediated by anti-war protesters and deployed to insert Abu Gharib once again into an everyday context, a wall in Sydney, and to collapse the invisible division between the public and the abuse of Iraqi prisoners.

The *Accidental Electrocutation* image munition has also been painted on a Seattle wall. This stencilled graffiti image has, on its left hand side (as you look at it), Mickey Mouse standing on a footstool with his left arm held out as if presenting the iconic

hooded figure from Abu Ghraib. The artist of this powerful image munition is drawing public attention to the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, having chosen to display it on a public wall where anyone passing it will see it. The artist has also cleverly chosen to pair up the iconic hooded figure from Abu Ghraib with an icon from American popular culture: Mickey Mouse. In this graffiti image Mickey Mouse is employed as a representation of American society and he is also depicted proudly presenting the Abu Ghraib figure. The image poses the following question: what has America got to be proud of? These parodic image munitions all point to a democratization of the Abu Ghraib images because they have been remediated by ordinary people – new media actors – right across the world.

This idea of the democratization of the Abu Ghraib images has been extended by the artist Giuseppe Di Bella with his series: *Abu Ghraib Stamps*. A reaction against the initial censoring of the Abu Ghraib abuse images by the Pentagon. Di Bella's *Abu Ghraib Stamps* has circulated widely, rivalled only by the circulation of Abu Ghraib images on the internet. He selected a number of images from the Abu Ghraib scandal, one of which was the *Accidental Electrocutation* image munition, printed them as sheets of stamps and painstakingly stuck them on individual postcards (next to real stamps) and then posted them off to various locations and patiently waited for them to be posted back. Donald Malcolm Reid has argued that '[a]round the world, stamps are a form of propaganda through which governments project selected images, and they are too illuminating a source to be left only to a philatelist.'<sup>627</sup> Stanley D. Brunn has also noted that 'stamps are products or 'windows' of the state that illustrate how it wishes to be seen by its own citizens and those beyond its boundaries.'<sup>628</sup> What Di Bella has achieved, with his *Abu Ghraib Stamps*, is the democratization of negative images which show exactly what was supposed to be invisible – the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison facility. These stamps are, therefore, windows onto a parallel universe of abuse and torture from the 2003 Iraq War. Di Bella has said the following about his *Abu Ghraib Stamps*:

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<sup>627</sup> Donald Malcolm Reid, 'The Postage Stamp: A Window On Saddam Hussein's Iraq'. *The Middle East Journal* 47, no. 1 (1993), p. 77

<sup>628</sup> Stanley D. Brunn, 'Stamps as Iconography: Celebrating the Independence of New European and Central Asian States'. *GeoJournal* 52, no. 4 (2001), p. 315



Traditionally, the postage stamp[s] function is to pay tribute or commemorate the traditions and culture of a country. It is also a powerful form of communication as it travels around the globe advertising the proudest aspects of a nation, in contrast to the Abu Ghraib photographs. I was interested in how the mechanical act of licking and stamping a postage stamp could be linked to a notion of humiliation and abuse/torture as revealed in the photographs. I was conscious that this process could turn the viewer into an active consumer and make the user aware of the consumption and treatment of public images in circulation. This could also lead the user to become an active accomplice - in some sense - to the abuse and violence. The repetitions of images on the stamp sheets are also a reflection of the depersonalisation that happens to victims of such abuse. The intimate and personal details of each account, and the consequences for the abused/tortured is hidden and forgotten as the images are multiplied, repeated and 'consumed' by society.<sup>629</sup>

Di Bella's account of designing and producing his *Abu Ghraib Stamps* reveals that the careful juxtaposing of Abu Ghraib images with postage stamps was more complex than just the production of negative images and shocking audiences. Di Bella recognizes the fact that the act of licking the stamp is a transformative act which forces audiences to become active consumers in the art itself. The multiple reproductions of Abu Ghraib images on stamp sheets are also a statement about the depersonalisation of the victims at Abu Ghraib and in posting his stamps to individuals around the world Di Bella was also attempting to re-personalize the victims of Abu Ghraib and force audiences to recognize their own complicity within the abuses at Abu Ghraib.

The cartoonist David Rees has also remediated the Abu Ghraib *Accidental Electrocutation* image munition, making a political intervention, as the Bionic Abu Ghraib Man, inserting it into his long running cartoon series *Get Your War On* about the war on terror (that has been serialised in *Rolling Stone* magazine). Rees' cartoon series stands as a counter-history of the war on terror. It is an attempt to subvert the official version of the war on terror. Also being serialised in *Rolling Stone* magazine has given it a popular cult following and this is proven by the fact that it has now been turned into a book.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> Giuseppe Di Bella, 'The Democratic Image: Archive for the 'Giuseppe Di Bella' Category', in *OpenDemocracy*. Available at: <http://thedemocraticimage.opendemocracy.net/category/giuseppe-di-bella/>. Accessed on 13 July 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>630</sup> See David Rees, *Get Your War On: The Definitive Account of the War on Terror, 2001-2008* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2008)

Cartoonist Dennis Draughton has similarly remediated the hooded figure in the Abu Ghraib image munition. According to Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites:

A particularly startling juxtaposition is achieved in [this] editorial cartoon that has the hooded figure from Abu Ghraib behind Kim Phuc [the accidental napalm girl]. At the least, the older iconic image is used to heighten the emotional and moral content of its successor. Her nakedness reveals the vulnerability of his shrouded body, her scream voices the agony within his hooded silence, her violated innocence represents his torture. As the tableau draws on virtually every element of the napalm icon's repertoire, the moral message is linked to the even more troubling implications of a traumatic history. Once again, war crimes are occurring because of U.S. policy; once again, the war will not go away. This haunting, sickening, traumatic relationship between past and present is underscored by the parallelism between the girl's arms and the arms of the hooded figure.<sup>631</sup>

A number of artistic representations of Abu Ghraib image munitions are also currently being exhibited in art galleries right across the world. Four specific interventions made by the artists: Martha Rosler, Fernando Botero, Susan Crile and Bill Concannon will now be explored. Martha Rosler, with her 2004 photomontage series: *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, New Series*, has cut and pasted together images of war from Iraq with images of home from *Life* magazine. Elsewhere I have written that:

The *Election (Lynndie)* image which I am specifically interested in comprises of: an image depicting the latest in high-spec kitchen design, and the image of Lynndie England leading an Iraqi prisoner on a dog leash (however minus the dog-like prisoner). Instead, seemingly England appears to be looking over her shoulder and admiring the luxurious island workspace of the kitchen – whilst in the original image, from Abu Ghraib prison, she is giving a gloating stare back over her shoulder towards the *now absent* dog-like prisoner. The windows of the kitchen depict the war zone outside... Interspersed throughout the kitchen, in places where one would ordinarily expect there to be cook books, magazines, newspapers and other general items that we all have in our own kitchens, instead these have been replaced by the *Accidental Electrocutation* image from Abu Ghraib.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, p. 202

<sup>632</sup> Nathan Roger, 'Abu Ghraib Abuse Images: From Perverse War Trophies through Internet Based War Porn to Artistic Representations and Beyond', in *De-Naturalising Violence: Trans-Disciplinary Explorations*, eds. Alejandro Cervantes-Carsen and Leonhard Praeg (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, forthcoming), Unpaginated

This series of image munitions help to collapse the distance between war from home, forcing audiences of these images to confront and recognize their own complicity within the events of the 2003 Iraq War.<sup>633</sup>

Fernando Botero has also produced a compelling series of over eighty paintings entitled: *Abu Ghraib*. The paintings are divided up into two distinct styles: the first are full colour paintings; and the second are more like the preparatory sketches that an artist will often make before committing paint to canvas. All of the prisoners and guards depicted in his paintings are plump/Boteromorphic, a style which has over the decades become Botero's trademark. *Abu Ghraib 64* – one of his colour paintings – shows a prisoner with his arms and legs bound (with rope) to a metal prisoner gate. The prisoner is blindfolded and also he is wearing only women's underwear (matching red knickers and a bra). It soon becomes evident that the prisoner has been subjected to a severe beating, prior to him being forced into this highly degrading pose, with various bruises (some old, some new) and a number of bleeding wounds located at various sites on his exposed flesh.

*Abu Ghraib 84* – is one of Botero's sketch images and it again shows a prisoner with his arms and legs tied with rope to a metal prison gate, while also being humiliated by being made to wear women's striped knickers and a bra. This picture depicts the prisoner with a hood over his head, whereas in *Abu Ghraib 64* the prisoner is blindfolded. The references to the beating of this particular prisoner are less overt, in this picture, compared with *Abu Ghraib 64*. *Abu Ghraib 84*, although a stand alone piece, could almost be described as a preparatory sketch for *Abu Ghraib 64*. His series of images is directly confrontational as it is supposed to force audiences to recognize their own complicity with the abuses.

Susan Crile has also produced the *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power Series*.<sup>634</sup> Her series of pastel drawings takes a selection of the most iconic Abu Ghraib image munitions and commits them to paper. Her drawings are made using a combination of chalk,

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<sup>633</sup> Martha Rosler produced a series of similar photomontage images in response to the Vietnam War. *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful (1967-1972)*

<sup>634</sup> See *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power Series* by Susan Crile. Available at: [http://www.susancrile.com/abuse\\_of\\_power.pdf](http://www.susancrile.com/abuse_of_power.pdf). Accessed on 18 May 2009

charcoal and pastels on dark coloured sheets of paper. Andrea K Scott, in a review for *The New York Times*, wrote: 'large areas of the page remain blank, echoing the sense of exposed vulnerability and free-floating terror that the inmates must have experienced.'<sup>635</sup> She also wrote that:

[t]he chalk is always white when depicting the anonymous victims, who become spectral icons of martyrdom, an association underscored by the show's largest work, "Obscene Intimacy." A man, his head, spine and buttocks smeared with fecal patches of brown, stands with arms outstretched and legs crossed in the posture of crucifixion.<sup>636</sup>

Crile also breaks her muted colour palette of black, brown, grey and white with the occasional introduction of a vibrant pastel colour to a drawing. She does this to help draw attention to a particular object within a drawing which holds a wider significance in the war on terror. For example, in the drawing "Hands of Power: Murdered Prisoner" which depicts a dead Abu Ghraib prisoner being pointed at by a disembodied green medical gloved hand. The colour green is used to draw attention to the fact that the Abu Ghraib abusers often wore medical gloves when abusing the prisoners. This shows how they viewed them as 'others' and as a result felt that they could abuse them guiltlessly. This guiltlessness is also a dominant discourse in the war on terror. In the drawing "Threatened" which depicts a bound Abu Ghraib prisoner, on his knees, being 'Feared Up' and threatened with a baying dog, the prisoner is wearing an orange coloured jump-suit. The colour orange is a clear allusion to unlawful combatants at Guantanamo Bay who are routinely made to wear orange coloured jump-suits. Crile is linking the abuse of Abu Ghraib prisoners with the abuse of unlawful combatants at Guantanamo Bay. Again, like Rosler and Botero, her series of paintings forces audiences to recognize their complicity with the abuse.

Bill Concannon has also taken the *Accidental Electrocutation* image muniton and turned it into a neon sign: *Untitled (Abu Ghraib)*. This image muniton strives to illuminate public complicity with the Abu Ghraib abuses. Concannon has picked up

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<sup>635</sup> Andrea K. Scott, 'Art in Review: Susan Crile - Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power'. *The New York Times*, 13 October 2006. Available at: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0DE5DD1130F930A25753C1A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print>. Accessed on 06 February 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid*: Unpaginated

on the fact that the hooded figure is reminiscent of Christ on the cross and as such is a kind of martyr; a martyr figure for all the Iraqi prisoners abused by a few American military personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison facility. To make this reference explicit he employs the figure in black silhouette, lit from behind with a strong red neon light. The red neon light helps give the effect of a halo as seen throughout art history and depictions of Christ on the cross.

A number of different commercial interventions have also been made. For example, Chris Wilson the webmaster of *nowthatfuckedup.com* offered military personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq free access to the pornography on his website in exchange for *War Porn* images from the Afghanistan and Iraqi war theatres. Wilson was commercially exploiting *War Porn* images so as to bring his website to the attention of a wider audience and also to offer his members a new category of pornography and so increase his membership revenue. In April 2006 the US government responded by shutting down his website. Finally, photographer Steven Meisel (who shot the images for Madonna's book: *Sex*) has appropriated Abu Ghraib in his 'State of Emergency' shoot for the September 2006 edition of *Italian Vogue*. Joanna Bourke has summed up this shoot as follows: 'In [Meisel's] lavish fashion shoot, we are shown a world peopled by hyper-real security staff and a faux woman – skinny, toned, and modelling fantasy clothes and shoes. The heavily armed security personnel exude violence; the model oozes sex.'<sup>637</sup> Meisel's embedding of abuse within these scenes of high fashion is designed to shock and ultimately draw commercial attention to the fashion featured in his shoot.

The diversity of contexts in which the Abu Ghraib image munitions have appeared in is confirmation that the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror cannot be controlled. It also highlights the fact that the traditional top-down information system – still dominant in America and Britain – has indeed now been replaced by a rhizomatic system which is defined by the uncontrollable flow of information and images. The ability of the Abu Ghraib image munitions to float freely has resulted in them appearing in new image contexts and places and coming to the attention of new

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<sup>637</sup> Joanna Bourke, 'A Taste for Torture? A Fashion Shoot in This Month's Italian Vogue is Clearly Inspired by the Current Climate of Terror, Torture and Abuse', *The Guardian*, 13 September 2006. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/style/story/0,,1871263,00.html>. Accessed on 26 February 2007, Unpaginated

audiences, who do not necessarily engage with the mainstream media. For example, people are confronted with the Abu Ghraib abuse images online (when they check their emails and view the image archives on *salon.com* or *nowthatsfuckedup.com*), on the street in graffiti images and posters (*iRaq*), in galleries (as photomontages, pastels and a neon sign), in magazines (*Italian Vogue* and *Rolling Stone*) and in their post (*The Abu Ghraib Stamps*). This all demonstrates how in the rhizomatic condition new media actors are able to pick up and deploy the Abu Ghraib image munitions with their own intentions that are totally distinct from the original intentions of the American soldiers, anti-war protesters, NGO's and Al Qaeda. While America has sought to regain control of the Abu Ghraib image munitions after their deployment, Al Qaeda has instead realised that it cannot control them after their release. Instead Al Qaeda has focussed its attention on getting a maximum initial impact for the Abu Ghraib image munitions. Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme – two other features of the invisible war on terror – will now be discussed, to improve our understanding of this new front in the new image warfare theatre of war.

### **Guantanamo Bay and Extraordinary Rendition**

Since September 11, 2001, according to Elaine Scarry,

the Bush administration has dedicated itself to creating an alternative universe, an offshore world with no legal constraints on the American executive... This fabricated universe also requires fabricating rules about habeas corpus to ensure that this made-up universe lies beyond the reach of real-world courts.<sup>638</sup>

This fabricated universe (or 'neverland'<sup>639</sup>) is comprised of 'unlawful combatants,' 'Torture Lite' techniques and the Pentagon's reinvention of the panopticon. Central to it is the Guantanamo Bay detention facility (Camp X-Ray, now Camp Delta) and the Extraordinary Rendition programme which facilitates the movement of terror suspects from camp to camp in the international network of internment camps,

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<sup>638</sup> Elaine Scarry, 'Presidential Crimes: Moving on Is Not an Option', *Boston Globe*, 2008. Available at: <http://bostonreview.net/BR33.5/scarry.php>. Accessed on 14 May 2009, p. 12

<sup>639</sup> David Mutimer, 'Sovereign Contradictions: Maher Arar and the Indefinite Future', in *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving*, eds. Elizabeth Dauphinee and Christina Masters (New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 161

created for the interrogation and detention of terror suspects. This is the invisible war on terror. However, unlike Abu Ghraib which is now extremely well documented visually, Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme are both still shrouded in mystery. Most of what is known about Guantanamo Bay and Extraordinary Rendition is known because of witness testimony, investigative journalism and thanks to reports published by international organizations such as *Amnesty International* and *The International Committee of the Red Cross* who are increasingly viewed as a new kind of resource separate from the official media.

Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, because of its position off mainland America, was seen by the Bush administration as the perfect location for detaining ‘unlawful combatants’ and distancing the American government from its newly sanctioned ‘Torture Lite’ techniques. The American military, however, drastically misjudged their management of the media by invoking references to earlier military campaigns, such as the invasion of Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury – October 23, 1983 to December 15, 1983). According to Robin Andersen, at the start of the invasion of Grenada:

Admiral Wesley McDonald banned reporters for “operational reasons”.... After three days of heated charges by media organizations of Pentagon censorship and pressure from some members of Congress, Joints Chiefs of Staff Chairman General John W. Vessey directed McDonald to allow reporters on the island by October 28.<sup>640</sup>

Even then journalists were prevented from properly reporting on the situation because, according to Andersen, ‘the press were escorted to Charleston Air Force Base, where returning medical students kissed the ground, exhilarated to be out of harm’s way.’<sup>641</sup> Journalists had been left with no choice other than to report on events specifically taking place at Charleston Air Force Base rather than in the conflict theatre itself. This was echoed when the Pentagon allowed journalists to visit the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. The journalists were treated to a parade of some of the unlawful combatants as they arrived: all wearing orange coloured jump-suits and shackles, with ear guards, medical face masks, goggles and gloves on depriving the detainees of their senses. They also witnessed the holding pens – where detainees were held prior to processing, often in the baking Cuban sun – but

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<sup>640</sup> Andersen, *A Century of Media*, p. 119

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid*, p. 123

not treated to a full tour of the facility itself. They were only allowed to stand and look on, from the other side of the fence, taking notes and pictures.<sup>642</sup> A few images have since been released that show interior scenes from the detention facility. These interior images were released for two specific reasons: an attempt to counter growing criticism that journalists had not been given a proper tour of the detention facility and symbolically to help manufacture transparency with the watching world. It is because of this limited journalistic access that images of some of the Guantanamo Bay detainees have emerged. In reviving media management strategies from the early 1980s the Bush administration have again proven though that they misunderstand the media changes that have taken place between the mass media age and the information age and consequently still believe that they can control the flow of images and information in the war on terror.

These images have since proven damaging for the Bush administration as they have been weaponized and used in protest campaigns about unlawful combatants, terrorist internment camps and Extraordinary Rendition. One particular Guantanamo Bay image munition which has been widely circulated – and which today acts as a metonym for both Camp X-Ray and Camp Delta (and also unofficially the Extraordinary Rendition programme) – features ten detainees on their knees in a holding pen, with their hands bound, wearing orange coloured jump-suits and with medical face masks, blacked-out goggles and ear guards on. The detainees are also being watched over by two patrolling military personnel. This image operates as a powerful image munition because it visually communicates how unlawful combatants at Guantanamo Bay are treated when they arrive at the facility. Also, whenever this image munition is redeployed it immediately helps to raise the issues of Guantanamo Bay and unlawful combatants (and Extraordinary Rendition) back up the international news agenda. Having described the Guantanamo Bay detention facility I will now turn to describe the Extraordinary Rendition programme, another important feature of the invisible war on terror.

Extraordinary Rendition is another circuit breaker, first introduced under President Bill Clinton and appropriated by President Bush for use in the war against terrorism,

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<sup>642</sup> Alicia Upano, 'U.S. Military in Cuba Keeps Journalists at Bay'. *The News Media & The Law* 26, no. 4 (2002): p. 43



which operates between the White House, the Pentagon and the invisible war on terror. According to Hill, this programme facilitates:

the snatching of suspects from numerous countries (including Canada, Germany, Italy, and Sweden), and their transportation either to US-run facilities outside the United States (notably in Afghanistan), or their turning over to foreign security services for detention and interrogation, in particular Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, and Uzbekistan – and also, it is alleged, to a number of Eastern European countries, including Poland and Romania. (While there is a degree of overlap here with the transportation to and detention of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, both the location of the latter and the identity of detainees held there are in the public realm.) Even though the existence of the extraordinary rendition programme has been exposed, the programme purportedly remains ongoing. Furthermore, the aspects of the programme that have been uncovered raise the question of those features of the programme that have not come to light.<sup>643</sup>

Jane Mayer, in an article for the February 14, 2005 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine, entitled 'Outsourcing Torture',<sup>644</sup> revealed the existence of the Extraordinary Rendition programme. In this article she discussed the case of Maher Arar

a thirty-four-year-old graduate of McGill University whose family emigrated to Canada when he was a teen-ager, [he] was arrested on September 26, 2002, at John F. Kennedy Airport. He was changing planes; he had been on vacation with his family in Tunisia, and was returning to Canada...Arar, who was not formally charged, was placed in handcuffs and leg irons by plainclothes officials and transferred to an executive jet. The plane flew to Washington, continued to Portland, Maine, stopped in Rome, Italy, then landed in Amman, Jordan. ...Ten hours after landing in Jordan, Arar said, he was driven to Syria, where interrogators, after a day of threats, "just began beating on me." They whipped his hands repeatedly with two-inch-thick electrical cables, and kept him in a windowless underground cell that he likened to a grave. ...Although he initially tried to assert his innocence, he eventually confessed to anything his tormentors wanted him to say...A year later, in October 2003, Arar was released without charges, after the Canadian government took up his cause.<sup>645</sup>

Mayer, with this article and her detailed description about Arar's experiences of being outsourced to Syria, has shed light on this controversial American practice.

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<sup>643</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 106

<sup>644</sup> Jane Mayer, 'Outsourcing Torture', *The New Yorker*, 14 February 2005. Available at: <http://kuwaitifreedom.org/media/pdf/Outsourciog%20Torture.pdf>. Accessed on 23 July 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated. See also Mutimer, 'Sovereign Contradictions', pp. 159-81

She has also cited Egypt and Morocco<sup>646</sup> as being two further favourite destinations for the unfortunate passengers of American Rendition 'ghost flights'.

Alex Danchev has documented how Britain is also complicit within this Extraordinary Rendition programme because it has allowed 'ghost flights' to take off and land from numerous UK airports. He explains how:

Luton was the most popular, but the CIA and its sub-contractors also availed themselves of the facilities at Belfast, Biggin Hill, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Brize Norton, Edinburgh, Farnborough, Gatwick, Glasgow, Heathrow, Inverness, Leuchars, Mildenhall, Northolt, Prestwick, Stansted and Wick.<sup>647</sup>

He has also commented on how Prime Minister Tony Blair's complicity with these flights embarrassingly came to light:

As late as December 2005, asked in the House of Commons when he was first made aware of the rendition flights, the prime minister replied, 'In respect of airports, I do not know what the Right Hon. Gentleman is referring to'...Hardly were the words out of his mouth than a leaked memorandum from the foreign secretary's private office to the prime minister's private office revealed that the government knew of CIA requests for British logistical support, including the use of territory and airspace, and knew also of the existence of 'interrogation centres' in third countries.<sup>648</sup>

The leaking of this memo forced the British government into an embarrassing u-turn over this controversial issue. A European Parliament commissioned report, published in February 2007, has also identified fourteen other European states that, like Britain, are complicit, in the Extraordinary Rendition programme.<sup>649</sup>

Mayer has further embarrassed President Bush by quoting him as having said 'torture is never acceptable, nor do we hand over people to countries that do torture.'<sup>650</sup> This statement coupled with evidence of prisoners having been outsourced to other countries and later tortured has collapsed the circuit breaker between the White House, the Pentagon and the invisible war on terror. Danchev has also noted how the

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<sup>646</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>647</sup> Alex Danchev, 'Accomplicity: Britain, Torture and Terror'. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 8, no. 4 (2006), pp. 593-594

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid*, p. 594

<sup>649</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, pp. 110-111

<sup>650</sup> Mayer, 'Outsourcing Torture', Unpaginated

British Muslim Moazzam Begg came to end up at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility after having been the subject of Extraordinary Rendition. Begg, according to Danchev, was extracted from Islamabad, Pakistan, on 31 January 2002:

To the warders and whippers of the war on terror, his intentions and his connections were axiomatically suspect. He was taken from his home at the dead of night and shipped to Kandahar. Moazzam Begg became Detainee 558. Bare life had begun. Detainee 558 was given a full tour of the American penal colony. After Kandahar came Bagram; after Bagram, Guantánamo. He was tortured and abused wherever he went. He was held, often in chains, sometimes in solitary confinement. He was interrogated, ineffectually, as an ‘enemy combatant’. ...Three forlorn years later he was informed that ‘any charges that we had pending have been dropped’, and released without explanation or apology.<sup>651</sup>

Making up for his invisible time in detention Begg has since given a voice to the invisible war on terror, through his public lectures and press interviews. He has also co-authored a book, with Victoria Brittain, about his experiences *Enemy Combatant: The Terrifying True Story of a Briton in Guantánamo*.<sup>652</sup> Collectively, the testimony from victims of Extraordinary Rendition – such as Arar and Begg – and the various witnesses who have come forward with information and the leaking of memos, etc have all helped to maintain media and public interest in this issue. Many of these declassified papers are available in *Administration of Torture: A Documentary Record From Washington to Abu Ghraib* by Jameel Jaffer and Amrit Singh.<sup>653</sup>

Mark Danner has written that in response to growing public resentment over the invisible war on terror:

just before the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, the President of the United States strode into the East Room of the White House and informed the high officials, dignitaries, and specially invited September 11 survivor families gathered in rows before him that the United States government had created a dark and secret universe to hold and interrogate captured terrorists – or, in the President’s words, “an environment where they can be held secretly [and] questioned by experts” – he was not telling a secret but instead

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<sup>651</sup> Danchev, 'Accomplicity', p. 588

<sup>652</sup> Moazzam Begg, and Victoria Brittain, *Enemy Combatant: The Terrifying True Story of a Briton in Guantánamo* (London Free Press, 2007)

<sup>653</sup> Jameel Jaffer, and Amrit Singh, *Administration of Torture: A Documentary Record from Washington to Abu Ghraib and Beyond* (New York, NJ: Columbia University Press, 2007)

converting a known and well-reported fact into an officially confirmed truth.<sup>654</sup>

President Bush then went on to announce that he was going to give *the International Committee of the Red Cross* access to fourteen high-value unlawful combatants detained at Camp Delta. His intention, according to Danner, was to bring these “high-value detainees” out of the dark world of the disappeared and into the light.’<sup>655</sup> This was clearly an attempt by the Bush administration, the Pentagon and the CIA to regain control of the remediation battle over the invisible war on terror. *The International Committee of the Red Cross* was given access to the detainees on the proviso that their report would remain secret and confidential and for the eyes of high level officials only. However, a copy of the report was leaked and Mark Danner has discussed the reports findings – which place ‘Torture Lite’ into a wider context with testimony from detainees – in a series of articles for *The New York Review of Books*. Attention will now shift to explore the circulation of Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme.

### **Circulating Guantanamo Bay and Extraordinary Rendition**

Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme have circulated widely in the new image warfare theatre of war. I will now explore this remediation beyond news networks and jihadi internet propaganda and show how this points to the uncontrollability of the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror.

A number of political interventions with Guantanamo Bay as their focus have been produced. The image munition from Guantanamo Bay – featuring ten detainees and two guards in a holding pen – has been used as the front cover of *New Terror, New Wars* by Paul Gilbert.<sup>656</sup> This image serves as a representation of the New Terror and New Wars discussed in Gilbert’s book. This same image munition has also been parodied. For example, in response to news of deaths of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility *Guardian* cartoonist Steve Bell produced a

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<sup>654</sup> Mark Danner, 'US Torture: Voices from the Black Sites', *The New York Review of Books*, 09 April 2009. Available at: [http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/us\\_torture\\_voices\\_from\\_the\\_black\\_sites](http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/us_torture_voices_from_the_black_sites). Accessed on 1 May 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>656</sup> Paul Gilbert, *New Terror, New Wars* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003)

cartoon showing detainees in the same stress-positions as in the original image again being watched over by two military guards. However, in the cartoon all the detainees have orange Mickey Mouse-like ears and one of the guards has a speech bubble which says: *IS THERE ANYTHING YOU PEOPLE WON'T DO FOR PUBLICITY?*<sup>657</sup> His depiction of the detainees wearing Mickey Mouse-like ears is significant because in everyday life if someone was to put on a pair of Mickey Mouse ears they would be instantly drawing attention to themselves. The presence of Mickey Mouse-like ears in this cartoon image is a way for Bell to visually describe the fact that the detainees at Guantanamo Bay have succeeded in drawing attention to themselves with the recent deaths of detainees. This is further supported by the fact that Bell has also drawn one of the guards asking a question about whether detainees will do anything for publicity. Bell's image munition helps to draw public attention back to the issue of unlawful combatants at Guantanamo Bay, it helps to bring the issue to the attention of new audiences and it also forces people to rethink the issue of Guantanamo Bay in light of the recent deaths of some of the detainees.

The conditions at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility have also been replicated by an *Amnesty International* campaign which built a mock Camp Delta cell and toured with it, hoping to publicize 'bare life' with the general public and therefore replicate some of the experiences of unlawful combatants. Bare life, according to Giorgio Agamben, describes: '[n]either prisoners nor persons accused, but simply "detainees," they are the object of a pure de facto rule, of a detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight.'<sup>658</sup> This campaign is significant because it again shows how novel ways have been found to visualise and draw public attention to the plight of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, thus taking further informational control away from the Bush administration and the Pentagon. It also shares similarities with the FOJM campaign, during the Beirut hostage crisis, in the 1980s, where a cage – containing a dummy and sometimes a celebrity – toured Britain in an attempt to publicize the plight of John McCarthy and in turn the other

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<sup>657</sup> Steve Bell, 'The Deaths in Guantanamo Bay'. *The Guardian*, 24 July 2008. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/cartoons/stevebell/0,,1797429,00.html>. Accessed on 24 July 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>658</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 3-4

Beirut hostages (see Chapter Five). Unlawful combatants were again publicized, according to Randell and Redmond, when

in December 2006, Banksy, a UK-based guerrilla artist, placed a life-sized figure of a Guantanamo Bay detainee within the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad ride at the Disneyland theme park in Anaheim, California. With this intervention, Banksy is not only intending to draw attention to the camps in Cuba but also to bring the absented and dehumanized war body to the ultimate in simulated play environments. The Disneyland theme park reconstructs the world in utopian environments. The Disneyland theme park reconstructs the world in utopian colors and dreamscapes. Banksy sets or retunes the screen so that the absented war body is made present; it comes, or rather it *plays back* into troubling view.<sup>659</sup>

Guantanamo Bay has also become the subject of artistic intervention with an art exhibition entitled: *Rattling the Cage* (similar in style to Mark Wallinger's *State Britain*). According to its curator Louise Purbrick:

*Rattling the Cage* is a community archive of documents, textiles, photographs and film used in the 'Save Omar' campaign. It demonstrates the power of improvisation. As a group of people from Brighton, Worthing and Eastbourne began to work together for the return of Guantánamo detainee Omar Deghayes to his home in Saltdean, they developed skills and materials that could be called an art of politics: they wrote letters and plays, performed on the street and for the screen. They created posters, postcards, badges and clothing. The exhibition of their archive is an opportunity to reflect upon how the creativity of local people can be used to effect political change.<sup>660</sup>

This exhibition clearly has a strong political message. It reveals the power of protest and emphasises that although Omar Deghayes, a Guantanamo Bay detainee, was (in *Bartle Bogle Hegarty's* slogan from the 1980s Beirut hostage crisis) kept out of sight he was not out of mind.

The Extraordinary Rendition programme has similarly been the subject of political intervention. Cartoonist Steve Bell has produced a series of cartoons about Extraordinary Rendition. In an interview, with Klaus Dodds, Bell has stated that his motivation for producing these cartoons 'was to both publicize and belittle this

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<sup>659</sup> Randell and Redmond, 'Introduction', p. 10

<sup>660</sup> *Rattling the Cage*. Available at: [http://www.phoenixarts.org/archived-exhibs/2009/exhibitions\\_2009.htm](http://www.phoenixarts.org/archived-exhibs/2009/exhibitions_2009.htm) Accessed on 18 May 2009

practice of Extraordinary Rendition, which has relied on making some people (labelled illegal combatants) invisible and thus largely beyond the scrutiny of democratic governments and independent judiciaries.<sup>661</sup> One of his cartoons features Frank Sinatra singing “COME FLY WITH ME LET’S SCREECH DOWN TO GITMO” a parody of his ‘Come Fly With Me’ song. In the background, of this cartoon, a plane is taking off and another one is sitting on the tarmac. Boarding the flight and standing on the CIA boarding steps is the hooded figure from the *Accidental Electrocution* image munition. Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay are thus identified as parts of a wider dynamic of abuse characteristic of the war on terror.

Other political cartoonists have made similar political interventions about the Extraordinary Rendition programme. All these image munitions are important because they help to draw attention to the issue of Extraordinary Rendition, they help to bring Extraordinary Rendition to the attention of new audiences and they also encourage people to rethink their attitudes towards Extraordinary Rendition. For instance, a cartoon by Grizelda shows a man and a woman (presumably both no-frills flyers) sat beside each other having just boarded the wrong flight. The couple soon realize they are on the wrong flight because their chairs have restraints on them and because the window has bars on it. The caption reads: “*I’ve been wondering about these extraordinary rendition flights...*”<sup>662</sup> This image munition draws attention to the fact that society are interested in the phenomenon of Extraordinary Rendition but how this interest is largely only superficial.

A cartoon by Karsten Schley shows a bearded, bound and perspiring detainee sat at a table. Standing over him is a suited CIA agent with his shirt sleeves rolled up, smoking a cigarette, sunglasses on, and with his finger poised on a CD player. The caption reads: *HIT ME! KICK ME! BUT PLEASE STOP TORTURING ME WITH*

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<sup>661</sup> Klaus Dodds, ‘Steve Bell’s Eye: Cartoons, Geopolitics and the Visualization of the ‘War on Terror’’. *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 2 (2007), p. 172

<sup>662</sup> Grizelda, ‘Extraordinary Rendition Cartoon’. Available at: [http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/e/extraordinary\\_rendition.asp](http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/e/extraordinary_rendition.asp). Accessed on 24 July 2008, Unpaginated

*BRITNEY-SPEARS-SONGS!!*<sup>663</sup> This image munition describes how the victims of Extraordinary Rendition are routinely tortured, often by being exposed to loud music for prolonged periods of time. Schley is also drawing public attention to the direct involvement of the CIA in Extraordinary Rendition.

A third cartoon, by Richard Sly, is a three part storyboard. Scene one features a politician and a journalist, with the journalist asking the politician: *What's the government's stance on the use of torture in the war on terror?* Scene two is a close-up on the politician responding to the question: *Our stance is absolutely clear... .* The final scene cuts again to the journalist and the politician and the rest of the politicians answer: *we are totally against admitting that we torture suspects.*<sup>664</sup> This three part cartoon again draws public attention to Extraordinary Rendition because it refers to government complicity with the Extraordinary Rendition programme.

Extraordinary Rendition has also become the subject of artistic intervention, albeit with a powerful political message, having been remediated for the theatre. *Rendition Monologues* scripted by Christine Bacon, with an original score by Michael Edwards and performed by *Ice and Fire Theatre Company*, according to the *Ice and Fire Theatre Company* website, 'was launched at the Bridewell Theatre, London, in June 2008, it weaves together first-hand accounts of men who have been victims of "extraordinary rendition."<sup>665</sup> *Rendition Monologues* offers audiences the unique opportunity to engage with first-hand accounts of Extraordinary Rendition, it also helps to bring the issue of Extraordinary Rendition to new audiences and it also challenges audience perceptions about Extraordinary Rendition.

The above remediations all relate to either the Guantanamo Bay detention facility or to the Extraordinary Rendition programme. They also further help to establish, along with Abu Ghraib, that the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror cannot be controlled. However, unlike Abu Ghraib which is extremely well documented visually (with hundreds of original abuse images currently in circulation) the

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<sup>663</sup>Karsten Schley, 'Extraordinary Rendition Cartoon'. Available at: [http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/e/extraordinary\\_rendition.asp](http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/e/extraordinary_rendition.asp). Accessed on 24 July 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>665</sup> *Rendition Monologues*. Available at: <http://iceandfire.co.uk/index.php/outreach/scripts/rendition-monologues/>. Accessed on 18 May 2009



Guantanamo Bay and Extraordinary Rendition programme are less well documented visually, rather they are well documented instead through witness testimony and leaked government and NGO reports. I have already discussed how the Pentagon mistakenly allowed limited journalistic access to Camp Delta and have also released official images featuring the detainees to the media, believing that they could still control the flow of information and images in the internet age. Thus giving Al Qaeda and new media actors' further ammunition with which to produce and deploy their own abuse image munitions and to also appropriate to help visualize the Extraordinary Rendition programme. The ability of image munitions to float freely also means that they appear in surprising new image contexts and places and as a result become available to new audiences. For example, people can engage with Guantanamo Bay and Extraordinary Rendition in Disneyland (thanks to Banksy), on the street as *Amnesty International* toured with a mock Camp Delta cell, in gallery spaces (with *Rattling the Cage*), in the theatre (with *Rendition Monologues*) and beyond. What this again shows is that Al Qaeda has a more sophisticated understanding of image munitions than America, because rather than trying to keep control of the abuse image munitions following their deployment Al Qaeda has instead focussed attention on getting the largest initial impact for these image munitions. Attention will now turn to examine the faked prisoner abuse scandal which is further evidence of just how uncontrollable and damaging the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror has actually become.

### **The Faked Abuse Images and Camp Breadbasket Abuses**

As the international community were still reeling from the news of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, on April 30, 2004, at a specially convened press conference called by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), General Sir Michael Jackson the Chief of the General Staff confirmed rumours that allegations of Iraqi prisoner abuse at the hands of some British soldiers were currently being investigated. This press conference also confirmed rumours that Britain was involved in an invisible war on terror.

The following day, on May 1, 2004, *The Daily Mirror* ran a full front page image and article supposedly documenting these abuses. These images gave news

audiences an immediate 'place' of focus for the recent announcement about ongoing investigations into claims of abuse perpetrated by some British soldiers against Iraqi prisoners. This front page image shows a bound and hooded Iraqi prisoner in the back of a truck, trouserless, with his shirt open, with a British soldier (back to camera) standing over him and urinating on him. This image munition was framed with the headline: 'VILE... but this time it's a BRITISH soldier degrading an Iraqi.' *The Daily Mirror* ran this image and this headline on its front page because it wanted to make an impact with its readers and also bring the allegations of British soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners to the attention of as wide an audience as possible.

Four more disturbing image munitions of prisoner abuse were also printed on the inside pages of the newspaper. These four other abuse images show the same Iraqi prisoner again sitting on the floor with his hands bound behind his back. The first image munition shows the prisoner this time being threatened with a gun and bullets rather than with a penis and urine. The second image munition shows the bound prisoner being hit in the genitals with the butt of the soldier's gun. In another image munition the prisoner is shown lying on the floor – in a kind of foetal position while the soldier has his boot resting on the prisoner's neck. The last image munition in the series shows the prisoner lying helplessly waiting for the soldier to kick him in the face. The publication of these abuse images was met by a public backlash which immediately transformed the MoD investigation about the alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners by some British soldiers, into a media spectacle. Each of these abuse image munitions mimics the symbolism on display in the Abu Ghraib images: humiliation, pornography and violence. They were deployed by *The Daily Mirror* to show how the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American and British military personnel is equally barbaric and sadistic.

Attention quickly centred on the Queen's Lancashire Regiment (QLR) that was based in Cyprus. It was not long before major concerns were being raised over the credibility of these abuse images. The journalist Claire Cozens reported, on May 4, 2004, how the Regimental Secretary of the QLR Lt. Col. John Downham had major

doubts over 'the veracity of the photographs.'<sup>666</sup> Lt. Col. Downham specifically 'questioned the absence of identifying badges on the soldiers' uniforms and non-standard lacing of the army boots,'<sup>667</sup> while journalists Sandra Laville, Richard Norton-Taylor and Helena Smith were also reporting on similar inconsistencies:

the pictures looked too pristine to have been taken by a soldier with a pocket camera. Other defence experts said that the rifle in the photograph was an SA80 Mk1 which was not issued to soldiers in Iraq and British troops on patrol wore berets or helmets not floppy hats like the one in the picture.<sup>668</sup>

The authenticity of the soldiers' urine was even debated. Media commentators were speculating that it may instead of urine be water squeezed from a water bottle. The prisoner, according to commentators, also did not look to be distressed enough when viewed against the Abu Ghraib abuse images.

After further investigation the images were finally proven to be fakes. For example, the trucks' interior was shown to belong to a model which had not been used in Iraq. On May 14, 2004 Brigadier Geoff Sheldon of the QLR 'confirmed that the truck in the Mirror photos had been found at the Territorial Army's Kimberley barracks in Preston.'<sup>669</sup> Trinity Mirror were swift in their response, they immediately sacked editor Piers Morgan for failing in his duty as editor to confirm the validity of the abuse images before deciding to publish them. The next day, on May 15, 2004, *The Daily Mirror* also published a full front page apology, stating: 'SORRY.. WE WERE HOAXED'. It later emerged that Private Stuart Mackenzie of the Territorial Army had unsuccessfully sought a payment of £5,000 from *The Daily Mirror* for the faked abuse photographs. Private Mackenzie was soon court marshalled over the hoax, but his court marshal collapsed in April 2005. In December 2005, the *Crown*

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<sup>666</sup> Claire Cozens, 'Morgan Faces Army Grilling over 'Torture' Pictures', *The Guardian*, 04 May 2004. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2004/may/04/pressandpublishing.iraq/print>. Accessed on 21 June 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>668</sup> Sandra Laville, Richard Norton-Taylor, and Helena Smith, 'Inquiry into 'Torture' Pictures: Mirror Stands Firm as Doubts Raised over Images of British Abuse', *The Guardian*, 03 May 2004. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2004/may/03/iraqandthemedial.politicsandiraq/print> Accessed on 19 June 2008, Unpaginated

<sup>669</sup> Dan Milmo, and Helen Carter, 'Mirror Editor Sacked over Hoax: Morgan Refuses to Apologise after Iraq Abuse Pictures Are Shown to Be Fakes', *The Guardian*, 15 May 2004. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2004/may/15/mirror.politicsandthemedial/print>. Accessed on 19 June 2008, Unpaginated

*Prosecution Service* also threw out his case citing insufficient evidence. Unfortunately irreparable damage had already been done; the images were already in circulation and had already been added to the abuse image archive/arsenal. These faked abuse images furthermore help to illustrate the uncontrollability of the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror and the fact that the government and military are no longer able to control if, how or indeed when abuses images are made publicly available (even those these images turned out to be fake).<sup>670</sup> They also – as with Vanderford’s fake hostage execution video (see Chapter Five) – show that remediated images have strong auratic presences, can easily be mistaken for real image munitions and therefore be circulated through the international media before being identified as fakes.

Images showing the abuses that General Sir Michael Jackson had alluded to in his press conference, on April 30, 2004 – the abuse of Iraqi looters by some British soldiers at Camp Breadbasket near Basra (during Operation Ali Baba), back in May 2003 – were finally made public on January 18, 2005. These image munitions had not been released prior to this because they were evidence in pending court marshals. They were released, however, in January 2005, as a part of the media’s reporting of these ongoing court marshals. It was also hoped that the publication of these actual abuse image munitions would finally replace the faked abuse image munitions and give the British army some control back over the remediation of the abuse of Iraqi looters at the hands of some British soldiers. This shows how the British army, like the American military, still mistakenly believes that they can control the spectacle of abuse and the blowback of image munitions from their invisible war on terror.

Attention will now turn to discuss seven image munitions from the Camp Breadbasket abuse incident. These abuse images mark a new visibility for Britain, like the Abu Ghraib abuse images did for America, because they have helped to visualize Britain’s invisible war on terror. There are striking visual similarities between the Camp Breadbasket abuse images and the Abu Ghraib abuse images. Two particular image munitions from Camp Breadbasket could easily be inserted

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<sup>670</sup> See Robin Brown, 'The Politics of Visual Images in International Politics: The Case of British Prisoner Abuse in Iraq', in *International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention* (Honolulu: 2005). Available at: [http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/staff/robin/Image\\_V4-1.doc](http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/staff/robin/Image_V4-1.doc). Accessed on 18 November 2007, pp. 1-10

into the Abu Ghraib image archive/arsenal and not look out of place. The first image munition sees a British soldier standing in the foreground, giving a grin and thumbs up to the camera, while an Iraqi civilian is being forced to work in the background. As in the Abu Ghraib image where England and Graner appear, grinning with their thumbs up to the camera, standing behind a human pyramid, this image is also reminiscent – paraphrasing Thompson – of exotic holiday snapshots.<sup>671</sup> This image munition also features the same striking visual discontinuity between ‘place’ and ‘pose’ as in the England and Graner image. Paraphrasing Coleman: this image also manages to capture the anti-British and the all-British again within a single image.<sup>672</sup>

The second image munition is a direct visual mimetic of certain Abu Ghraib images (like the simulations of anal and oral sex) although the Camp Breadbasket and Abu Ghraib abuses took place independently from each other. This image features two male Iraqi civilians being forced to simulate anal sex. Both men are shown posing with smiles and with their thumbs up to the camera.

The next five images, a loose series, appear to document an escalation of abuse. They give audiences a ‘place’ of focus – for the Camp Breadbasket abuses – because the same scene, a hanger or warehouse, appears in each of the image munitions and a further continuity also runs throughout this series of images because of the continued presence of netting. They also provide audiences with definitive proof (after the earlier controversy surrounding the publication of fake abuse images in *The Daily Mirror*) that some British military personnel had indeed abused Iraqi prisoners. The first image munition shows an Iraqi civilian lying bound on the ground and wrapped in netting. The next image munition sees an Iraqi civilian – again bound and wrapped in netting – being stood over by a British soldier who is ready to punch him in the head. Another image munition sees an Iraqi civilian, again wrapped in netting, again lying on the floor, waiting for a British soldier to kick him in the head. In another image munition, yet another Iraqi civilian is lying on the floor, wrapped in netting, whilst a British soldier stands on top of him. The image munition which has since become the metonym for the Camp Breadbasket abuses shows an Iraqi civilian – bound and in netting – hanging from the prongs of a forklift truck.

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<sup>671</sup> Thompson, 'The New Visibility', p. 31

<sup>672</sup> Coleman, "'Damn You for Making Me Do This'", p. 211

These abuses came to light when Fusilier Gary Bartlam returned from Iraq and took a film of photos into his local Max Spielmann photography shop for developing on May 23, 2003. Employees at the branch saw the images in the development process and immediately alerted the authorities. As a result of a detailed military investigation, four British soldiers (Fusilier Gary Bartlam, Lt. Cpl. Mark Cooley, Cpl. Daniel Kenyon and Lt. Cpl. Darren Larkin) were court marshalled in Germany in January 2005 and in February 2005 they were all found guilty of committing these abuses. The images or rather image munitions which document this abuse have had a similar fate to earlier abuse images – they have all circulated globally, joining the already circulating abuse image munitions from Abu Ghraib and those faked abuse image munitions which appeared in *The Daily Mirror*. However, Abu Ghraib still remains the most infamous out of the Iraq prisoner abuse incidents because it was the first to be made public and therefore audiences will often automatically associate prisoner abuses with Abu Ghraib. In terms of image warfare in the war on terror abuse image munitions all contribute to the same image archive/arsenal. Attention will now turn to examine the ‘own goal effect’ of abuse images.

### **Abuse Images and the ‘Own Goal Effect’**

Susan Sontag has drawn attention to the fact that:

in 1924, on the tenth anniversary of the national mobilization in Germany for the First World War – the conscientious objector Ernst Friedrich published his *Krieg dem Kriege!* (*War Against War!*). This is photography as shock therapy: an album of more than one hundred and eighty photographs mostly drawn from German military and medical archives, many of which were deemed unpublishable by government censors while the war was on.... Almost all of the sequences in *War Against War!* are difficult to look at, notably the pictures of dead soldiers belonging to the various armies putrefying in heaps on fields and roads and in the front-line trenches. But surely the most unbearable pages in this book, the whole of which was designed to horrify and demonize, are in the section titled ‘The Face of War’, twenty-four close-ups of soldiers with huge facial wounds.... By 1930, *War Against War!* had gone through ten editions in Germany and been translated into many languages.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Sontag, *Regarding the Pain*, pp. 13-14

Now, fast forward to the first years of the twenty-first century where, according to Hill, abuse images and

the use of torture can be judged self-defeating.... The matrix ‘torture – extraordinary rendition – Guantanamo Bay – [faked abuses – Camp Breadbasket –] Abu Ghraib’ has served to fatally undermine the values the Bush administration and its allies have sought to identify as directing the War on Terror.<sup>674</sup>

However, this strategic matrix was always supposed to remain invisible and ultimately deniable. It was never meant to become public. These abuse image munitions have since played an important force multiplier role. Today, these abuse image munitions, or ‘free-floating weapons,’<sup>675</sup> have been published instantly on the internet and copied by other people – located anywhere in the world – onto their own private blogs and websites, reaching a wider and wider audience and gaining a larger and larger circulation each time they are copied. These images have, therefore, had a damaging cumulative ‘own goal effect’. I deploy the term ‘own goal effect’ here to describe the abuse images which have been produced by America and Britain in the war on terror – either by soldiers independently of the military or by military officials in an attempt to control the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror – and it helps to describe the fact that all of these abuse images have been uncontrollable since their release and as such have been damaging for both America and Britain.

Phillip Carter believes that ‘if Osama bin Laden had hired a Madison Avenue public relations firm to rally Arabs hearts and minds to his cause, it’s hard to imagine that it could have devised a better propaganda campaign.’<sup>676</sup> David Simpson also believes that ‘the staging of these incidents as pranks rather than as formal spectacles provided exactly the touch of the real that might have been absent from more

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<sup>674</sup> Hill, *Re-Imagining*, p. 115

<sup>675</sup> Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, ‘Gender Trouble at Abu Ghraib?’ in *Western Political Science Association (WPSA) Annual Conference* (Oakland, CA: 2005). Available at: <http://www.csus.edu/ORG/WPSA/Nesvold06.pdf>. Accessed on 13 May 2007, p. 3

<sup>676</sup> Phillip Carter, ‘The Road to Abu Ghraib’, *Washington Monthly*, November 2004. Available at: <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2004/0411.carter.html>. Accessed on 19 August 2008, Unpaginated

carefully composed images falling into the inherited genres of wartime reportage.’<sup>677</sup>

According to Mirzoeff:

the refined torture technique known as the “Vietnam,” in which a hooded prisoner standing on a box connected to wires was led to believe he would be electrocuted if he stepped off. This mode of torture used to be preferred precisely because it left no visible marks but the digital cameras and computers that were so central to the success of the US-led invasion have now “blown back” the sight of Americans as torturers.<sup>678</sup>

Jean Baudrillard believed that ‘these images are as murderous for America as those of the World Trade Center in flames’<sup>679</sup> a point which can also be made about *The Daily Mirror* faked abuse images and those from Camp Breadbasket. But they have also helped the invisible war on terror to remain in the public consciousness and therefore high up on both the political and news agendas. However, I do not want to make any direct causal claim here about the release of the Abu Ghraib images and changes in the international political landscape.

In fact, this making visible of the invisible war on terror did not result in immediate political changes. The Abu Ghraib images did contribute though to the growing public discontent with the war in Iraq. According to Jeff Lewis:

Elections in the US and Australia in 2004 returned with increased majorities the incumbent conservative governments that had sponsored the invasion and occupation of Iraq. In the British elections in 2005 dissatisfaction with Tony Blair’s management of the war was not enough to remove the Labour government from office, even though protest votes were directed to the Liberal Democrats.<sup>680</sup>

Lewis concluded, back in 2005, that

the universal outrage with which the Abu Ghraib photographs were met seems not to have translated into a more generalized public expression within the institutionalized electoral system. The photographs, we might assume, were not sufficient in themselves to galvanize public protest against the war and force the removal of ‘responsible’ governments from power.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 133

<sup>678</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 180

<sup>679</sup> Baudrillard, 'War Porn', p.1

<sup>680</sup> Lewis, *Language Wars*, p. 244

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid*, p. 244



However, fast forward to 2009 (with four more years of insurgency activity and soldier deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan) and it is immediately apparent that the international political landscape has changed dramatically. After a 'long goodbye' Tony Blair – George W. Bush's closest ally since the 9/11 terror attacks – finally stepped down as Britain's Prime Minister, on June 27, 2007, he was immediately succeeded by Gordon Brown (Blair's former Chancellor of the Exchequer). In Australia, on December 3, 2007, Prime Minister John Howard – another ally of the Bush administration – was succeeded by Kevin Rudd. Meanwhile in America President Bush had come to the end of his second term in office (and was constitutionally bound not to run for re-election), therefore, the Republican Party selected a new Presidential Candidate. The Party selected Senator John McCain – a Vietnam War Veteran and former Prisoner of War – who, back in 2000, had lost out to Senator George W. Bush in the race to become the Republican Party's Presidential Candidate. In selecting McCain the Republican Party were possibly hoping to maintain continuity between the Bush years of the war on terror and the post-Bush years.

The race to become the Democratic Party's Presidential Candidate soon came down to two runners: Senator Hilary Clinton (wife of former US President Bill Clinton) and Senator Barack Obama (a junior United States Senator, former Editor of the *Harvard Law Review* and an African American). The Presidential race was finally fought between Senator John McCain and Senator Barack Obama. McCain's Doctrine<sup>682</sup> echoed Bush's Doctrine<sup>683</sup> (especially on the issue of Iraq) and as in other parts of the world America voted instead for change.

Following his inaugural address, on January 20, 2009, in which he made repeated rhetorical references to the start of a new chapter in American history and the war on

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<sup>682</sup> See Matt Bai, 'The McCain Doctrines', *The New York Times*, 18 May 2008. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/18/magazine/18mccain-t.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/18/magazine/18mccain-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print). Accessed on 13 May 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>683</sup> See Charles R. Kesler, 'Democracy and the Bush Doctrine', *Claremont Review of Books*, 2004. Available at: [http://www.claremont.org/publications/crb/article\\_print.asp?articleid=1218](http://www.claremont.org/publications/crb/article_print.asp?articleid=1218). Accessed on 15 May 2009, Unpaginated

terror,<sup>684</sup> President Obama was also quick to institute some major changes. In fact, on January 22, 2009, he signed his first executive orders which called upon the CIA to close, within a year, their international network of internment camps – including the Guantanamo detention facility. However, in April 2010, Guantanamo Bay was still being used to detain a number of terrorist suspects. He also ordered an immediate review of the status of the remaining 245 detainees at Camp Delta and he banned the use of ‘Torture Lite’ techniques.<sup>685</sup> President Obama has also been clear that the immediate suspensions of the Guantanamo military tribunals are pending a review. On February 26, 2009 President Obama also lifted the moratorium, passed in the lead up to the 1991 Gulf War by President George H. W. Bush, preventing the publication of images of the repatriation of dead US service personnel to Dover Air Force Base. Instead responsibility about whether images of the repatriated dead should be published or not was handed over to the families of individual victims to be considered on a case by case basis.<sup>686</sup> President Obama then committed his administration to a withdrawal plan from Iraq, something that the Bush administration had never committed to. “‘Let me say this as plainly as I can: By Aug 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end.’”<sup>687</sup> In a move designed to make the invisible war on terror even more transparent the Obama administration has also declassified a number of documents pertaining to both Guantanamo Bay and Extraordinary Rendition. He has also renamed the war on terror an ‘Overseas Contingency Operation.’ These executive orders and rhetorical word games all signal the beginning of the end for the invisible war on terror and symbolically they are also meant to draw a line under the Bush administrations years in office.

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<sup>684</sup> See Barack Hussein Obama, 'Inaugural Address', 20 January 2009. Available at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/President\\_Barack\\_Obamas\\_Inaugural\\_Address/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/President_Barack_Obamas_Inaugural_Address/). Accessed on 21 May 2009, pp. 1-4

<sup>685</sup> Mark Mazzetti, and William Glaberson, 'Obama Issues Directive to Shut Down Guantanamo', *The New York Times*, 22 January 2009. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/22/us/politics/22gitmo.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/22/us/politics/22gitmo.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print). Accessed on 13 May 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>686</sup> John Myers, 'Obama Lifts Moratorium on Coverage of War Dead', *associatedcontent.com*, 2009. Available at: [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1518852/obama\\_lifts\\_moratorium\\_on\\_coverage.html?cat=49](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1518852/obama_lifts_moratorium_on_coverage.html?cat=49). Accessed on 13 May 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>687</sup> Ben Feller, 'Obama Sets Firm Iraq Withdrawal', *The Detroit News*, 28 February 2009. Available at: <http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20090228/POLITICS/902280332/Obama+sets+firm+Iraq+withdrawal>. Accessed on 13 May 2009, Unpaginated

To conclude, President Bush was right – in his September 20, 2001 speech to Congress and the American people – the war on terror has proven to be ‘unlike any other we have ever seen.’<sup>688</sup> In fact, post-9/11, a new image theatre of war has opened up. However, it is now known – with the benefit of hindsight – what could not have been known then: that the Bush administration would misjudge the challenges of image warfare. Instead of working towards understanding the meanings of images – like Al Qaeda have done – the Pentagon have remained trapped, convinced that the war on terror will be won through a military campaign which is derived from techno-war principles developed from the most recent RMA and adapted for image warfare.

The Pentagon’s technological superiority has proven to be no match against Al Qaeda’s damaging image munitions. When the Bush administration has manufactured media spectacles – such as Saving Private Lynch, the falling Saddam statue and Bush’s ‘Mission Accomplished’ speech – it has done so failing to understand the decentralized nature of the contemporary rhizomatic media system. Where an increasing number of new media actors are now able to take a manufactured media spectacle – say Bush’s ‘Mission Accomplished’ speech – reinsert it into new image contexts and remediate it for political purposes that are entirely distinct from the original intentions of The White House. The Bush administration also mistakenly believes that it can still centrally control the flow of information and images in the war on terror. It fails to grasp the fact that today’s news audiences are increasingly media savvy and more able to identify a manufactured media spectacle from an unscripted media event than they were back during the 1991 Gulf War. Therefore, when these kinds of manufactured media spectacles are released they are quickly met with criticism from both the media and the audience. Finally, the Bush administration has failed to realise that its media spectacles are in fact image munitions and some of them even have a damaging ‘own goal effect’: Uday and Qusay Hussein death images, Saddam’s capture/trial/execution and prisoner abuse images. These same mistakes have been repeated by the new Iraqi government when they turned Saddam’s execution into a media spectacle and thought that they could control its dissemination.

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<sup>688</sup> President George W. Bush, 20/09/2001, Unpaginated

Al Qaeda has instead realised that its media spectacles – bin Laden tapes, suicide terrorism footage, suicide video wills and hostage videos – are powerful image munitions and have deployed them to gain a strategic advantage in the war on terror. Al Qaeda have also realised that new media technologies now allow them to manufacture increasingly sophisticated images and videos which can then be deployed with greater accuracy – having a force multiplier effect – as they can be inserted into news-cycles to coincide with specific events on the international political agenda. Thus enabling Al Qaeda to hijack political events, for example: a bin Laden video was released to coincide with the 2004 US Presidential Election (see Chapter Three) and a Kenneth Bigley hostage video was released to coincide with Prime Minister Tony Blair’s keynote speech at the 2004 Labour Party Conference (see Chapter Five). Al Qaeda is also mindful of the fact that information is increasingly uncontrollable and unpredictable in the rhizomatic media age. This is because a growing number of new media actors can now remediate image munitions and deploy them for political purposes which are distinct from Al Qaeda’s original intentions. Therefore, Al Qaeda realizes just how crucial the initial impact of their image munitions are as they have no control over their circulation and remediation. To help guarantee a strong initial impact they design their image munitions either to fit into existing news frames, borrowing from well established media messages like political communications with their bin Laden videos and suicide video wills. Or they produce their image munitions with a shocking content, suicide bombing footage and hostage videos, so as to make them immediately newsworthy.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored abuses and the invisible war on terror and its impact on the new image warfare theatre of war. It began with a conceptualization of war abuses. Since the advent of photography, abuses have been documented in a number of wars. However, war abuse images have largely remained hidden and where they have become visible they have been mobilized by anti-war movements and popular culture. A contemporary example of war abuses being hidden is the “Turkey Shoot” incident from the 1991 Gulf War – these images were not published in full until just prior to the 2003 Iraq War. War abuses were again hidden during the conventional

operations phase of the Second Iraq War, however, in 2004 images showing the abuse of Iraqi prisoners, by some American military personnel, at the Abu Ghraib prison facility emerged. Comparisons were then drawn between these Abu Ghraib abuses and prisoner abuses in the American prison system. Mirzoeff's conceptualisation of the invisible war on terror, 'The Empire of Camps' – was then explored and used to launch into my own discussion of the weaponization of abuse image munitions in the war on terror.

The Abu Ghraib abuse images were then identified as a major turning point, marking a new visibility in the war on terror, and I have also explored the uncertainty surrounding when the Abu Ghraib images actually became weaponized: establishing that the Abu Ghraib images were actually transformed into image munitions not at their initial point of production but when they were picked up and deployed by anti-war protesters and NGO's. I then singled out five specific Abu Ghraib image munitions for discussion and also explored the circulation and remediation of Abu Ghraib image munitions beyond news networks and jihadi internet propaganda. Revealing how in the information age these abuse images have been appropriated by a number of new media actors and consequently appear in surprising and unpredictable new image contexts. Attention then turned to examine the Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme. The limited journalistic access to Guantanamo Bay and the return of 'unlawful combatants' from internment camps have failed to prevent a number of damaging image munitions and damaging testimony appearing in the media, these images and testimony have since continued to circulate and remediate.

On April 30, 2004, at a MoD press conference, General Sir Michael Jackson announced news of an investigation into abuses by some British soldiers in Iraq. The following day, on May 1, 2004, *The Daily Mirror* published images supposedly showing some British soldiers abusing Iraqis. These abuse images were later proven to be fakes, however, they continue to circulate and remediate and be confused with actual abuse image munitions. These fake abuse images point to the uncontrollable nature of the spectacle of abuse in the new image warfare theatre of war. This episode was then followed by the publication, on January 18, 2005, of real abuse image munitions showing the abuse of Iraqi looters at Camp Breadbasket at the

hands of some British soldiers. These damaging image munitions are proof that the British army currently misunderstands (like America) the nature of image warfare in the war on terror. It shows the British Army continuing to believe that it can control the spectacle of abuse, via the release of actual abuse image munitions. I then examined seven of these Camp Breadbasket abuse image munitions, revealing a network of associations between them and the Abu Ghraib abuse images. Finally, the so-called 'own goal effect' of contemporary abuse image munitions was discussed with reference to the publication, in 1924, of *War Against War!* by Ernst Friedrich (highlighting the 'own goal effect' of these gruesome images for post-WWI German society) and to the changing international political landscape between 2004 and 2009. To conclude, the election of President Barack Obama and his administrations early efforts to exorcise Bush's schizophrenic legacy of visibility and invisibility in the war on terror were discussed.

The above case study on abuses has explored the opening up of a new front in the new image warfare theatre of war – the making visible of the invisible war on terror. Today, instead of just having to guard against attacks from Al Qaeda manufactured image munitions, America and Britain is now facing attack from abuse image munitions produced by their own soldiers and unintentionally weaponized as they have circulated and have been picked up and deployed by anti-war groups and NGO's in campaigns against the war in Iraq and the wider war on terror.

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored the changing ways in which images circulate within contemporary society. It defined this as a shift from a mass media system (connected to a twentieth century notion of propaganda, characterized by control and the ‘mobilization of images’) to a rhizomatic media system (connected to the deterritorialized circulation and the ‘weaponization of images’). It was also argued that this has resulted in a paradigm shift: from techno-war to image warfare. Failing to recognise this shift, the American and British governments and militaries are also failing to manage image warfare in the war on terror because they are still trapped in an outdated techno-war mindset. In contrast Al Qaeda appears to better understand the new security challenges posed by the uncontrollability of images in image warfare.

The first part of this thesis (Chapters One and Two) was theoretical. In it I outlined the mass media system, what characterises the rhizomatic media system and the step-changes in contemporary war from the Vietnam War (the first television war), the First Gulf War (the first real-time war), the Kosovo Conflict (the first internet war) and the September 11<sup>th</sup> instituted war on terror (image warfare). I also discussed the work of a number of key IR theorists: François Debrix, Richard Jackson, Stuart Croft, Milena Michalski and James Gow, Michael J. Shapiro and James Der Derian. Although Critical International Relations, Critical Security Studies and post-positivist IR theorists have already made important inroads with their study of images and popular culture and their embracing of the aesthetic turn in International Relations. They do not go far enough in my opinion. In order to fill this gap and promote a more sophisticated understanding of the media and how images circulate in society I have embraced literature in cognate disciplines such as Media Studies and Visual Culture. Exploring how propaganda has transformed from something produced centrally and disseminated from the top-down, into information that flows unpredictably from decentralized sources. I have also discussed the work of Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, revealing how Baudrillard was – with the 1991 Gulf War – critical of real-time communication and how he was forced to rethink this in

response to September 11<sup>th</sup>; whereas Virilio instead immediately saw possibilities in real-time communication for making new forms of activity and agency possible, offering a prophetic glimpse of future war. I also engaged with work in Visual Culture about photography, image production, circulation and relocation by Susan Sontag, W. J. T. Mitchell, Nicholas Mirzoeff and Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. Then, to make these diverse insights more appealing to IR theorists I developed three conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’ and then tested them against the iconic historic images: *Flag Raising at Iwo Jima* and *The Unknown Rebel (or Tank Man)* and a selection of contemporary appropriations. I concluded the first part of this thesis with a discussion of my methodology.

The second, empirically driven part of my thesis (Chapters Three to Six) employed my three conceptual terms in four thematic case studies (political communications, suicides, executions and abuses) which each explored a different part of the new image warfare theatre of war. My political communications case study traced out certain aspects of political communications in the war on terror, understood as a form of image munition. I discussed how ‘official’ political communications – especially those by American Presidents and British Prime Ministers and specifically President Bush and Prime Minister Blair in the war on terror – are important because they facilitate the dissemination of information to the public by leaders in times of war and peace. Also, how technology has been important in the development of political communications and how the power of political communications has been recognized by Al Qaeda who now produce ‘unofficial’ political communications featuring Osama bin Laden. I then examined the bin Laden tapes up until 2009, discussed Andrew Hill’s Lacanian analysis of the bin Laden tapes and Binoy Kampmark’s work on the spectre of bin Laden. Finally, I explored how the remediation of bin Laden image munitions has resulted in them being picked up and deployed in surprising new image contexts by new media actors. Evidence of the uncontrollability of images, but also how bin Laden is indeed a savvy communicator and manipulator of new media technologies exploiting them to guarantee his continued presence in the war on terror.



My suicides case study examined suicide terrorism, a key terrorist tactic. However, rather than focussing exclusively on the physical tactical value of suicide terrorism I also went beyond this to reveal a further symbolic dimension: used by terrorists to manufacture propaganda around their acts of terror. I started by looking at why Al Qaeda's suicide terrorism is an effective counter to techno-war. I then examined – with reference to the bombing of The Canal Hotel in Iraq on August 19, 2003, the September 11, 2001 attacks, the triple suicide bombing of Firdos Square on October 24, 2005, the July 7, 2005 London Bombings and the July 21, 2005 Failed London Bombings – how suicide terrorism and suicide video wills are both rich sources of image munitions, counter-image munitions and remediation battles. To conclude, again reflecting the uncontrollability of image munitions, I discussed a number of examples which show how new media actors have picked up, adapted and deployed suicide terrorism image munitions for their own political purposes.

My executions case study explored another feature of the image warfare theatre of war, a source of further powerful image munitions. I started by discussing three symbolically powerful terrorist tactics: hijackings, hostage-takings and hostage executions. Revealing how hijackings and hostage-takings are traditionally conducted to manufacture a strong media presence and also maintain media interest in a crisis (early examples of image munitions). I also discussed how hostage executions are similarly conducted to produce a strong media presence, but how they are also designed with the intention of producing powerful image munitions. I explored this with reference to pre-9/11 airplane hijackings, the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship hijacking, the kidnap and murder of Aldo Moro and the 1980s Beirut hostage crisis. I also examined the contemporary hostage-takings of Daniel Pearl, Nick Berg, Kenneth Bigley and Alan Johnston. The fact that hostage executions in Iraq now appear to be counterproductive is significant, but what is equally important is how the symbolism continues to be popular. This is evidenced by the symbolism deployed in the Johnston image munitions, the fact that a plot to kidnap and behead a British Muslim soldier in Birmingham has been foiled and the appearance of this symbolism in popular culture: *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip* and *Spooks*. The uncontrollable circulation of image munitions was again proven through a discussion of a number of examples showing how hostage execution image munitions have – since their initial release – been picked up, remediated and deployed by new media

actors. I then examined, with a discussion of the release of damaging image munitions (the death images of Uday and Qusay Hussein), how America and the new Iraqi government have again proven that they misunderstand image warfare and the contemporary circulation of images. I have also shown how these damaging Uday and Qusay image munitions have since been picked up and used by new media actors who have deployed them in surprising new image contexts. The capture/trial/execution of Saddam Hussein was also transformed into a series of media spectacles and a source of damaging image munitions which have since also been picked up by new media actors and deployed in surprising new image contexts, thus providing further compelling evidence of the uncontrollable circulation of image munitions in the rhizomatic condition.

My abuses case study is distinct from the previous case studies. Rather than examining images which were originally produced as image munitions, instead I focussed attention on images and testimony that documented abuses and were only later deployed as damaging image munitions against America and Britain. Evidence that the spectacle of abuse cannot be controlled in the internet age as images which were originally filmed and photographed by military personnel as souvenirs were able to be picked up, at a later date, and weaponized against the Bush administration and the Blair government. I also discussed how although the history of war is littered with abuses they have largely remained out of sight and when they have become visible they have quickly been mobilized by anti-war movements and popular culture. I explored the invisible war on terror via Nicholas Mirzoeff's account of 'The Empire of Camps', also the uncertainty over when the Abu Ghraib abuse images actually underwent their transition from gruesome images to image munitions (identifying that it was when they were picked up and deployed by anti-war protesters and NGO's), I then selected a number of Abu Ghraib image munitions for discussion and followed this with a discussion of some examples which highlight their uncontrollable circulation and remediation in the rhizomatic condition. My attention then turned to two other features of the invisible war on terror: Guantanamo Bay and the Extraordinary Rendition programme both of which have also been subject to unpredictable remediation by a number of new media actors who have their own distinct reasons for picking up and deploying these images. I then discussed General Sir Michael Jackson's announcement that allegations of the abuse

of Iraqi prisoners by some British soldiers were being investigated, the publication in *The Daily Mirror* of faked prisoner abuse images (that raised questions not only about the invisibility/visibility of abuses in the war on terror but also about the relationship between real and fake abuse images) and the release of real abuse images documenting the abuse of Iraqis by some British soldiers at Camp Breadbasket in Iraq. This decision to publish the Camp Breadbasket abuse image munitions shows that Britain still mistakenly believed that it could control the spectacle of abuse. In fact the publication of these abuse image munitions only gave anti-war protesters, NGO's and Al Qaeda further ammunition to deploy against Britain. I finished by exploring what I term the 'own goal effect' of abuse images and President Obama's failed attempt to increase transparency and also draw a line under the Bush years of the war on terror.

Having identified that society has moved away from the age of mass media to rhizomatic media, fundamentally altering the ways in which images circulate and resulting in a paradigm shift from techno-war to image warfare, I discussed how this new theatre of war has largely been sidelined by mainstream IR. However, engaging concepts found in Media Studies and Visual Culture literature and introducing them to IR – via my conceptual terms – I have endeavoured to help bridge the gaps between these diverse disciplines. I hope that by reassessing the war on terror my work can contribute to debate within IR about image warfare and that this will encourage others in International Relations to embrace work from Media Studies, Visual Culture and beyond and to engage in further research about image warfare. This is important because to continue reworking techno-war for the challenges of image warfare is ineffective, especially when Al Qaeda have already fully embraced the fact that they are engaged in a war of images against the West. What I am calling for, along with scholars including: Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, William E. Connolly, Stuart Croft, Alex Danchev, François Debrix, James Der Derian, James Gow, Richard Jackson, Liam Kennedy, Debbie Lisle, Milena Michalski, Michael J. Shapiro and Cynthia Weber, is a comprehensive theoretical restructuring in International Relations in a way that ensures the movement of aesthetic, critical and post-positivist approaches from the outside to the mainstream of IR and an embrace of new media and visual forms.

If any doubts should exist about the importance or likely longevity of the politico-aesthetic transformations which dominated the Bush years of the war on terror, then the election of Barack Obama should dispel them. Although there are significant differences between the Bush years and the new Obama era continuity remains in the form of image warfare and the fact that Obama mistakenly believes that he can control the spectacle of war and image munitions in the same manner as he controlled his election spectacle. Obama – as a Senator, a Presidential Candidate, President Elect and now as President of the United States of America – has at every stage proven himself to be a skilled communicator and manufacturer of media spectacles. In fact, as Kellner puts it, Obama has become ‘a “supercelebrity.”’<sup>689</sup> And has ‘in the first months of his presidency, deployed his status as global supercelebrity and utilized media spectacle to advance his agenda.’<sup>690</sup>

Here are a few examples of Obama mobilizing media spectacle to great effect: the 2008 Democratic Party primaries were a spectacle of ‘race’ and ‘gender’, between the first African American candidate and the first female candidate;<sup>691</sup> Obama’s campaign speeches also became immediate internet spectacles, especially his Super Tuesday victory speech which was the most searched for speech on the internet at that time.<sup>692</sup> Obama also became a ‘spectacle of hope’<sup>693</sup> and this hope was soon circulating and remediating via street art, as graffiti, posters and stickers (on everything from street signs to billboards).<sup>694</sup> Obama eventually became the Democratic presidential nominee and soon embarked on an international tour, visiting the leaders of the world. According to Kellner, Obama was acting ‘as if he were the presumptive president. This established him as a global celebrity.’<sup>695</sup> Brand Obama was born.

On election night the spectacles of ‘victory’, ‘celebrity’ and ‘race’ converged as famous African American celebrities, such as Jessie Jackson, Spike Lee and Oprah

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<sup>689</sup> Douglas Kellner, 'Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle'. *International Journal of Communication* 3 (2009), pp. 717

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid*, p. 717

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid*, p. 717

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid*, p. 718

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid*, p. 718

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid*, p. 719

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid*, p. 721

Winfrey, gathered in Chicago to hear Obama's speech and celebrate his victory.<sup>696</sup> Then, as Kellner writes, 'the pre-inaugural spectacle in January was memorable and perhaps unparalleled in recent U.S. history.'<sup>697</sup> Kellner also believes that:

the Obama inaugural spectacle was as well-planned and performed as the primary and presidential campaigns.... Obama's traditionally short inaugural speech did not have the lofty and soaring rhetoric and crowd-pleasing chants of his most memorable discourses, its recognition of the severity of the crisis confronting the country, the need for fundamental change in politics and values from the Bush-Cheney administration, and determination to confront these problems satisfied the crowds and most serious observers.<sup>698</sup>

Following his inauguration and announcement of an immediate break from the Bush administration's foreign policy, on January 26, 2009, he also gave his first formal televised interview as President. In it he offered to open a dialogue with Iran and so hinted at a potentially significant shift in America's relationship with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his government. According to Leonard Doyle, his 'selection of al-Arabiya over its better-known rival al-Jazeera or the US-funded network al-Hurra emphasised his desire to reach out to the Muslim world without seeming to pander to America's fiercest critics.'<sup>699</sup> Obama's appearance on al-Arabiya also mirrors the earlier appearances of Prime Minister Blair and President Bush on Al Jazeera (see Chapter Three). Obama then went on tour again to meet world leaders in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East – once more confirming his global celebrity status.<sup>700</sup> Although a master manufacturer of media spectacles, the uncontrollable circulation and remediation – via graffiti and stickers – of his image should have served as a warning that spectacles cannot be controlled. Obama has not heeded this warning and has instead launched into controlling the fallout from the spectacle of abuse in the war on terror, a decision which is currently unravelling.

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<sup>696</sup> *Ibid*, p. 730

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid*, p. 735

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 735-736

<sup>699</sup> Leonard Doyle, 'Obama Reaches out to Iran with Message to Muslims'. *The Independent*, 28 January 2009. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/obama-reaches-out-to-iran-with-message-to-muslims-1517853.html>. Accessed on 14 April 2010, Unpaginated

<sup>700</sup> Douglas Kellner, 'Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle'. *International Journal of Communication* 3 (2009), pp. 736

President Obama soon realised that exorcising Bush's schizophrenic legacy and drawing a line under the damaging invisible war on terror – via increased transparency – were both going to be more challenging than he had planned. In fact, according to Jon Ward, Obama has become something of an 'apologizer-in-chief.'<sup>701</sup> In a move designed to finally exorcise Bush's legacy and take control of the remediation battle over abuses in the invisible war on terror, Obama announced plans to declassify 2,000 prisoner abuse image munitions as part of this new era of transparency.<sup>702</sup> However, on May 13, 2009, Obama performed a u-turn on this issue on national security grounds.<sup>703</sup> This decision has since been heavily criticised by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Obama could have avoided this situation though because as he came to power promising a clean break with the Bush years of the war on terror he could have adopted a policy that the Pentagon would not be declassifying any further prisoner abuse images. However, instead he has fallen into the same trap as the Bush administration, mistakenly believing that he can control the spectacle of abuse. What has now happened is that these 2,000 abuse image munitions have started to be leaked anyway.<sup>704</sup> Proof again that the spectacle of abuse cannot be controlled. It is also confirmation that image warfare still continues to dominate in the war on terror.

In exploring the ways in which society has shifted from a mass media system to a rhizomatic media system, the implications for this shift on the contemporary circulation of images and the significance of a paradigm shift from techno-war to image warfare. I hope that this has opened up for fuller consideration this new 'theatre' of war and with it avenues for future research. For instance, the concepts of 'image munitions', 'counter-image munitions' and 'remediation battles' could be deployed to help interpret and investigate other examples of contemporary conflict, terrorism and protest. The coordinated Mumbai terror attack, on November 26,

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<sup>701</sup> Jon Ward, 'Obama Tries out Role as Apologizer-in-Chief', *The Washington Times*, 09 April 2009. Available at: <http://www.washintontimes.com/news/2009/apr/09/obama-tries-out-role-as-apologizer-in-chief/>. Accessed on 14 May 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>702</sup> Jonathan Beale, 'Reasons Behind Obama's U-Turn', *BBC News*, 13 May 2009. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8049178.stm>. Accessed on 14 May 2009, Unpaginated

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid*, Unpaginated

<sup>704</sup> Alex Spillius, 'Prisoner Abuse' Photographs Surface as Barack Obama Prepares to Block Publication', *The Telegraph*, 16 May 2009. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldwide/northamerica/usa/barackobama/5325444/Prisoner-abuse-photographs-surface-as-Barack-Obama-prepares-to-block-publication.html>. Accessed on 16/05/2009, Unpaginated

2008, when terrorists (later identified as members of Lashkar e Toiba – Pakistan’s largest militant group) launched ten coordinated attacks, including bombings, shootings and sieges – reminiscent of earlier Al Qaeda terror attacks – against *The Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus* (a railway station), *The Oberoi Trident* (a complex of two hotels), *The Taj Mahal Palace & Tower* (another hotel), *The Leopold Cafe*, *The Cama & Albless Hospital*, *Nariman House* (an Orthodox Jewish Centre), *The Metro Cinema*, an ally near *The Times of India* building and *St. Xavier’s College*, *The Mazagaon Docks* and finally a taxi in the Vile Parle suburb of Mumbai. The sieges at *The Oberoi Trident* and *The Taj Mahal Palace & Tower* were finally ended on November 29, 2008. The coordinated Mumbai terror attack shows Lashkar e Toiba using new media technologies (television media coverage and mobile phones) to their advantage. Senior operatives in Pakistan were able to keep in constant communication with their operatives on the ground in Mumbai and direct them and also use the television coverage to adapt their plans so as to manufacture a number of powerful image munitions and transform the terror attack into an episodic media event. It once again proves that terrorists, this time Lashkar e Toiba rather than Al Qaeda, have a more sophisticated understanding of the rhizomatic media system and image warfare compared with government and military authorities, this time India, rather than America, Britain or indeed the new Iraqi government. Applying my theory of image warfare to this coordinated terror attack will provide IR theorists with further important insights about contemporary acts of terror.

The inability of authorities to control the circulation of images – in the information age – was again demonstrated, on June 20, 2009, when Neda Salehi Agha Soltan (a twenty six year old Graduate of *Azad University* and a trainee tour guide) was shot dead during protests against the recent re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. A video quickly began to circulate and remediate uncontrollably on different media platforms (*YouTube, Facebook, Twitter*) despite moves by the Iranian government to stop information from leaving Iran. This disturbing video depicts the final moments of Neda’s life and also the actual moment of her death (something that is usually taboo). This video and the damaging image munitions cribbed from it have since become the instant metonym for the 2009 Iranian election protests and they continue to be picked up and deployed by new media actors, appearing in surprising new contexts and haunting the Ahmadinejad government. Analysis of the Neda video and

Neda image munitions will provide further compelling evidence of the dominance of image warfare and also how the circulation of images is today uncontrollable.

This thesis has explored how the image as circulated within society has changed as society has transformed from a mass-media to a rhizomatic media system. I have also identified how war has shifted from techno-war to image warfare, how America and Britain are currently one war behind – still all consumed by theories of techno-war – when in reality image warfare now dominates; whereas Al Qaeda has embraced image warfare and currently holds the strategic advantage in the war on terror. I have also embraced cognate literatures, such as Media Studies and Visual Culture, and developed and introduced the conceptual terms: ‘image munitions’, ‘counter-image munitions’ and ‘remediation battles’ to the lexicon of IR – representing a convergence of Media Studies/Visual Culture terminology and IR terminology and encouraging a dialogue about image warfare. In singling out the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks and the 2009 Iranian election protests, as subjects for potential future research, I show that image warfare is not just confined to theorisations of the war on terror. Rather, my theory of image warfare can be adapted to help explain other forms of contemporary and future conflict.



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