Violent Peacekeeping: The Rise and Rise of Repressive Techniques and Technologies

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Violent 'peace keeping' is a contradiction in terms but not if we analyse the provision of coercive law enforcement as just another organising process in state bureaucracies. This paper argues that events surrounding 9/11 merely accelerated processes of coercive peace keeping, which were already re-orientating following the end of the Cold-war.

Peace keeping operations involve a range of definitional difficulties since they encompass not just peace keeping, but also peace enforcement and pacification. *Peacekeeping* can be seen as the means by which the international community attempts to achieve conflict prevention, management and resolution (Findlay 1997). It is undertaken through, for example, UN operations to implement peace agreements, monitor ceasefires and protect civilians. Since 1948, the number of peacekeepers, usually only armed with light weaponry, has grown considerably - with over 250,000 military personnel operating today (Smith, 2003). *Peace enforcement* implies coercion – including the kind of operations currently being undertaken in Iraq – while *pacification operations* imply a much more violent approach of wiping out dissent at any cost. These latter operations, to which this article is concerned, may be regarded as completely

illegitimate by the targeted population. In such a context, as a state loses legitimacy, it also loses

authority and must deploy increasing levels of force in its enforcement activities, just to maintain

the status quo.

During pacification operations, activities may go beyond the limits of the law and spawn a

catalogue of human rights abuses including a crackdown on all forms of dissent, total

surveillance and tracking of human rights defenders, 'disappearances', imprisonment without

trial and a range of cruel, degrading and inhumane treatments of the civilian population,

including torture and extra-judicial execution. The concern for this author is the mechanisms by

which such approaches evolve into 'standard operation' procedures, i.e a form of technology

which can proliferate to violate human rights elsewhere. Research by Michael McClintock

(1992), who tracked training manuals used by US forces in Vietnam, has shown us that

pacification procedures that advocated assassination, torture, kidnapping, sabotage and the

overthrow of foreign governments, re-emerged in dirty warfare operations in Laos, Lebanon,

Nicaragua, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Cuba, Central America and Africa. Thus,

'standard operating' procedures, while still far from being properly understood, are flexible and

adaptable. Without proper legal accountability, such practices lead to state impunity; but, they

can foster further violent dissent. As shown below, such conflict dynamics are complex, as any

popular resistance facing pacification operations can easily generate the deployment of a more

severe state response - creating a vicious circle of escalating violence and 'conflict lock in'.

This paper uses examples from the Northern Ireland conflict to illustrate the role of sub-lethal weapons in peacekeeping activities. The sections below analyse the ethics of using such weapons against a civilian population and questions what new systems lie on the horizon. Such weapons provide states with easy technical 'fixes' for intractable social and political problems. After 9/11 that trend has accelerated with more money being poured into security assistance programmes and 'less-lethal' weaponry. But, what can be done to non-violently challenge such developments? The paper concludes that future research activists may need completely different information models and concepts if they are to help create alternative security paradigms.

Programmes and Paradigms of Pacification

The formulation of critical perspectives on programmes and repressive paradigms of pacification is not new. It began during the Vietnam War era, when path-finding researchers like Klare & Arnson (1981); Chomsky & Herman (1979); McClintock (1985a, 1985b); and others identified new pacification doctrines which were essentially neo-colonial which, they predicted, would eventually return to the home-front. These writers identified a new instrumentalism in pacification programmes. Although ostensibly designed to deal with terrorists and illicit drug activities, their primary function was to support authoritarian elites who had structural, political and commercial ties to old and new imperial powers, especially the United States.

Johan Galtung (Galtung, 1964; Galtung & Hoivik 1971) argued that even when there was an absence of direct violence, structural barriers to change were a form of violence since they systematically blighted the potential growth, sustenance and development of whole social and ethnic groups[2]. However, Galtung's key point was that pacification violence was not always even defined as violence since it was effectively masked. Some of the new technologies discussed below similarly attempt to mask their coercive role and function and are becoming increasingly deployed to deny social and political justice during times of rapid change.

Abram de Swann (1977) was one of the first to recognise that part of the executive in some countries is concerned with the professional deterrence of dissent by its citizenry. De Swann (ibid) observed that these government services are bureaucracies providing a service alongside other services, with standard operating procedures and opportunities for promotion and service enhancement. What fascinated De Swann were the contradictions between the political leadership and the leadership of secret services providing 'disappearances', torture and professional human rights violations. These processes, according to de Swann (ibid), contained paradoxical relations of publicity and secrecy, since the service they provided needed to be both predictable and unpredictable since their clientele (the local population) needed themselves to define the line between what is permissible and what activities will lead them into harms way.

De Swann (ibid) also noted that the very processes which kept authoritarian regimes in power would also damage their international prestige if uncovered. Tyrannical regimes are acutely aware of such factors and Amnesty International files are replete with the names of human rights defenders, who have been gobbled up by such processes. A key factor here is always plausible deniability. This option is potentially compromised by the information held by complicit functionaries in the apparatus who can sometimes speak out. There comes a time when people calculate their odds of survival in a different way. According to de Swann (ibid), the problem is one of 'synchronicity' – if enough people choose to resist at the same time, the regime will either collapse or it must wage war against its own citizens.

By outlining the process by which declining state authority was correlated with the increasing use of force, Marjo Hoefnagels (1977) detailed that when a state lost influence and legitimacy, they would be more likely to engage in forceful repression Thus, when resistance took hold, when the lack of legitimacy reached a certain point, repression often became the key government service. This theory gelled with the notion that new weapons technology used by state security forces was proliferating. Researchers were becoming aware that new weapons and techniques, previously used for dealing with insurgents and crowds in the former colonies, were being revamped for use in Europe, initially in Northern Ireland (Ackroyd et. al 1977) but eventually that these new technologies of political control would proliferate world-wide. (Wright, 1998; Omega Foundation, 2000).

Lessons from Urban Warfare in Northern Ireland

Many modern paradigms of 'peacekeeping', forged during colonial times, have been more concerned with targeting potential insurgents than promoting social justice. For example, when the British Army was sent in to give assistance to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland in 1969, they arrived with a ready made set of 'peacekeeping strategies', which were formally set out in the British Army's Land Operations Manual (British Army, 1969). Almost the entire gamut of these phased strategies, built on escalating degrees of violence, has subsequently been deployed in the province. The state response encompassed law enforcement activity, security operations, counter-insurgency, limited war tactics - all of which had components which could be evolved, re-engineered and adapted for new conflicts elsewhere.

An essential consideration in assessing such programmed strategies is the extent to which this deployment becomes self-legitimating. If the coercion used during the preliminary phases alienates sufficient numbers of citizenry to precipitate more resistance, this can produce ratchet effects which inevitably lead to the deployment of subsequent and ever more coercive phases. In Northern Ireland that meant special courts, detention without trial, massive numbers of intimidatory house raids and new forms of riot control. Paramilitaries have evolved their own forms of resistance including assassination programmes, car bombings and more open warfare.

A key issue, then, is the extent to which the state use of coercive weapons during peacekeeping operations can backfire. One early study of the Northern Ireland troubles suggested that prolonged deployment of riot weapons exacerbated the conflict (Wright, 1978). More recently, the Praxis Centre has presented a sophisticated study of the Northern Irish conflict using complex time series analysis (http://www.imresearch.org/PraxisCentre/NIrelandStudy). This study examined a range of state and paramilitary indicators to assess whether official 'peace enforcement' activities had induced so much alienation that resistance was deepened rather than quelled. Whilst a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this article, the conflict dynamics which emerged suggest the conflict is much more structured than previous studies have grasped and that violent peacekeeping, using less-lethal public order weapons such as plastic baton rounds, 'locked' the participants 'in' to violent conflict behaviours. If the role of 'peace induction' activities is not recognised, this work suggests that the trend will be for more sub-lethal weaponry to be used and that will make matters worse.

The Evolution of 'Torture-Lite'

If we accept De Swann's thesis that as asymmetrical warfare advances, the intimidation services will seek to develop new and more specialized technical and administrative expertise too: it should not surprise us that any pacification programme built on masked violence will also develop new mechanisms for breaking its enemies – even if they are innocent.

In Belfast, all internees were subject to pre-interrogation treatments to maximise the stress of arrest. Several of these techniques are echoed in US treatment of Iraqi and Afghan detainees, including: general assault with kicks, knuckledusters and truncheons; men being forced to run barefoot over glass or dropped blindfolded from helicopters hovering near the ground; Alsatian dogs were used to savage prisoners; detainees were forced to stand for many hours in uncomfortable positions; they were deprived of sleep and repeatedly wakened; food and drink were withheld, bags were kept over the heads of some prisoners for up to six days; some prisoners were subject to sexual humiliation, detainees were urinated on whilst others were burnt with matches and candles; psychological tortures were used such as Russian roulette or mock executions.

These measures were designed to mimic visual, tactile and kinaesthetic deprivation as well as disturb bodily functions. The work of Smith and Lensky (1959) showed that among the after effects of sensory deprivation, were loss of identity, feelings of unreality and disorientation. Fear and panic were common in anyone remaining in these conditions for more than just a few hours and some people experienced nightmares and acute paranoia (Zubek, 1969).

The official Parker report on these techniques in Northern Ireland admitted that previous disparate techniques used by the British Army during earlier counterinsurgency campaigns in the

colonies had been unified and integrated (Parker et al, 1972). Many techniques had played an important part in counter-insurgency operations in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Brunei, British Guyana, Aden, Borneo and the Persian Gulf (ibid). However, while based on previous campaigns, this torture trail has led from Belfast to Guantanamo Bay and then to Abu Ghraib in terms of techniques, a link now slowly being understood as former detainees are released and can tell their stories.

A pattern is now emerging in the US 'War Against Terror' of a matrix of techniques deliberately being refined both at the software level (which includes standard operating procedures such as hoodings, humiliations, dressing in goggles and boiler suits, use of dogs, etc) and the liveware level where specific techniques are taught and replicated. Recent evidence has indicated that prisoners were punished by an Extreme Reaction Force using a variety of procedures which included spraying prisoners with peppergas whilst restrained and then forced submersions in toilet bowls. British Prisoners released from Guantanamo have reported that such episodes were routinely videoed for future training purposes (Panorama, 2004). It is unlikely that such practices by the Coalition will remain in the Middle East. Human Rights organisations are making the connections between the practices of US operatives in Cuba, Afghanistan and Iraq and linking these activities with the coercive interrogation training programmes taught at the US School of Americas and the US Army Centre at Ft Benning in Georgia (Amnesty International USA, 2004).

New Peacekeeping Weapons – Masking Repression

So called 'non-lethal weapons pre-date the US-led 'War Against Terror' and have featured regularly in human rights abuses since they first found a role in colonial times in crowd control operations (Omega Foundation, 2000). From the 1960s to the 1990s, they were seen simply as a set of tactical tools to be used by both police and army in 'low intensity conflict' – essentially to augment rather than replace lethal force. In the 1990s, science fiction writers and Quakers Janet and Chris Morris joined forces with futurologists Alvin and Heidi Toffler to advocate a new form of bloodless warfare (Toffler & Toffler, 1993). The notion was ridiculed by many peace researchers as an oxymoron.

The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS) was the first NGO to recognise that a new form of technology of political control was emerging, taylor-made for the different level force which was perceived as publicly acceptable in liberal democracies. They predicted that the precise level of force and the nature of the technologies was a movable feast and would vary according to what was seen as politically expedient (BSSRS, 1974). They noted that, as situations deteriorated, other flexible response weapons would be deployed that would notch up the acceptable threshold of permissible violence. The more intimidating the technology, the

fewer state security personnel required to deploy it – the technology thus becomes a powerful force amplifier.

Security peacekeeping packages often disguise agendas set by states, which demand pacification rather than justice. The very technologies and tactics used for coercive peace-keeping operations are designed to mask the level of violence being used. Tools to quash dissent are big business and the security apparatus is permeated by commercial interests aggressively marketing technical fixes for a wide range of social and political problems. BSSRS (1974) was the first NGO to realise that such technologies were being designed to *appear* rather than *be* safe and to identify their function as an apparent technical 'fix' for wider social and political problems. As such, names such as plastic bullets and teargas disguise the real effects of such weapons which include internal injuries, scalping, blindness, vomit induction and deaths (Omega, 2000 and NIHRC, 2003).

Today, it is evident that accelerating rates of technological development are increasingly driven by the commercial sector, not the military. Increased weapons lethality and precision has also, as Estes (1997) predicted lead to 'new operational doctrines'. In particular, the US has begun to consolidate its Non-Lethal Weapons approach and the US Army is attempting to acquire a range of so called non-lethal [3] weapons for fielding peace keeping operations (http://www.dtic.mil/ndia/nld4/cosumano.pdf). Such technologies, explored further below, have

a significant role in undermining future human rights. With the US stance endorsed by NATO, the stage has now been set for institutionalising new technologies based on pain and maiming without creating the massive damage to physical infrastructure normally associated with conventional weapons[4].

Modern Border Control and Victim-Activated Punishment

We should not presume that future peacekeeping algorithms will always be human based. Humans cost money, get tired, avail themselves of corruption and have discretion. A modern techno-politics of exclusion may include machine operatives to patrol borders, deny areas and exclude all but permitted citizens and security personnel through a state's security gateways. In these instances the pain inducing technology is in the infrastructure of borders, perimeter fences and zone exclusion systems and is largely victim activated, 24/7 by self deciding automated sentinels.

Some of this technology has and will emerge as a result of research into alternative landmines (Landmine Action, 2003), other technologies will arise out of the current non-lethal weapons research programmes. The old style riot technology of plastic bullets, peppergas and water cannons is being augmented by what are seen as second generation or even third generation weapons. These will include: *taser-mine fields* (victim activated munitions which project a

number of darts carrying 50,000 volts which can immobilize a target by interfering with skeletal muscle control to effect paralysis); *directed energy weapons* (which can use either high powered microwaves to heat up a human target or ionising lasers to allow air to carry a charge from long distances); *pulsed energy projectiles* (which use pulsed lasers to ionise the top layer of clothing or skin to produce a powerful shockwave); *calmative encapsulation* (which puts power tranquillizing agents or chemicals and toxins which affect heart rate body temperature or level of anxiety into thin membranes which burst when trodden on); *robot self deciding vehicles* (which can use semi-intelligence to hunt for humans in an exclusion zone and use weapons); *projected electroshock and stun technology* (some of which spray plasma that enables a large crowd to be targeted by lightening type shocks); *vortex rings* (which shoots large rings of energy which carry enough momentum to bowl over targets) and *acoustic weapons* (which vary from devices which make a deafening sound to machines which can speak to one human at a distance of over a kilometre by using the jaw bone as a speaker). Many of these incapacitating and paralysing technologies are beyond the prototype stage and can facilitate the mass production of torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading processes (Wright 2002).

Systems, such as Raytheon's $40m Vehicle Mounted Area denial System, are being readied for use in Iraq but have dubious safety assumptions: this system heats humans up to unbearable levels via microwave radiation. The assumption is that they will be safe because people will self evacuate. However, there is nothing in the weapons design which prevents it from heating

someone and their eyeballs beyond safe limits if they remain in contact. A simple snag appears

to have been overlooked – a natural response to unbearable eye pain is to shut the eyes so how

will such targets safely exit the heat zone if they are effectively blinded? Future research on the

ethics of peacekeeping will have to explore the operational assumptions being built into the

second and third generation sub-lethal weaponry – especially when future roles may include the

creation of exclusion zones to prevent migration during times of rapid climate change or natural

disaster (Martin & Wright, 2005).

Challenging Violence as a Government Service

Such 'sub-lethal' weaponry and technologies provide a convenient mechanism for states to

legitimize or mask their institutionalised use of force (Rappert, 2003). The ethical challenge for

future researchers is how best to deconstruct these masks in ways which are meaningful to

ordinary citizens, without themselves rising up the food chain of new security targets.

In proposing 'Countershock' as a mechanism for mobilising resistance to electroshock weapons,

Martin and Wright (2003) identify five ways in which government leaders and related apologists

will seek to inhibit challenges to violence as a government service. These five methods are

essentially: (i) hiding torture; (ii) devaluing the opponent; (iii) denying that any modern

technologies have or will be used for repressive purposes; (iv) denying that any technology

under question actually causes damage; (v) claiming that all proper procedures were followed. To challenge violence as a government service, a new type of research activism is required – one that is connected to other protective, legal, political and media networks to ensure continued survival.

Publicity is a very effective counter to hiding torture and organisations like Amnesty have done an excellent job in raising measures to both identify collusion and to stamp out torture (Amnesty International, 2000). In the face of denials and devaluations, activists can challenge repressive technologies. For example, in the UK we saw absolute denials given by companies such as British Aerospace that they had sold products which had been used in torture until the Channel 4 programme *The Torture Trail* caught representatives of the company admitting as such to camera. Similarly, Taser claim their products are absolutely safe but Amnesty recently published a report attributing 70 deaths to taser usage in the USA and Canada (Amnesty, 2004). Further, manufacturers and governments claim their plastic bullet rounds are safe but the Omega Foundation, in a report to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC, 2003), showed that the bullet's kinetic energy was in the severe damage region and that officers were firing them outside the range of the official guidelines and continued to act with impunity.

Governments always claim to follow procedures unless challenged with solid evidence to the contrary. This is an area where research activism can come into its own. By providing carefully

researched examples, other more hidden faces behind the pacification pipleline can be unmasked. Through field research and detailed examples, NGO's such as the Omega Foundation, IANSA, Oxfam and Amnesty International have been able to deconstruct the loopholes which allow business as usual (Oxfam et al, 2004). In the longer term, such international co-operation between research activists may offer the best means of proliferating counter measures against the spread of illegal violence-based, second generation pacification technologies and techniques.

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[2] Enloe (1980) further developed this theory in identifying the role of dominant ethnic groups monopolizing certain key peacekeeping and internal security roles and function.

[3] Even the name itself is a misnomer. Some now deem them less-lethal since they can and do kill or maim on occasion, or pre-lethal since in some operations sub-lethal weapons such as chemical irritants are used to flush out demonstrators into the direct line of more lethal fire.

[4] At least, that is the theory, though there is not much evidence of that in Iraq. Ironically the failure there will fuel the notion that state removal can be done much more humanely with this new hardware in the string of conflicts to come.

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16

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Abstract: Violent 'peace keeping' is a contradiction in terms but not if we analyse the provision of coercive law enforcement as just another organising process in state bureaucracies. This paper argues that events surrounding 9/11 merely accelerated processes of coercive peace keeping, which were already re-orientating following the cold war. The technologies used for coercive peacekeeping operations are designed to mask the level of violence being used. These include new methods of tracking and punishing dissent as well as prison techniques and technologies for disabling resistance. Such tools to quash dissent are big business and the security apparatus is permeated by commercial interests aggressively marketing technical fixes. Future researchers and NGOs will need to deconstruct these masks, without themselves rising up the food chain of

new security targets. We may be seeing the genesis of a new type of research activism designed

to promote human security as if people mattered.

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