

tion by the male gaze are all really existing moments that are in themselves subject to the division of the sensible that sustains the possibility of visibility as a system of power.

Pan's Labyrinth is, then, a key example of the tension between the right to look and the law of the gaze, which it is prone to become. That is to say, the subaltern revolt tends to become reified as what Gramsci called the modern Prince, or the centralized, hierarchical political party, a form of the police technique that is Caesarism. If we rely on folklore, popular culture, call it what you will, to do the undoing of visibility, the regime of the Hero, then the final undoing, that which folklore retreats from as its condition of possibility, is that of undoing itself. The fear of undoing has been the greatest motivator of visibility, beginning with the great undoing of Saint-Domingue into Haiti by the revolt of the enslaved, which persuaded Britain to abolish slavery rather than risk a viral undoing of the mystical foundations of sovereignty. The specter of emancipation in Jamaica and Chartism in Britain prompted Carlyle to reassert the power of mysticism as visibility over that of unbinding. Without proposing a last, the first undoing, as radical movements have known and then disavowed for generations, must be the frame of the national that so effectively lends itself to the domination of the police. In short, the mystical regime of visibility can be undone by magic, as long as the next thing magic does is undo itself.

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SEVEN

*Global Counterinsurgency
and the Crisis of Visuality*

The first, the supreme, most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its true nature.

—Karl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832), quoted by Col. Daniel S. Roper, "Global Counterinsurgency"

Politics is the continuation of war by other means.

—Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended"

The coils of a serpent are even more complex than the burrows of a molehill.

—Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control"

Visuality was a technique for waging war appropriated as a means to justify authority as the imagining of history. The end of the Cold War, in 1989 might have been expected to create a postvisuality era. Instead, the global Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has extended and transformed visibility, using digital technology to pursue nineteenth-century tactical goals. The "small wars" of imperial revolt, contrasted to the large wars against the national armies of other colonial powers, have been digitally upgraded into a global insurgency that requires a matching global counterinsur-

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gency. It should be said that from the decolonial perspective, the Cold War was always already a counterinsurgency, from Algeria to Indochina, Latin America, and now the Middle East. Classifying a conflict, as Clausewitz emphasized, was the first task of the leader and therefore the first step of visibility. As an index of the interaction of the first iteration of visibility theory and its current intensification as global counterinsurgency, Clausewitz's passage was cited by Colonel Daniel S. Roper, director of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, himself commenting on then British Prime Minister Tony Blair's assertion, in 2007, that the definition of a global war against insurgency was the first task in winning that war. By defining counterinsurgency as an existential struggle, the stage is set to ensure that "they" must die so that "we" may live. This "asymmetric warfare" is visualized as the Darwinian "struggle for life," or, in Roper's words, as a way "to preserve and promote the way of life of free and open societies based on the rule of law, defeat terrorist extremism and create a global environment inhospitable to extremists."¹ Foucault's assertion that politics is war by other means is now policy. It has entailed the adoption of population control as military tactics. Counterinsurgency manages populations, not individuals, being "a population-centered approach, instead of one focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the insurgents."² Achille Mbembe has argued that such controls in the context of war should be considered "necropolitics," a question of who shall live and who shall die, entailing "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations."³ Mbembe derives the genealogy of "sovereign right to kill" from slavery and colonial imperialism, where it could act with impunity and without rules. Expressed in today's military format, this becomes the mantra of counterinsurgency: "clear, hold and build," meaning remove insurgents from a locality using lethal force, sustain that expulsion by physical means such as separation walls, and then build neoliberal governance in the resulting space of circulation. Counterinsurgency classifies and separates by force to produce an imperial governance that is self-justifying because it is held to be "right" a priori and hence aesthetic. This governance is what I shall call "necropolitical regimes of separation."

The goal of such governance is not to produce disciplined, docile bodies, so much as to manage what Deleuze called the "society of control." In the parlance of counterinsurgency, this terrain is known as "culture," sometimes even defined and described using poststructuralist and cultural-studies theorists—including Deleuze. This post-panoptic imaginary operates a control

that seeks to separate the "host population" from the "insurgent," as if quarantining the former from infection by the latter. This necropolitics is invisible to the insurgent, with no expectation of reforming or disciplining that person, hence the sense that it is post-panoptic. For Bentham's Panopticon was designed above all to reform and improve the inmate, pupil, or factory worker, while post-panoptic visibility centers on population control. Despite an apparent but carefully stage-managed success in Iraq, which seems to be coming unstuck after the failed elections of 2010, global counterinsurgency has struggled to deliver basic services and public safety in its key areas of operations from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Yemen. These quantitative shortcomings are perhaps the corollary of the qualitative failure to define the practice of counterinsurgency beyond the classification and separation of the insurgent. Precisely because this is the era of globalization, characterized by transnational migration and electronic media, the digitized "border" between insurgent and host population consistently fails to hold. In the resulting crisis, the very pattern that counterinsurgency is trying to sustain is unclear: a centralized nation, a client state, or a global market? Although the U.S. military continues to use a moralized rhetoric of nation-building, their practical administration of counterinsurgency has significantly shifted to the management of disaster by means of targeted killing of insurgents using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), Special Forces, and private contractors. Ironically, perhaps, the Bush-era pursuit of governmentality in regions like Afghanistan has yielded to Obama's necropolitics, in which killing enemy leaders is the priority, epitomized by the killing of Osama bin Laden.

The long-standing project of defining the social from the perspective of militarized visibility has been deliberately made incoherent. Today's technologically mediated means of material visualization do not generate information about the presence of the human visualizer, if indeed there even is one. If we look at the drawings made by Bagetti for Napoleon, and other such battlefield visualizations of the Clausewitz era, the viewpoint of the commanding general was critical to the technical production of the map. By contrast, a satellite image, or one taken from a UAV, tells us nothing at all about those who wanted the visualization made. In a somewhat uncanny fashion, the Medusa effect, which I ascribed to Carlyle's concept of visibility, has now found a technological analogy. By the Medusa effect, I intended to convey visibility's politics of making the separation between autocrat and ruled so permanent that it was, as it were, set in stone. A new military device known as the "Gorgon Stare" has been devised to generate

twelve separate visual feeds from one UAV platform, covering four square kilometers of territory. Each feed can be viewed separately and concurrently. While the feeds are low-grade, they can be used to direct the full-motion video feed to specific targets.⁴ With perhaps surprising satire, the device is named after the mythical Gorgon, whose castrating stare turned people to stone. It is intended in part, then, to intimidate and to make it seem that whatever insurgents might do is visible and will be seen. Dehumanized weapons are certainly fear-inducing, for, in Thomas Pynchon's famous phrase, "a screaming comes across the sky."⁵ Journalistic reports indicate a similar anger in present-day Pakistan, where airborne drone attacks have increased such that as many as eighteen were launched in a few days after the failed Times Square bombing of May 2010. However, it was precisely such attacks that some consider to have motivated the attempt to target New York in the first place, forming a familiar asymmetric feedback loop: increased remote attacks of increased sophistication provoke increased attacks against U.S. civilians using improvised and nonmilitary materials, like fireworks. Any such attack generates further reprisals on both sides. Further, the chaos produced by post-panoptic visibility is its condition of existence. Whereas Carlyle offered the Hero and his visualization as the only defense against chaos, the counterinsurgent requires chaos, or at least its possibility, as the means of authorization in all senses. Its gambit is simply that civilian governance lacks both the authority and the imagination to resolve any of the crises that generate the need for counterinsurgency. Increasingly, the result has been to create the seemingly contradictory practice of counterinsurgent governance, the necropolitical regimes of separation.

It is at the borders of the United States and European Union that these asymmetric flows and counterflows are worked out domestically. Other modes of separation and distinction, such as the color line, are mobilized by this intensification because they are already there. For example, the U.S.-Mexico border is a racialized distinction, just like that between "Europe" and "Africa" on Spain's southern coasts and islands. Domestic segregation is complexly interactive with the global counterinsurgency. It also visualizes its tasks as "to clear" and "to hold," which is to say to classify residents (as insurgent/illegal or "legitimate" resident) and separate them by physical means. In the United States, the domestic use of counterinsurgency became apparent in the response to Hurricane Katrina. In a (now deleted) article that appeared in the *Army Times* on 2 September 2005, Brig. Gen.



FIGURE 55. STILL FROM *WHEN THE LEVEES BROKE: A REQUIEM IN FOUR ACTS* (DIR. SPIKE LEE, 2006)

Gary Jones, commander of the Louisiana National Guard's Joint Task Force, declared, "This place is going to look like Little Somalia. . . . We're going to go out and take this city back. This will be a combat operation to get this city under control." The journalist understood this to mean that the National Guard would be combating "an insurgency in the city."⁶ In Spike Lee's powerful documentary of the events, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (2006), several sequences demonstrate the practical consequence of this division of the sensible. We see then governor of Louisiana Kathleen Blanco histrionically announcing the deployment of the National Guard into the city with the remark that they have just returned from Iraq and will shoot to kill. We see a reporter for the BBC, usually the most decorous of journalists, quivering with rage as law enforcement near the Superdome surrounded one man accused of looting while dozens of others struggled through the by then polluted waters unassisted. We see Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré arriving in New Orleans on Friday, 2 September 2005, telling the soldiers, "Put those damn weapons down" — and their palpable reluctance to do so (see fig. 55). We realize that for the past four days U.S. troops have routinely been training their weapons on their own citizens. Ironically, the historian Douglas Brinkley, featured in Lee's film, reports that the terrorism security apparatus slowed the Department of Homeland Security's response because of all the background checks.⁷ This adaptation of domestic politics to the regime of counterinsurgency has since gone viral. Opponents of gay marriage in the United States refer to such couples as "domestic terrorists." High-school principals describe their work in inner-city schools

as "classic counterinsurgency." Border patrols in Nogales, Arizona, follow the counterinsurgency mantra "clear, hold, build" as the guiding light for their enforcement of immigration law. In April 2010, a strikingly unconstitutional state law was passed in Arizona, requiring police to pursue those who appeared to be illegal immigrants and criminalizing any immigrant at large without documentation. While the law may well be invalidated, it was widely agreed that it was passed for "domestic" political reasons within the state. The intent is to intensify the racialized divide between the citizen and the undocumented migrant worker, creating a nomadic border that can be instantiated whenever a "citizen" looks at a person suspected of being a migrant. Indeed, the UAV is now widely used in cross-border surveillance, flying first on the border and more recently in Mexico itself.⁸ British police have advanced plans for the extensive use of drones as domestic surveillance tools.⁹ Test flights in Liverpool produced a first arrest in February, 2010, only for the drones to be grounded by the Civil Aviation Authority for lacking the requisite license.¹⁰

These imbrications of classic population-management discourses, from sexuality to education and immigration, with low-intensity asymmetric urban warfare both produces, and is a product of, the crisis in visibility. In 1990, Deleuze emphasized that Foucault had only been able to perceive the constraints of the disciplinary society because they were coming undone as the society of control took over. The coils of the serpent Leviathan, the state and its population management, had so extensively succeeded in driving Marx's "old mole" of class struggle underground that population could now be managed, rather than disciplined. The corollary here is that visibility itself has today become "visible" at a point of intensification in which it can no longer fully contain that which it seeks to visualize. That is to say, chaos is now not the alternative to visibility but its condition of necessity. The so-called visual turn in the humanities since 1989 is, then, a symptomatic response to first the neovisuality of the RMA, which followed the end of the Cold War, and now the intensified crisis of that visuality. Take the axiomatic phrase "Move on, there's nothing to see here," which I have borrowed from Rancière. Under conditions of (counter)insurgency, everyone knows that not to be the case. In Iraq and Afghanistan, insurgents and suicide bombers have often dressed in military and police uniforms to further confuse relations of visibility. Circulation itself becomes dangerous when roadside explosive devices and marketplace suicide bombings are the tactics of choice. The Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang visualized this contra-

dition in his spectacular sculpture *Nothing to See Here* (2006). It consists of a sixteen-foot-long fiberglass crocodile, impaled with bamboo spears and hundreds of "sharp objects" confiscated by Chinese transport police, such as forks, chopsticks, and scissors. The confiscations allow the passenger to keep circulating, but perhaps we are all missing the five-hundred-pound crocodile in the room. With his trademark subtlety, Cai makes us question whether the crocodile is the enemy insurgent or perhaps the body-politic of our own society, so enmeshed in "security" as to have lost a sense of purpose. As the economic crisis has shown, circulation is not always possible and is certainly not always an answer as to what to do next. If that circulation is by car, as in the French *circulation*, meaning "traffic," then it adds to the disaster of climate change as well. Caught between the car crash, the car bomb, and the fossil fuel-generated climate crisis, it seems impossible to know which way to turn.

MILITARY REVOLUTIONS

One index of the present crisis is the difficulty of periodization. The claim that the entire planet is a potential space for insurgency and thus requires a waiting counterinsurgent force indicates the attempt to update and intensify the Cold War. In this view, if globalization has again become the "global civil war" that was the Cold War in networked form, or has created a new state of "permanent war," then war is global politics.¹¹ At the beginning of the Cold War, President Harry Truman denounced the "terror" of the Soviet Union, creating a vocabulary that came readily to hand post-9/11. The military-industrial complex was designed to resist regression into its own colonial past of slavery and to maintain the present condition of "freedom." U.S. National Security Council doctrine held that it was "the implacable purpose of the slave state to eliminate the challenge of freedom," meaning that Soviet communism was slavery that must be resisted by the free.¹² This conflict was thus to be engaged wherever and whenever it manifested itself under the rhetoric of paying any price and bearing any burden in order for things to remain exactly the same. Under the threat of nuclear war, as Donald Pease put it, "Hiroshima had turned the entire U.S. symbolic system into the afterimage of a collectively anticipated spectacle of disaster."¹³ Given that there had never been a nuclear war (as opposed to the single detonation of Hiroshima or later tests), this spectacle was paradoxically imaginary despite its status as afterimage: a war that will have

been. The endlessly discussed war was always in the future anterior — this will have been the nuclear war. For Derrida, the status of nuclear war as “fabulously textual” generated the very status of “the old words culture, civilization . . . [and] ‘Reality.’”¹⁴ This “Reality” was understood as binary, structural, and violent. The future that will (never) have happened was specular but textual, generating among its multiple side effects the 1980s era of “reading images.”

The counterinsurgency theory launched at the end of the Cold War as the RMA, however, has always already happened and is always to be visualized as part of culture. Its academic creature was visual culture. Military theorists presented the emergence of “information warfare” as the twelfth in a series of military revolutions that began with Napoleon, following the genealogy of visuality. This is myth-making of the first order, but its use of actual historical experience within a framework long dedicated to making “history” tell the story of the West allows it to have the aura of reality. The term *revolution* was not used idly. For the military have been devoted readers of revolutionary and guerilla theory ranging from the French and Indian Wars of colonial North America to Mao and the Zapatistas. Indeed, the RMA is widely considered to have been developed first in the Soviet Union, where it was also known as the “scientific-technical revolution.” The RMA was designed to give the military the advantages of speed and surprise usually held by guerilla and revolutionary groups. Consequently, the new mode of war was said to involve “dispersed ground forces,” with the result that “conventional ground operations come to resemble high intensity guerilla warfare.”¹⁵ Of course, the more effective guerilla warfare is, the less visible its activities are to the opposing forces. The goal of this mode of invisible war was to establish a permanent dominance in command, control, communications, intelligence (C3I), and information that would in turn ensure military hegemony. U.S. military planners envisaged a range of new weaponry, such as “precision guided munitions, combat vehicles that require no fuel or ammunition, directed energy weapons launched from platforms not yet invented, infrasonic weapons, and computer viruses used as weapons.”¹⁶ In 1999, when the Defense Department budget was a relatively modest \$263 billion, analysts questioned whether expenditures of over \$50 billion on these new weapons, exceeding in themselves the entire military budget of Russia at that time, were necessary or affordable. The counterargument was that C3I dominance would actually reduce costs elsewhere in land forces and other projects. Such worries seem quaint in an era of de-

fense budgets of some \$680 billion, excluding the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, estimated as an “additional” \$149 billion for 2010.¹⁷

In this incarnation, the RMA implied both new forms of weaponry and significant use of information technology to control and destabilize the opponent.¹⁸ This intensification in military-industrial visuality amounted to a revolution. It shifted focus from the counterpoint of spectacular (nuclear) warfare and its documentation and classification by aerial photography to that of information and disinformation. The assemblage of information was the primary tactic of colonial counterinsurgency now applied to a global digitized warfare that had yet to be encountered but was assumed to be imminent. The Information War strategy developed into the complementary tactics of “cyberwar” and “netwar.” In the view of John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, the most prominent theorists of Information War, cyberwar involved “information-based military operations designed to disrupt an adversary,” whereas netwar is “low intensity conflict at the societal end of the spectrum” of war, whose polar opposite was battlefield conflict.¹⁹ The network form of war, including but not limited to the Internet, produced an opponent without leaders or with multiple leaders, making it hard to combat by traditional means: “Netwar is about Hamas more than the PLO, Mexico’s Zapatistas more than Cuba’s Fidelistas . . . and Chicago’s Gangsta Disciples more than the Al Capone Gang.”²⁰ If this sounds more like a cultural-studies paper (remember this was 1996) than a military think-tank, so it should.

Indeed, the RMA’s height of ambition was to turn the military strategy into a cultural project. In an essay published, in 1997, in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, one general argued: “It is no longer enough for Marines to ‘reflect’ the society they defend. They must lead it, not politically but culturally. For it is the culture we are defending.”²¹ Cultural war, with visuality playing a central role, takes “culture” to be the means, location, and object of warfare. In his classic novel 1984, George Orwell coined the slogan “War Is Peace,” anticipating the peace-keeping missions, surgical strikes, defense walls, and coalitions of the willing that demarcated much of the last decade of the twentieth century. It was striking to observe the Israeli Defense Force making extensive use of poststructuralist thinkers like Deleuze and Guattari, the situationist Guy Debord, or the deconstructionist architect Bernard Tschumi in thinking about how to fight urban counterinsurgency warfare in the period following the al-Aqsa intifada of 2000.²² If the conclusion was to begin “walking through walls” as a bizarre form of nomad-

ism, meaning literally piercing holes in building walls to gain the element of surprise, the rhetoric of the Operational Theory Research Institute is nonetheless disconcertingly familiar to any reader of critical theory.

The Bush-Rumsfeld doctrine (2001-6) intensified these modes of counterinsurgency into full-blown preemptive warfare as part of their declared "Global War on Terror." While returning to the rhetorics of the Cold War, the so-called war on terror relied on the counterinsurgency and information war tactics of the RMA, creating a new hybrid. What W. J. T. Mitchell has called "image wars" were a central part of this doctrine, which imagined decisively defeating its enemies in battle and in ideology. The new techniques could not only visualize the battlefield, but also engage in it, demoralizing the opponent by demonstrations of mastery, like the "surgical" strike with computer-guided weapons that visualize their own targets. This moment was the high point of the RMA, quite literally its reign of terror. Like Robespierre, Bush assumed that no opposition could be tolerated and that all measures were permitted in defense of the republic. As secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld implemented a strategy in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, marked by a high-tech, high-speed, lethal force capable of accomplishing significant goals with a relatively small number of personnel. It was supposed to be the apex of the RMA, integrating extensive use of "smart" weapons, dispersed ground forces, and intensive use of information war. This "Rumsfeldism" added an additional component to the war with the use of the image as a tactical weapon. As I have analyzed at length in *Watching Babylon*, the first three years of the Iraq war (2003-5) saw images used as weapons, designed to suppress dissent at home as well as resistance on the ground. These uses of the image-weapon were the culmination of a generation of Anglo-American information strategy, beginning with the Falklands/Malvinas War, in 1982, where both images and information were subject to extremely close state control. In Iraq, the strategy of embedding journalists with troops often led to them identifying with the men and women they were working with, as well as enabling control of what might be seen. One instance of the information-war policy was the creation of the Iraqi Media Network by the Coalition Provisional Authority, in 2003. An initial \$15 million no-bid contract was awarded before the invasion took place, to the contractor Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to generate television, radio, and a six-day-a-week newspaper. Against all the odds, the renamed Iraqi Public Service Broadcaster did get on the air and opened its programming with a verse from the Koran. That

gesture was at once cancelled by Washington, which compelled the network to broadcast instead an hour-long daily show called *Towards Freedom*, produced by the British government. Unsurprisingly, six months after the war a State Department poll showed 63 percent of Iraqis watched al-Jazeera or al-Arabiya, but only 12 percent watched the government station. The response was to award a new \$95 million no-bid contract to the Harris Corporation, a manufacturer of communications equipment with no television production experience.²³

SADDAM EFFECTS

As a metonym of the stages of image war in Iraq, I want to consider here a variety of images of Saddam Hussein. The war began with the famous shock-and-awe bombings, seen live on television. It is less often recalled that the hope had been to kill Saddam Hussein with the first attack, based on information received from Iraqi sources. It is possible that, had this attack achieved its goal, the war might have unfolded differently. As it was, repeated claims of Saddam's death were soon refuted or forgotten, so a substitute had to be found. In April 2003 newspapers and television-news programs around the world led with the story of Iraqis in Baghdad demolishing a statue of Saddam. Such demolition of the images of kings has a long and resonant history, most recently with the destruction of socialist monuments in the former Soviet bloc post-1989. Americans might recall the overturning of a statue of King George III in New York during the American Revolution. This mock execution seemed to encapsulate the symbolic power of the American victory and locate it in a series of popular revolts. And so it was intended by the unnamed marine corps colonel and his psychological-operations team who were commended by the army a year later for their "quick thinking." Even at the time, the event seemed a little too neat and the "crowd" seemed small for so symbolic an event. By the time it became clear that the statue demolition had been an operation of information war, the insurgency was starting to take the shine off the supposed triumph.

Aware that events were not moving quickly enough, military intelligence came under immense pressure to discover Saddam's whereabouts in late 2003. This necessity was one of the motivating factors that led to the intensification of interrogations in Iraqi prisons, known as "Gitmo-izing," that is to say, making them like Guantánamo Bay. That need to generate

“actionable” intelligence was directly responsible for the scandals that are now summarized by the name “Abu Ghraib” and that have been widely analyzed. In other words, pressure for a flow of information led Americans in Iraq, like the French in Algeria, to resort to torture in order to accelerate results. In this context, the capture of Saddam was presented as a successful effort of information war, involving the use of layered social-network analysis by Major Brian J. Reed.²⁴ For all the social-science nomenclature, the tactic was largely the same as that used by the French in Algeria: reach the head of the network from its outlying points of contact, in this case, one of Saddam’s drivers. Again, the initial impact was strong, leading one CNN anchor to ask, “What is there left to talk about in Iraq?” As this comment illustrates, the capture of Saddam was meant, like the declaration “Mission Accomplished” and the demolition of the Saddam statue, to end what Mark Danner usefully called “the war of the imagination.”²⁵ The war had been imagined in Rumsfeldism as a Hollywood film, with a necessarily dramatic and heroic ending.²⁶ It now seemed that the scenario had changed from a John Wayne drama with a suitably uplifting denouement into a self-referential independent picture in which every apparent ending turned out to be the beginning of another episode. The capture of Saddam was another moment when the “democratic tsunami” predicted by the supporters of the war could finally be unleashed without fear of the return of dictatorship. It was also assumed that anticolonial resistance would soon collapse without its leader. As we know, these predicted movements never took place. The insurgency in fact accelerated dramatically after Saddam’s capture, and the long-awaited enthusiasm for America never materialized. The endlessly repeated video clip of Saddam being examined by a doctor presented the United States as a benign power, concerned for the health of even its worst enemy. It may also have been a search for poison or concealed information. More precisely, it represented modern biopower, the use of power to sustain life even and especially when the state is on the point of withdrawing that life.

On 30 December 2006 that moment was reached, when the chronicle of Saddam’s foretold death came to its inevitable conclusion on the gallows (see fig. 56). What surprised and shocked the world was that it was not just told but seen. While the cell-phone video that was “accidentally” released was not officially authorized (meaning known to the occupation), there was also an official version, which lacked the soundtrack. So, unlike the “disciplined” execution presumed to be normative in the West, it was always

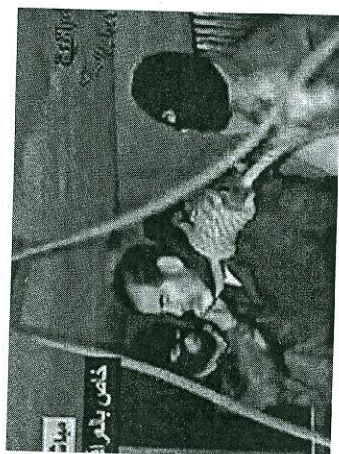


FIGURE 56. STILL FROM THE VIDEO OF THE EXECUTION OF SADDAM HUSSEIN

intended that the moment of Saddam’s death be seen, just as the bodies of his sons had been shown to the world media. It no doubt seemed important that, in the swirling, rumor-driven climate of the occupation, some form of proof be made available. It was telling that the video was first broadcast by the pro-occupation Fox News cable channel, known for their distribution of officially sanctioned “leaks.” The video was always unlikely to be able to serve as proof, given that the Internet was already awash with theories that the person being held was one of Saddam’s doubles, that he had not been arrested in March but six months earlier, as evidenced by some unripe dates in one of the photographs of his so-called rat hole, and so on. Yet there was an older impulse at work here: the desire of those appropriating sovereignty to show that it does not adhere to the living body of the deposed sovereign. From the execution of Charles I, in 1649, via that of Louis XVI, in 1793, and the counterspectacle of the assassination of too many slave owners and plantation managers to name, the new power wants to claim that authority has passed from the dead sovereign and now adheres not to the heir but to the executors. The double-meaning of *executor*, in which the modern sense of legal performer has replaced the older sense of executioner, suggests a legal sleight of hand following the executioner’s coup de grâce, in which the last will and testament of the executed is rewritten by the will to power. In this tremulous moment, the social contract that sustains authority is made dangerously visible, and, as Foucault liked to remind us, public executions are always therefore double-edged moments, full of potential for riot and revolution. Sedated by the minimal contact between the U.S. state

and those it condemns to death by automatic injection, the occupation did not think to police its own policemen, assuming they would adhere to their rules.

In fact, the cell-phone video of the execution was a palpable horror, a digitized rendition of the realities of the quasi-judicial process. Abuse was hurled at Saddam by his guards, including a chant of "Moqtada! Moqtada!" (referring to the Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr). One person tried to calm matters by reminding those in attendance that this was an execution, a legally ordained withdrawal of the right to live. Ironically, this furor seemed to break the deposed dictator out of a state of shock, provoking him to a sardonic rebuke and to carry out his final prayers. As if sensing that the spectacle was not progressing as intended, the executioner opened the trapdoor of the gallows before the prayer was complete. Nothing can mitigate what it means to have seen and heard an execution. It does not, of course, condone or exonerate Saddam's excesses, which were first criticized by the global Left while he was still the favored creature of Anglo-American machinations against Iran. Whatever this execution was, it failed in its primary goals to emulate the Nuremberg trials and to both legitimize the new regime and cast a pall over Baathism.

FROM WAR AS CINEMA TO DIGITAL WAR

The dissemination of the video was the culmination of the cinematic era of the RMA, a documentation of war by its participants that was supposed to have been seen only by those participants and those they trusted. In the era of networked communications, it was no longer possible to contain these images within the circle marked out by the police, beyond which we are instructed to "move on, there's nothing to see here." In fact, we might say that if what a picture wants is above all to be seen, what the digitized image wants is to be circulated, whether by copying, linking, or forwarding. Much of the military video and photography from the Iraq war has reflected this uncertain status. Raw TIFF files circulate with no means of contextualizing them, while unedited video footage of routine military events is interrupted on shocking occasions by the eruption of violence. Explanations, context, and consequences are rarely available, whether in U.S. or purported insurgent video.²⁷ In one notorious instance, digital images of the war in Iraq were bartered for access to an amateur pornography site, the appallingly accurately named *nowthatstuckedup.com*. Chris Wilson,

the site's owner, recognized that soldiers could not use their credit cards while serving, because their companies flagged their locations as questionable. He therefore offered an exchange, whereby posted photographs of the war, whether standard poses or those in the notorious "Gory" folder, would allow the user access to the pornographic sections of the site. By the time the site was closed down, in 2004, by Florida sheriffs on grounds of obscenity relating to the pornography, there were some 1,700 photographs on the site, including two hundred "gory" images.²⁸ It cannot have been important to the soldiers to see this particular collection of pornography, given the plethora of such material online. Rather it seems that they wanted to show their actions to a wider audience, mirroring the shock-and-awe philosophy of their commanders and claiming a similar level of entitlement both to see and display and to be seen and displayed.

In similar fashion, digitized images accumulate on sites such as Flickr and YouTube, hoping to "go viral," a metaphor derived from infectious disease that is very appropriate to this biopolitical moment. Even the military have tried to get involved, creating a Multi-National Force Iraq YouTube channel, which unsurprisingly attracted few viewers.²⁹ To render the digital image into a cultural virus, it must go into a frenzy of circulation, being copied, linked, and forwarded as fast as possible. But for every Obama Girl, whose homemade video of a song called "I've Got a Crush on Obama" had millions of viewings in 2008, there are thousands of YouTube clips that languish without circulation and it is not yet predictable how and why certain scenes go viral. Visuality has always been violent and expropriative, so there is a certain homology at work in the dominance of violent scenes in the most notorious moments of twenty-first-century visual culture (9/11, Shock and Awe, Abu Ghraib, the Danish cartoons, Hurricane Katrina: this list is also a barebones syllabus). However, it is important to restate that the violence is inherent not to the content, but to visibility. While there may be a distinction between a photograph of an American soldier giving a thumbs-up gesture while standing next to an Iraqi child, and the same soldier repeating her gesture next to an Iraqi corpse, both scenes represent violence. Nowhere was this made clearer than in Errol Morris's documentary on Abu Ghraib, *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). In the film, the now notorious former Specialist Lyndie England claimed that although she had been photographed holding a prisoner on a leash, that leash had simply been handed to her, that she had not herself dragged the prisoner out of the cell. Similarly Specialist Sabrina Harman, seen posing next to a corpse packed

in ice, giving a broad smile and a thumbs up, asserted that this was simply her automatic response to being photographed. While this may seem like defensive rhetoric, at the end of the film the army's own investigative officer Brent Pack declared that the repeated photographs showing prisoners at Abu Ghraib in so-called stress positions, with or without wearing women's underwear or hoods on their heads, were not torture but the eponymous standard operating procedure.

Violence is the standard operating procedure of visibility. While setting out to distinguish between when it is acceptable and when excessive in visual images is not my intent here, in the hands of lawyers and NGO workers such distinctions can mitigate actual harm to people, and of course I applaud such work. In the case of visibility, its violence has paradoxically, as the counterinsurgents like to put it, turned on the materialized visualization itself. This perhaps final intensification of the violence of visibility attempts to render the visible invisible, even within the zone of those authorized to see—or at least so uncertain that it cannot be decided what has been seen. There is nothing to see here, because it has been rendered undecidable, or even in a sense nonexistent. The Rumsfeld stage of the RMA attempted to achieve this undecidability by generating so many images and visualizations that no single instance could be decisive. The sovereignty of the visualizer shifted ground so that authority was now derived from the ability to ignore the constant swirl of imagery and persist with a “vision” above and beyond mere data. The justification for the invasion of Iraq centering on the “weapons of mass destruction” purportedly held by Saddam Hussein has therefore survived the apparently clear demonstration, by 2003, that there were none. Following an article by Ron Suskind that appeared, in 2004, in the *New York Times Magazine*, this attitude became celebrated as a contempt for the so-called reality-based community articulated by a “senior adviser” to Bush.³⁰ Less remembered in that citation was the commitment to continue “creating other new realities,” a policy that has become enshrined as the counterinsurgency doctrine of necropolitical governmentality.

COUNTERINSURGENCY

The fall of Rumsfeld, in 2006, did not mean the end of the RMA, any more than the fall of the Jacobins, in 1794, ended the French Revolution. In this new moment, the past excesses of the Global War on Terror are ritually dis-

paraged, much as the French Executive Directory of 1795 decried the Terror of 1793, but claimed to be continuing the revolution.³¹ Reframed as the “long war,” counterinsurgency, COIN in the military acronym, has in no way diminished its ambitions. Its leading theorist, John Nagl, has argued that as well as the Department of Defense, the State Department, the Departments of the Treasury, and the Department of Agriculture need to be thinking in terms of counterinsurgency.³² The project was repackaged as “countering global insurgency” (GCOIN),³³ a project whose range and ambition is every bit as grandiose as before.³³ The premise is that if insurgency is global, then counterinsurgency must be as well, taking the entire planet as its “area of operations.” The new doctrine (a term of art in the military) was encapsulated in the publication of Field Manual FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* issued by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, in December 2006, its first statement on counterinsurgency since Vietnam.³⁴ Written in great haste at the instigation of General David Petraeus, in a single year from its first conception, in December 2005, this Field Manual aims at nothing less than making counterinsurgency the primary responsibility of the military, a mission that is described as both cultural and political. The project renders the biopolitical governance of populations into a military mission, now known as population-centric counterinsurgency. It contains a timeline for its predetermined success and continued application in the extended future, measured as far as fifty years ahead. Here, counterinsurgency is explicitly a cultural and political war, fought as much in the United States as it is in Iraq or elsewhere. As an indication of its significance, the new Field Manual was downloaded from the Internet over two million times by 2007, making it something of a digital global best-seller. In an extraordinary step, it was then republished by the University of Chicago Press in a \$25 hardcover edition, complete with an introduction by the Harvard professor Sarah Sewall, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for peacekeeping in the Clinton administration and director of the Carr Center for Human Rights at Harvard, now an adviser on national security for Barack Obama.³⁵

In Sewall's manifesto, she calls counterinsurgency “paradigm shattering” because it argues for the assumption of greater risk in order to succeed, requiring “civilian leadership and support” for the long war. Indicating a certain continuity with Rumsfeld, she claims counterinsurgency to be superior to what she calls the “Weinberger-Powell doctrine of overwhelming and decisive offensive force.”³⁶ The term *doctrine* is being used specifically here: it is the military term for the principles governing fundamental choices

about how and when to fight war. Colin Powell's theory was not limited, however, to overwhelming force. In 1991, he was among those advising then President George H. W. Bush not to occupy Baghdad on the so-called Pottery Barn principle — that is to say, you break it, you own it. The radical RMA strategy espoused by the Bush-Rumsfeld doctrine overturned such caution with results that engendered the new need for counterinsurgency tactics. Like all revolutionary strategies, the RMA has taken the emergency presented by the disaster of the Iraq war as an opportunity. The publication of the new counterinsurgency strategy, designed both for strategic planning and for daily use in the field, was a tactical transformation of RMA and its strategic continuation. General Petraeus has thus served as the Napoleon of the RMA, a hero figure whose utterances were beyond question until the mission seemed to stumble in Afghanistan, which may serve as his Waterloo.

COMMAND VISUALIZATION AND VISUALIZED INFORMATION WAR

COIN has become a digitally mediated version of imperialist techniques to produce legitimacy. It insists that the “commander’s visualization” is the key to success in the conflict against insurgents, but there is “paradoxically” less visual content (traditionally defined) to such visualization. It centers on the cultural and historical elements of a particular place, imagined and accessed as a network within a digital framework. Such paradoxical visualization seeks to generate legitimacy by means of population control, blending imperial strategy with the governmentality of developed societies. The doctrine is defined as a return to the cultural politics of war and to the concept of war as culture.³⁷ A digitally enabled military, using surveillance and information as its primary tools, seeks to dominate culture using a networked leadership, in patterns set by imperial regimes, that is invisible to those led. Unlike the Panopticon or plantation, the place of surveillance is not just invisible, but unknown, what one might call its undisclosed location. This is post-panoptic visibility for a new era, a neovisuality enabled by global digital technology that nonetheless understands itself to be part of a centuries-old tradition. In the first pages of the Field Manual insurgency is defined as existing on a continuum from the French Revolution of 1789, with insurgency as one “extreme” and a “coup d’état” as the other. Not by chance, figures from Napoleon on can now be presented as counterinsurgents, a version of history that would have been congenial

to Carlyle. Counterinsurgency, imagining itself quashing all modern revolts from the French Revolution to the military coup, thus figures itself as legitimacy. It seeks both to produce an acquiescent national culture and to eliminate insurgency, understood as any challenge to power. It does so not simply by means of repression, but by the progressive application of techniques of consent under the imperative “culture must be defended.” The Field Manual offers an instrumental definition of power as “the key to manipulating the interests of groups within a society” (3-55). But power alone is not enough: “Victory is achieved when the populace consents to the government’s legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency” (1-14). Dominance must be accompanied by a consensual hegemony that generates the legitimacy of counterinsurgency in thought and deed. This ideological idealism is still offered as a political justification for the war, even as the tactics have become directed at a necropolitical management of hostile populations.

While COIN wants to be framed as a heroic narrative—a story of overcoming resistance—it can best be analyzed as a set of related techniques. Resting on visualization as a military tactic enabled by digital technologies, COIN seeks to render a culture in its own image that will actively want to be subject to biopolitical imperial governance. Visualization is the key leadership tactic that holds together the disparate components of counterinsurgency into what one might call “visualized information war.” Indeed, according to the counterinsurgency manual, it is policy that “the commander’s visualization forms the basis for conducting . . . an operation” (A-20). In the section of the manual intended to be read by officers in the field, this visualization is defined as the necessity of knowing the map by heart and being able to place oneself in the map at any time. Nowhere is the legacy of the history of visibility described in this book clearer than in these instructions. Media and other imagery are components of the visualization, rather than its substance. For instance, “media activities” can be the primary activity of an insurgency, according to the army, while “imagery intelligence” in the form of still and moving images are vital to counterinsurgency (3-97). Visualization by contrast requires commanders to know “the people, topography, economy, history, and culture of their area of operations” (7-7). The counterinsurgent thus transforms his tactical disadvantage into strategic mastery by rendering unfamiliar territory into a simulacrum of the videogame’s “fully rendered actionable space.”³⁸ Counterinsurgency cultivates optical invisibility in support of a digitized surveillance and com-

mand structure. Its favored tactics include "disappearances," renditions, the "invisible" prison camp, no-fly lists, no-fly zones, electronic surveillance, and non-accountable interrogators, known as Other Government Agency personnel. When counterinsurgency deploys itself as a visualized field, it does so by means of representation in which the place of observation is invisible or obscured, for the state of exception is a non-place, like the mystical perception of Carlyle's Hero. Comprised of digitized images, satellite photographs, night-vision goggles, and map-based intervention, post-panoptical space creates a 3-D rendition of the insurgency that corresponds to the counterinsurgent's experience of space in a grid accessible only to the "commander," the modern-day Hero. Taken together, these abilities are summarized as the "commander's visualization," using Carlyle's own term, but this visualization is now comprised of data and imagery invisible to the unaided human eye.

In this chaotic zone of neovisuality, counterinsurgency can allow the forbidden to emerge into visibility, whether by choice or accident. So there was a deliberate "revealing" of the coercive tactics used at the otherwise invisible Guantánamo Bay camp in order to strike fear into actual and potential insurgents as to what awaited them if captured. On the other hand, the photographs from Abu Ghraib emerged in a way that was clearly accidental, even if the army had taken no precautions to prevent it. The "revelations" prevented neither the generalization of torture nor the expansion of the counterinsurgency, although they have led to limitations on cameras among enlisted personnel. A good example of the paradoxes resulting from this blurring can be seen in the new place of mapping. Whereas mapping was for centuries associated with colonial power as a technology of visibility, recent neocolonial occupations, such as that in the Occupied Territories of Israel/Palestine or in Iraq have made mapping an oppositional practice.³⁹ This indifference to what is known or unknown has become one of the strengths of the counterinsurgency's aspiration to a totalizing vision. No countervisualization can damage its claim to totality. The Field Manual embraces a fully sovereign visuality: "Soldiers and Marines must feel the commander's presence throughout the A[rea of] O[perations], especially at decisive points. The operation's purpose and commander's intent must be clearly understood throughout the force" (7-18). Visualized information war is imagined as a perfect signal-to-noise ratio, with messages conveyed perfectly from leader to field and back in real time. Command visualization is the field version of the nineties-era RMA term "full spectrum

dominance," the neovisuality of our times, based on dominating "offense, defense, stability, [and] support."⁴⁰ Counterinsurgency is thus legitimate because it alone can visualize the divergent cultural forces at work in a given area and devise a strategy to coordinate them.

When soldiers refer to action as being like a videogame, as they frequently do, it is not a metaphor. By turning the diverse aspects of foreign life into a single narrative, the counterinsurgent feels as in control of the situation as a player in a first-person-shooter videogame. The commander thereby feels him- or herself to be in the map, just as the game player is emotively "in" the game. This experience is sufficiently real that videogames are now being used as behavioral therapy for psychologically damaged soldiers. Numerous first-person accounts by rank-and-file U.S. troops testify to their confusion as to where they were and what direction they were going during combat missions, perhaps contributing to the high levels of suicide, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by veterans. The popular videogame Full Spectrum Warrior, played using a virtual-reality helmet, has become an effective therapeutic tool for soldiers suffering from such post-traumatic stress. In this instance, a modified version of the game places the soldier back in a situation similar to that in which s/he was traumatized as a behavioral tool to normalize response. While the game is quite well rendered, you would not ordinarily mistake it for reality. However, a soldier engaged in visualized information war can and apparently does take this rendition as equivalent to the interface experienced in the insurgent environment. Re-performing the war can restore mental equilibrium in the "shell-shocked" patient by dint of repetition. The medium-resolution 3-D digital videogame experience is indistinguishable from the "reality" of counterinsurgency.

The counterinsurgent understanding of culture is, however, a reversion to imperial governance under a model of cultural hierarchy: "Cultural knowledge [is] . . . essential to waging a successful counterinsurgency. American ideas of what is 'normal' or 'rational' are not universal" (1-80). This cultural hierarchy is derived directly from nineteenth-century imperial practice. Consequently, readers of the Field Manual are advised to consult such apparently unlikely works as *Small Wars: A Tactical Handbook for Imperial Soldiers* (1890), by Charles E. Callwell, produced at the height of British imperialism. The U.S. Army does not ask its soldiers to accept difference, but rather to understand that Iraqis cannot perform like Americans. Such references reframe counterinsurgency as the technical management

of neo-imperial dominions, even as the notion that Iraq or Afghanistan are “small wars” undermines public assertions that they are the moral equivalent of the Second World War. Instead, it accurately locates these wars as a technique of imperial governance, rather than as an existential struggle. The counterinsurgency manual often draws parallels with the imperial hero T. E. Lawrence’s experience in “Arabia,” citing his maxim “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly” (1-155) as one of the “paradigm shattering” paradoxes that conclude the opening chapter of the *Field Manual*. Against this lesson from the past, Lawrence himself had advised that his “Twenty-Seven Articles” on working with Arab armies were intended only for those engaged with the Bedu[ouin], and he was, after all, promoting an anti-imperial Arab revolt. He also advised borrowing a slave as a manservant. On the other hand, for all his racialized characterizing of the “dogmatic” Arab mind, Lawrence insisted that the would-be ally of the Arabs must “speak their dialect of Arabic.”⁴¹ By contrast, the U.S. Army began, in 2007, offering soldiers a pamphlet with some two hundred Arabic words and phrases, spelled out phonetically. Culture as the ground for counterinsurgency is understood in this contradictory fashion as a totalizing system, governing all forms of action and ideas, in an oscillation between Victorian anthropology and the first-person-shooter videogame. The anthropologist Edward Tylor argued in *Primitive Culture* that “Culture or Civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man.”⁴² The counterinsurgency strategy similarly understands culture as a “web of meaning” or as an “operational code” that is valid for an entire group of people, “acquired by all members of a particular society or group by means of ‘enculturation’” (3-37). According to the manual, culture therefore conditions how and why people perform actions, distinguish right from wrong, and assign priorities, as if it were a set of rules (3-38).

NECROPOLITICAL REGIMES OF SEPARATION

Counterinsurgency directly concerns itself with governance and the maintenance of life. The still current *Small Wars Manual* (1940) argues that “small wars are operations undertaken wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such

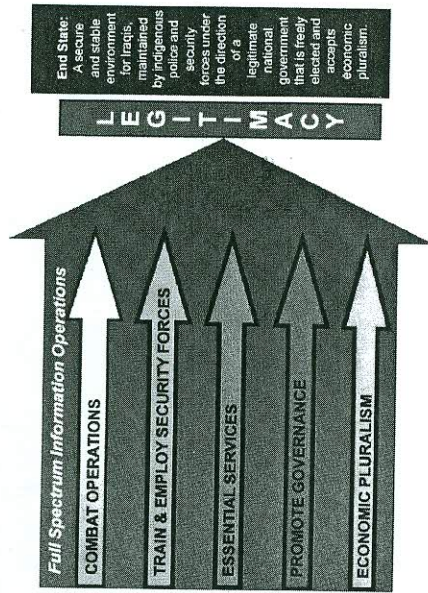


FIGURE 57. MAJOR-GENERAL PETER CHIARELLI, “FULL SPECTRUM INFORMATION OPERATIONS.”

interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation.”⁴³ Here military intervention is again understood as militarized necropolitics: the preservation of life, determined by foreign-policy interests. By extension, lethal force may be used in the preservation of certain lives on the basis of judgments made by the counterinsurgent. Command visualization thus generates legitimacy not just by military operations, but by a militarized governmentality, as summarized in the diagram (see fig. 57).

Devised by then Major General Peter Chiarelli, in 2005, to illustrate his concept of “Winning the Peace,” this visualization imagines security as one of a cluster of required “information operations” that combine to produce “legitimacy.”⁴⁴ The object of control has moved from being History in general to the population, in this case the Iraqi population, whose security is now to be ensured by means of a series of coordinated techniques, from the implementation of neoliberal economics to the reestablishment of essential services and the retraining of security forces within the counterinsurgency paradigm. The outcome is imagined to be “legitimacy,” or what I have been calling “authority,” that moment when the government is simply obeyed because it is recognized as having legitimate authority. Having achieved legitimacy, the theory goes, the war will have rendered a culture in its own image with elections and a free-market economy. It is important to note the audacity of this strategy, for “legitimation” is precisely the weak point

of constitutional theories of the state in general and the state of exception in particular. In a move typical of the radical Right, that potential weakness is turned into a point of strength, as counterinsurgency assumes legitimacy as both its justification and its mission. Perhaps the greatest success of such operations has been on what is still called "the home front," that is to say, domestic U.S. political opinion and mass media culture. Its success in these domains is unquestioned: who in public life is against counterinsurgency, even if they oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or interventions elsewhere? Ironically, there is significant dissent only within the military, where many remain unconvinced by the new doctrine.

Tactically, COIN now considers its terrain to be what it calls the "host nation population," a militarized form of biopolitics.⁴⁵ While the governance and services categories now included in this Full Spectrum Operation were formerly understood by Foucault as part of civilian governmentality in Western nations, the introduction of military and police components within the context of a counterinsurgency visualized information war clearly represents a new formation. More exactly, this means of controlling the population is a "necropolitics," meaning the management of the withholding of life. These benefits are offered to the occupied "host population" as a whole, not to insurgents. It was notable that, in early 2010, it was announced that all Afghans were to be issued identity cards with biometric data and that the military were maintaining a "kill or capture" list of those they considered insurgents. Biometrics are here directly at the service of necropolitics.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the three stages of counterinsurgency are described as "first aid," "in-patient care—recovery," and the final achievement of "outpatient care—movement to self-sufficiency."⁴⁷ Counterinsurgency now actively imagines itself as a medical practice: "With good intelligence, counterinsurgents are like surgeons cutting out cancerous tissue while keeping other vital organs intact" (1-126). It is not a perfect metaphor: most cancer patients would require chemotherapy or radiation treatment to prevent recurrence, which impacts the entire system, precisely the kind of crisis counterinsurgency wants to avoid. The use of *amer* indicates here not a specific medical parallel, but an unmistakable threat to life, requiring radical intervention. As cancer is a rapidly multiplying life-form, its (metaphorical) eradication is a necropolitics: this parasitic life must be withheld so that the "host" can live.

Counterinsurgency's means of accomplishing such necropolitical transformations were developed from the imperial hierarchies of sovereignty and

subject peoples. Although the manual disavows biological constructs of race, it consistently emphasizes cultural difference, with a strong view that "Western democracy" is the superior form of culture. The long-established model for such tactics is that used by Israel in its governance of the Occupied Territories. Indeed, the de facto strategy of the "surge" was to segregate Shia from Sunni by means of walls similar to that constructed on the West Bank.⁴⁸ These barriers reified the mass internal and external displacement of Iraqi citizens, estimated at some four million of the twenty million Iraqi population. Just as in the colonial segregation of Algeria, the resulting relative decline in violence has led Western audiences to accept this violent divide of a formerly integrated population as "normal." Writing in the context of Israel/Palestine, Hilla Dayan argues that "regimes of separation . . . develop unprecedented mechanisms of containment, with forcible separation and isolation of masses trapped in their overextended political space."⁴⁹ Visualized information war produces necropolitical regimes of separation. These regimes are global, just as the terrain of counterinsurgency is global, evidenced by the extensive construction of exclusion barriers on the U.S.-Mexico border, between "Spain" and Morocco around the still-colonized cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and elsewhere, not to mention a long list of states operating internal regimes of separation. Such regimes are nomadic, requiring the immigrant—and sometimes the citizen—to have their identification cards available at all times, on threat of deportation.

The establishment of these regimes is a key goal of the counterinsurgency, both at "home" and in the global occupied territories. The geographer Trevor Paglen has documented and tracked the extensive network of "invisible" or "black" state operations in the United States, demonstrating that at least \$32 billion is budgeted for such activities per year, "more than the combined budgets of the Food and Drug Administration, the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration."⁵⁰ The rendition of the war as counterinsurgency centers on the need for what is known as "actionable intelligence." Anglo-American governments have transformed this need into an unparalleled surveillance of their own populations, largely in secret in the United States, but quite openly in the United Kingdom. When the full extent of email and phone surveillance became known in the United States, in 2008, a cowed Democratic Congress soon offered full immunity to telecom companies and officials. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, it was a Labour government that presided over the erasure of rights. The United Kingdom has now be-

come the surveillance capital of the planet, with a staggering five million closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras estimated to be in operation in 2006, one for every twelve citizens and 20 percent of the global total.⁵¹ By 2010, each Londoner was thought to be photographed 300 times a day by CCTV. Not for nothing, it seems, was George Orwell's vision of Big Brother set in Britain. Police procedural television dramas in the United Kingdom now routinely center around the use of CCTV footage, rendering the emergency into the new normal. So far have things deteriorated that the refusal of Parliament, in 2008, to extend a 28-day detention period (in which a person that authorities declare to be suspected of terrorist activities can be held without legal rights of any kind) to 42 days was presented as a victory for civil liberties. It increasingly seems that a key goal of global counterinsurgency is to render legitimate this massively extended domestic surveillance society that would formerly have been seen as illegal.

The necropolitical regime of separation has no hesitation in using torture and other forms of violent interrogation, derived from Cold War counterinsurgency methods. French torture methods in Algeria were transmitted to American instructors at the School of the Americas and then on to various Latin American regimes. For instance, the methods used at the ESMA concentration camp, in Buenos Aires, during the Argentine dictatorship (1973–82) have an unpleasantly familiar ring: hooding, sensory deprivation, shackling, and electricity, all designed to “dehumanize” the victim in order to obtain information. In congressional hearings and other forums, Bush administration officials repeatedly described torture as the application of “techniques.” For all the doublespeak at work here, counterinsurgency relies on the graduated use of force as a technique of legitimation. It is legitimate to use torturing force on the recalcitrant body of the person designated as an insurgent because the counterinsurgency is legitimation and the insurgency must acknowledge it to be so. In this sense, Iraq, Afghanistan and other ventures of counterinsurgency, such as Iran, Palestine, or Pakistan, are technical experiments in the production of necropolitical regimes of separation.

PARADOXES OF VISUALIZED WAR

The goal of these techniques is the sustained need for the regime of separation, meaning that the ultimate paradox of counterinsurgency is that the measure of its success is its permanent continuation. The more these para-

doxes proliferate, however, the greater the uncertainty and hence the continued need for counterinsurgency. This is a long-standing argument of counterinsurgents. In 1977, the Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan declared that the issue of the Palestinian territories should be reframed: “The question was not, ‘What is the solution?’ but ‘How do we live without a solution?’”⁵² As Eyal Weizman has shown, the use of unmanned drone aircraft has been essential to this strategy in Israel/Palestine. It is therefore not surprising that in the era of paradoxical global counterinsurgency Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), such as the Predator and the Reaper, are becoming the weapon of choice in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. While the UAV certainly visualizes the area of operations, it generates a paradox within the totalizing mission of Global Counterinsurgency (GCOIN) by being an agent of violence alone. The UAV is launched by specialists in the area, but is then managed in flight by operatives situated in Nevada or California. Far from being fully conversant with the cultural “map” of the area of operations, these soldiers are on a different continent. Further, each individual controls several drones at once, coordinating them via screens using a joystick familiar to videogame players. Inevitably, this style of warfare has led to repeated civilian deaths alongside those of the “targets” identified by the UAVs, bringing protests not just from local populations, but also from the theorists of counterinsurgency like David Kilcullen: “These attacks are now being carried out without a concerted information campaign directed at the Pakistani public or a real effort to understand the tribal dynamics of the local population, efforts that might make such attacks more effective.”⁵³ In short, they are not proper counterinsurgency. In April 2010, it was leaked that UAVs launched at least fifty attacks in Pakistan during 2009, resulting in some five hundred casualties. By February 2011, it was reported that, while 581 insurgents were claimed killed by UAVs in Pakistan in 2010, only two were top-ranked targets.⁵⁴ The UAV is emerging as the signature technology of the new paradoxical visibility of global counterinsurgency, even being touted as environmentally friendly, relative to ground operations. On the one hand, the UAV epitomizes what Derek Gregory has called the “visual economy” of the “American military imaginary.”⁵⁵ At the same time, it is clearly a departure from conceiving counterinsurgency as “armed social work.”⁵⁶ Further, the current results in Afghanistan and Pakistan are unclear even by counterinsurgency standards. In asymmetric warfare, how does one even measure success?

Military discussion, both official and unofficial, has centered this ques-

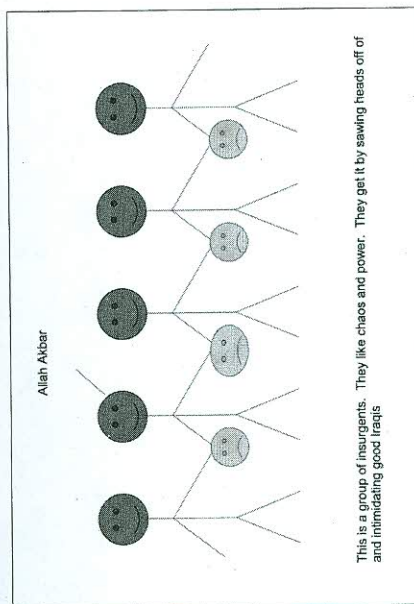


FIGURE 58. CAPT. TRAVIS PATRIQUIN, "GROUP OF INSURGENTS."

tion on the way in which digital visualization has in some sense become the mission itself. Today's junior officers spend much of their time compiling PowerPoint presentations that digitally render their visualizations. The advance on past modes of visualization was noted in the pro-counterinsurgency blog *Small Wars Journal*: "The graphics used in PowerPoint replace the massive campaign maps and problematic acetate overlays which were used by armies for decades, allowing these documents to be easily produced and mass-distributed with the click of a mouse."⁵⁷ On the other hand, in 2009, an essay in the *Armed Forces Journal* noted the "dumb down" effect of the bullet-point process of PowerPoint, which often elides the key question as to who is actually going to carry out the tasks in a list.⁵⁸ As has been widely discussed in digital circles, PowerPoint is a marketing tool, designed to sell products. An article in *Small Wars Journal* pointed to a PowerPoint made by the late Captain Travis Patriquin, in 2006, during the campaign in Anbar Province, Iraq. It was circulated widely during the military surge, including by national media outlets like ABC News, as an example of visual material that was highly effective on the ground. Although he was an Arabic speaker, Patriquin's "population centered approach" was more than a little reductive (see fig. 58). Insurgency here is reduced to an Islamic slasher movie, in which the only extant motive is to cause chaos and gain power for oneself. It so happened that the extreme violence of groups like the so-called Al-

Qaeda in Mesopotamia did lead many Sunni leaders in Anbar to cease their support, making for a tactical alliance with the U.S. Army. Using a standard phrase of Muslim piety like "Allahu akhbar" as the insurgent catch-phrase, however, shows that Patriquin had no strong understanding of the Iraqi situation.

The reverse problem was manifested in a plan shown to General Stanley McChrystal in the summer of 2009, aiming to show the flows of insurgency and counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, where he was the U.S. commander. Some months later the slide was released to the *New York Times* journalist Elisabeth Bumiller, previously best-known for her fawning coverage of George W. Bush (see fig. 59).⁵⁹ The analysis presented here does not lack for sophistication. It would, however, be hard to tell what one was supposed to do after examining it. The visualization shows only that there is no solution available. The intent behind the leak is precisely that: to show that Afghanistan remains in chaos and will need military presence for the foreseeable future. It was a continuation of the strategy whereby McChrystal leaked his request for 40,000 additional troops in Afghanistan in advance, giving Obama the choice between declaring his own general insubordinate or alienating his own supporters by sending more troops. This new leak was the first shot in the campaign over Obama's announced withdrawal date of July 2011. Using this image, McChrystal might claim either that conditions justify a longer mission or that he cannot be held responsible for any perceived failure of the mission. McChrystal soon learned to his cost that media war needs to be waged intelligently, when his insubordinate comments to a *Rolling Stone* journalist led to his dismissal in June 2010. His successor, none other than Gen. David Petraeus continues to assert that victory in Afghanistan is at hand but requires ongoing support.

Indeed, counterinsurgency has for some time deployed an apparently "paradoxical" coordinated political and military strategy to sustain chaos as a means of requiring military intervention. Those supporting the long-term occupation of Iraq claimed that future chaos would be the consequence of withdrawal and current chaos was the necessity of remaining. Whereas Carlyle persistently raised the specter of chaos as the alternative to heroic leadership, creating chaos is now a matter of technique and strategy. In December 2006, an Iraqi woman who blogged as "Riverbend" described the technique: "You surround it from all sides and push and pull. Slowly, but surely, it begins coming apart. . . . This last year has nearly everyone

convinced that that was the plan right from the start. There were too many blunders for them to actually have been, simply, blunders.”⁶⁰ If this seems excessive, consider the facts documented by Oxfam in July 2007: in a population of some 27.5 million, 8 million people were in need of emergency aid, composed of 4 million at risk of famine, 2 million internally displaced people, and 2 million refugees outside Iraq. Forty-three percent of Iraqis lived in “absolute poverty,” while 70 percent had inadequate access to water, and 80 percent lacked access to sanitation.⁶¹ While violence had decreased by 2009, these indicators have remained strikingly bad. In February 2009, the Brookings Institute compilation of Iraq-related statistics showed that 2.8 million Iraqis were internally displaced and another 2.3 million were living abroad. Fifty-five percent of Iraqis still lack access to drinkable water, and only 50 percent have what is described as “adequate” housing.⁶² Afghanistan in 2010 remains a disaster area at all levels, from the narcoeconomy to corruption and poverty. The brief resurgence of education for women has ended. According to the CIA, Afghanistan has the second-highest rate of infant mortality worldwide and ranks 219 out of 224 for life expectancy. Forty percent of the population were unemployed in 2009, and per-capita income was only \$800.⁶³ Figures of this kind indicate clearly that what is being enacted is a necropolitics, rather than a biopolitics. If the priority was to sustain the population, rather than to allocate and withhold death, such conditions would rightly be considered intolerable. In the “game environment” created by counterinsurgency, the trick is to get to the next level, rather than to complete every action at the current stage of play. For the goal of counterinsurgency is not to create stability, but to naturalize “the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war,” not as politics, but as “culture,” the web of meaning in a given place and time.⁶⁴ Counterinsurgency is trying to produce the Middle East and Central Asia as cultures of weak or failing states requiring permanent counterinsurgency. Indeed, the new mantra of the GCOIN strategists is the need to engage with the “global jihad,” deriving from a newly “global Islam . . . a structureless, leaderless archipelago of communities whose energy is aroused by a nervous system based on communications technology.”⁶⁵ Contrary to some assertions, such protagonists of GCOIN assert a distinction with paranoia, such as that of the Cold War, and argue the definition of the “enemy” is no longer black-and-white, but “shaded.”⁶⁶

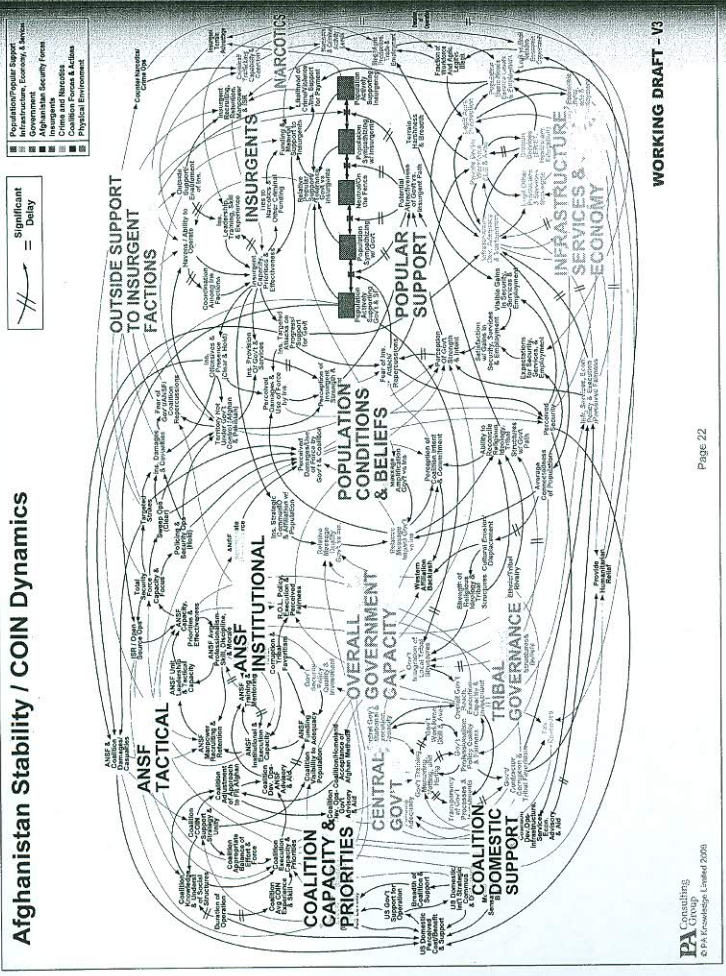


FIGURE 59. ANONYMOUS, "POWERPOINT SLIDE OF SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN 2009."

BEYOND COUNTERVISUALITY?

If counterinsurgency uses neovisuality as a strategy, can we construct a countervisuality to counterinsurgency? Like all visuality, neovisuality is already a countervisuality. For it requires an opposing insurgency as a means of legitimation and will seek it out if none is forthcoming, under the slogan "Bring 'em on!" Further, its means of visualization are increasingly anti-visual, making any countervisualization likely to be ineffective. Above all, if the designation of counterinsurgency as a necropolitics is right, then it cannot be opposed in its own terms. In the case of biopolitics, by contrast, there have been a range of tactical responses, including a recent edited volume entitled *Tactical Biopolitics*. Contributors working at the intersection of science, art, and questions of "life" have created public biolabs, amateur science, tactical media projects, and theoretical critiques.⁶⁷ Imagine a book or conference called "Tactical Necropolitics." In fact, of course, we don't have to, because violent terrorism, especially suicide bombing, is precisely such a necropolitics. As George Bataille put it long ago, "Sacrifice in reality reveals nothing."⁶⁸ Consequently, those opposed to the counterinsurgent formation of necropolitical regimes of separation can in no way identify with any "insurgency" that uses a micro-necropolitics of separation. Nonetheless, this is a moment of paradoxical emergency for authoritarian visuality, which requires a new "mobility" to refuse to move on. While critics of visuality are not going to affect military policy as such, the continuing critique of their claims to visualize remains salutary. Why would the Obama administration have so strenuously resisted releasing the remaining Abu Ghraib photographs if they did not fear the reaction?

It is now time, however, to stop playing the second move to whatever deployment of militarized information war comes next. The tools of democratization, education, and sustainability are to hand and have not exhausted themselves. While democracy is part of the mission of counterinsurgency in theory, the practice reveals otherwise. Rather than concern ourselves with such geopolitics as day-to-day politics, it will be more effective to consider combining democratization issues with education and sustainability in the institutions of education, where most of my readers are, I presume, engaged. As Rancière has long argued, how can the nineteenth-century hierarchies of most higher education continue to be justified in the same space as calls for radical change? What are the goals of education for a post-growth sustainable economy? Can universities democra-

tize themselves or should there be an emphasis on alternative modalities? All of these rethinking will have to be accomplished, for those outside China and India, in the context of disinvestment, unemployment, and the casualization of labor. In short, it seems to me that the present conjuncture, as we used to say, bears more than a passing resemblance to that in which the cultural-studies project was first formed. Once again it becomes of the first importance to reclaim, rediscover, and retheorize the practices and spaces of "everyday life," but now in the context of permanent war. As the example of post-Katrina New Orleans shows, there is nothing banal or quotidian about this "new everyday."⁶⁹ At the same time, the case of New Orleans shows that simple visibility or media coverage does not ensure any change in political practice. Where once consumer and subcultural practices seemed to offer new modes of resistance, the task now is more paradoxical. In a period in which we are all suspects, provisionally guilty until proved otherwise, the need is to assert the continuance of an everyday that does not require militarization to carry on. The everyday form created in Tahrir Square, Cairo, has been the best example to date of the possibilities of a praxis of the everyday that is not found but made. Nonetheless, the spectacular, spectral, and speculative traces of visuality continue to walk the earth. It is the interim, a moment that could generate momentum for a new common, the mobility, or revert to an interregnum for a new form of autocracy. Several outcomes seem possible from this swirling crisis: a new authoritarianism, a perpetual crisis, or, just possibly, a time in which my claim to the right to look is met by your willingness to be seen. And I reciprocate.