Cui Bono: Groupthink vs Thinking the Unthinkable?

Reframing the suffocating consensus in response to 7/7

Introduction

This is an effort to bear witness to the manner in which the response to the London Underground terrorist incident of 7 July 2005 ("7/7") is framed in the light of the lessons of 9/11 and thereafter. The concern is that lessons from previous incidents and subsequent investigations and revelations have been poorly learnt. The Latin term "Cui Bono?" (Who Benefits?) in the above title derives from the much-cited practice of a judge in Imperial Rome, cited by Cicero and by Thomas Hobbes (Leviathan, 1651):

Cicero maketh honourable mention of one of the Cassii, a severe judge amongst the Romans, for a custom he had in criminal causes, when the testimony of the witnesses was not sufficient, to ask the accusers, cui bono; that is to say, what profit, honour, or other contentment the accused obtained or expected by the fact. For amongst presumptions, there is none that so evidently declareth the author as doth the benefit of the action.

One application of this to 9/11 (Catherine Austin Fitts, 9/11: Cui Bono?) ranked this as the "most unasked question" in relation to the subsequent investigations by various authorities. Curiously, by 16 July 2005, the question did not figure in a checklist of six questions relating to the investigation of 7/7 (cf Speculations and hypotheses as investigators search for answers).

With unusual rapidity, subsequent to 7/7, articles bearing the title "Cui Bono?" were posted on the web on 7, 8 and 9 July. It is appropriate to note that the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, responsible for the above citation, through Leo Strauss, is one of the prime philosophical influences on the American neocons (Earl Shorris. Ignoble liars: Leo Strauss, George Bush, and the philosophy of mass deception Harper's Magazine, June 2004). Like Hobbes, Strauss believed that fundamental aggressiveness of human nature could be restrained only through a powerful state based on nationalism. "Because mankind is intrinsically wicked, he has to be governed... Such
governance can only be established, however, when men are united -- and they can only be united against other people" (Jim Lobe. *Strong Must Rule the Weak*, said Neo-Cone' Muse).

The discussion that follows is based on the value premise that terrorism of all forms is reprehensible and incompatible with a civilization that claims to be advanced and enlightened. Sympathy and compassion for all that suffer thereby is essential. However this discussion is not limited to the "terror" caused by others on those of "my culture" and "my way of life". It extends to the terror caused by "my culture" on those of others (possibly with my inadvertent complicity). It includes the terror caused within my culture by those of my culture -- even when the perpetrators are not legally defined as "terrorists". It is to these forgotten victims of terror that this discussion is dedicated.

The concern here is with the actions of any people whose compassion does not extend beyond their own and who are cold-hearted in their total indifference to the suffering that they so inadvertently inflict on others.

#1. Learning from the 9/11 response: groupthink and failure of imagination


- **Groupthink**: This was originally defined as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action". It describes a process by which a group can make bad or irrational decisions. Each member of the group attempts to conform his or her opinions to what they believe to be the consensus of the group. In a general sense this seems to be a very rationalistic way to approach the problem. However this results in a situation in which the group ultimately agrees upon an action which each member might individually consider to be unwise [more]. In the case of Iraq, this "extended to our allies and to the United Nations and several other nations as well, all of whom did believe that Saddam Hussein had active WMD programs" [more]. (cf *Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale: missing the link between "freedom fighters" and "terrorists"*, 2002)

- **Failure of imagination**: regarding the second factor, according to David Leventhal (Bush's groupthink caused failure of imagination, 11 September 2004): Groupthink "is used to blame the intelligence agencies for the WMD fiasco. 'Failure of imagination' is used to blame the whole body politic for the 9/11 attacks. Both frames are being used to deflect criticism away from the Bush administration. In reality, though, groupthink and failure of imagination uniquely characterize the administration's maladaptive pre-9/11 behavior".

Together these two factors resulted in coherent, simple conclusions -- which were premature and wrong. It is to be hoped that the same conclusions are not made with regard to the response to 7/7. Who benefits from groupthink and failure of imagination?

#2. Learning from different levels of response to "terrorist incidents"

The order of reaction and response to any disaster might be seen in terms of the following stages or levels:

- **physical measures**: evacuate the area, security initiatives to limit further damage or repetition, medical response to wounded. *The urgency of these measures may obscure the need for…*

- **empathy**: consolation, condolences, solidarity, emotional support for the wounded and bereaved (and their relatives and friends). As noted by the former UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook: "The immediate response to such human tragedy must be empathy with the pain of those injured and the grief of those bereaved. We recoil more deeply from loss of life in such an atrocity because we know the unexpected disappearance of partners, children and parents must be even harder to bear than a natural death." [more] *This process may obscure the need for…*

- **moral judgement**: morally inappropriate, totally lacking in any ethical principles, inconsistent with the values of a democratic civilization. *This process may obscure the need for…*

- **spiritual judgement**: inherently evil, unworthy of any consideration. *This process may obscure the need for…*

- **concrete next step**: pragmatic realism ("life must go on"); "business as usual"). *This may obscure the need for…*

- **analysis**: justification, purpose. Again as noted by Robin Cook: "But perhaps the loss is hardest to bear because it is so difficult to answer the question why it should have happened…. What purpose is there to yesterday's senseless murders? Who could possibly imagine that they have a cause that might profit from such pointless carnage?" [more] *This process may obscure the need for determining…*

  - who is to blame, other than those with whom we identify
  - who claims they did it (number of people calling in)
  - who benefits
  - who benefits from having people think an obvious suspect benefits
  - who benefits from the confusion about who may benefit

- **envisioning a strategic response**

There is every indication that the level of response to terrorist incidents is of the lowest order. Both the Islamic jihadists and the Christian crusaders of the Coalition of the Willing have chosen to define their relationship as a "war". The Coalition of the Willing has been very busy causing mayhem and destruction to thousands of innocents and their families in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Many have asked whether it is beyond the bounds of reason that some would seek, with some justification, to return the favour?

Waves of emotion in empathetic response to casualties are justified in every respect. They do however obscure the fact that very little such empathy and attention is addressed to the many civilians casually terrorized and killed in daily military operations -- by the
governments elected by those who mourn at incidents of terrorism to which they themselves may then be exposed. **Who benefits** from waves of empathy -- as distraction and camouflage? The distraction certainly helped to reframe the G8-Live8 agenda. Who is to be considered innocent in such a context?

What is to be said of the extent of emotive media exposure of 7/7 and responses to it -- compared with the deliberate exclusion of the media from recording the shameful slaughter of innocents in Iraq and Afghanistan? The exception of course being footage of the results of insurgent incidents -- not of what engendered them. Innocents all over the world are slaughtered daily. Pointing a camera at them, and knowing their names, does not make them more, or less, innocent than those whose deaths go unrecorded. However, deliberately failing to count and name those bodies is a mark of guilt on the part of perpetrators -- not innocence (cf *Iraqi Casualties*, 23 March 2004: "We don't count bodies").

### #3. Learning from the past: here we go again?

Despite the level of violence perpetrated against civilians elsewhere, astonishment of the greatest naivety is expressed at the "incomprehensible", "inexplicable", "irrational", "unfathomable" mindset from which acts of terrorism are undertaken in civilized countries against innocent people -- who voted democratically for the leadership perpetrating the slaughter of innocents elsewhere. As stated by Polly Toynbee (*The Guardian*, 8 July 2003):

> The minds of those who did it seem too remote to understand, too unknowable a twister to summon up much rage or thirst for revenge. A thousand questions about fanaticism will go for ever unanswered. Of course we must detect, prevent and expunge it as best we can -- but it is a monstrous force of unreason beyond arguing with. [more]

Robin Cook (*The Guardian*, 9 July 2005) states:

> ... there is no language that can supply a rational basis for such arbitrary slaughter. The explanation, when it is offered, is likely to rely not on reason but on the declaration of an obsessive fundamentalist identity that leaves no room for pity for victims who do not share that identity. [more]

But wisely Toynbee reframes Blair's assessment:

> How barbaric, Tony Blair rightly said, that the terrorists should strike just as the G8 at least strives to do better on Africa and climate change. Yes indeed. But then barbarism is in the eye of the beholder and every act of war is justified in the warped minds of its perpetrators. Barbaric might also be 30,000 children a day dying in Africa while a mere 25,000 US cotton farmers keep their trade-denying subsidies. Or Bangladesh soon to be washed away in global-warming floods. Or arms sold to those who will force them upon child soldiers, or any number of worldwide atrocities. [more]

To what extent does the phrase "warped minds" apply to perpetrators of the "war against terrorism"? The war was after all named as "illegal" by the UN Secretary-General. It is the subject of an ongoing debate regarding its legality in the light of the shifting opinions offered by the UK Attorney General. Its legality is also a matter of current debate in the USA in the light of the "Downing Street memo" (23 July 2002)?

**Who benefits** from framing suicide bombers as "incomprehensible"? Does this apparent "incomprehensibility" and "irrationality" have implications for the quality of intelligence that is being brought to bear on the challenge and considered appropriate to it?

Despite the self-congratulation of the Coalition of the Willing for its own tolerance of different beliefs in principle, there is however the question of whether, in practice, societies under Christian leadership genuinely promote such tolerance or seek rather to impose surreptitiously their own worldview on others. A prime example is Franklin Graham (son of Billy Graham, spiritual advisor to a succession of presidents), one of the USA's most outspoken critics of Islam, who indicated that he had relief workers "poised and ready" to roll into Iraq to provide for the population's post-war physical and spiritual needs (*Crusaders sending in missionaries after the Blitzkrieg*, 2003; *Christianizing the Enemy*, 2003).

In this context, with a Christian-led Coalition creating and sustaining terror amongst the innocent in Iraq, both sides then have something to learn from Cook's one-sided argument:

> Defeating the terrorists also means defeating their poisonous belief that peoples of different faiths and ethnic origins cannot coexist. [more]

### #4. Learning from "al-Qaida" as a source of terrorism

With respect to 7/7, media coverage immediately focused on "al-Qaida" -- indicating that such a strike had long been expected. But it is important to recall:

- "al-Qaida" is a name that some terrorism experts claim was imposed by Western officials on to disparate radical Islamic groups to give their amorphous enemy a degree of conventional coherence -- and by doing so blew Osama bin Laden's power and reach "out of proportion". Whilst concerned about the threat of terror, they argue that we should "debunk the myth of al-Qaeda" (cf Brendan O'Neill, *Does al-Qaeda exist? Not in the way that we think, say some terrorism experts*, 28 November 2003; Adam Dolnik...
Whilst such issues are widely evoked and dismissed as "conspiracy theories", John Laughland (Do you believe in conspiracy theories? The Spectator, 17 January 2004) argues that "one ought to speak of a 'conspiracy of silence' about the role of secret services in politics".

As noted by Thomas L Friedman: "There are no obvious terrorist headquarters and training camps in Afghanistan that we can hit with cruise missiles. The Al Qaeda threat has metastasized and become franchised. It is no longer vertical, something that we can punch in the face. It is now horizontal, flat and widely distributed, operating through the Internet and tiny cells" [more].

Anyone can claim to be "al-Qaeda" and none will deny it -- least of all the security services anxious for early leads. Anyone can claim that some target group has "links to al-Qaeda", especially if they need rapid closure on their investigation to demonstrate effectiveness. Indeed, in Iraq or Afghanistan, the very fact of having bombed any group suffices to define them by that act, without further evidence, as a "group with links to al-Qaeda".

For whom is it convenient that an easily framed responsible agent should be loosely organized to the point of non-existence in any conventional understanding of "organization"? Who benefits? And who benefits from continuing to claim that "al-Qaeda" is a conventional organization that was responsible for terrorist incidents under the supreme coordination of Osama bin Laden?

In the UK, of the 700 people arrested under the Terrorism Act since 9/11, half have been released without charge, and only 17 have been charged. Only three of those arrests relate to allegations of Islamic extremism. The same proportions may apply in the case of the inmates of Guantanamo Bay -- if they live to tell the tale. There is indeed a question of how it can be proven that many have not been simply "disappeared", following the practice supported by the USA in Latin America.
There is little comment about the possibly quite distinct nature of "terrorism" based on a culture very strongly influenced by metaphors of the desert and the kinds of loose social organization appropriate to it -- with compensating strong tribal identities (cf Martin J Gannon (Ed), Cultural Metaphors, 2001; Stella Ting-Toomey, Intercultural Conflict Management: a mindful approach, 1999). There is also the much more developed historical memory, in those cultures, contrasting with modern western cultures -- with some exceptions, as illustrated by the tribal politics of Ireland. Much of the "incomprehensibility" of terrorism deriving from such cultures is strongly linked to historical abuses that are held to be irrelevant by contemporary western cultures -- and by a leadership of the Coalition of the Willing in deep denial. A key flaw in western strategic response to terrorism may lie in George Santayana's insight: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".

Such factors raise interesting questions about the nature of the "collective intelligence" that provides the strategic focus for terrorist incidents. Anthony Wade (Cui bono? Stupidity Versus Logic in the Latest 'Terror' Attack, OpEdNews.com, 7 July 2005), for example, explores the assumption that "al-Qaida" would be so lacking in intelligence as to attack London in the very week when plans to pull UK troops from Iraq were being aired. He suggests that other parties might have had more reason to want to galvanize political support in the UK to remain in Iraq -- and that it would be such other parties who would have instigated the attack.

The faith-based framing of "al-Qaida" as inherently evil and satanic (discussed below), has provided a justification for the "crusader" framing of the Christian-led response undertaken with the regular presidential blessing of God -- reiterated by military chaplains in the field (cf Gary Leupp, It Really is a Crusade! 2005). It is however extraordinary that modern field commanders should assert that Satan has the face of the Islamic opponents there (cf Paul Wood, Hunting 'Satan' in Falluja hell, BBC News, 23 November 2004).

Given the extraordinary similarity between the circulated images of the purportedly satanic "Osama bin Laden" and the portrayals of the historical Jesus in Christian places of worship, it is no wonder that the transformation by Coalition Christian soldiers of the "face of Satan" into those of the slaughtered innocent is a source of trauma. It is currently estimated that 1 in 6 soldiers returning from Iraq now suffer from "post-traumatic stress disorder" [more | more] -- without taking account of those who fail to make known their symptoms.

Unlike the more secularized battle of Vietnam, Christian Americans have set themselves up to be haunted by their actions in the Middle East (William M. Welch, Trauma of Iraq war haunting thousands returning home, USA Today, 28 February 2005). Who benefits from this manipulation of religious and symbolic icons?

In a technocratic society, there is a curious symmetry to basing a global strategic policy on the fulfillment of the will-to-good of one insubstantial global entity, God, in response to the will-to-evil of a second insubstantial global entity, Satan, understood to be acting through the demonic "al-Qaida" -- also essentially insubstantial and global. Framed in this way, it is understandable that those who persist in dehumanizing and demonizing others effectively evoke their own demons to haunt them in one way or another.

In the terms of Jungian psychoanalysis, perhaps "al-Qaida" could be usefully understood as humanity's "collective unconscious" -- which is equally nebulous to the ordinary mind and to the security services. From such a perspective, "the capacity of the insurgents to develop new tactics faster than US forces can counter them" is to be expected (cf Paul Rogers, Iraq: Thinking the unthinkable, 30 June 2005). That is how the unconscious outmanoeuvres the conscious mind. There is therefore a case for exploring the global "war on terror" as humanity's effort to engage in a "war on the collective unconscious" -- a notion offering psychotherapists much to say regarding the maturation process of human civilization.

To some extent it is clear that the nature of "al-Qaida" is shaped more by the attitude of particular observers and commentators to those "facts" that they consider meaningful. In a real sense its nature then lies in the eyes of the beholder. This might also be said to be true of how the natures of the "international community" and "global governance" are shaped by those to whom they are of relevance. For some there is indeed an amorphous "al-Qaida" organizational style to the "international community" -- reflected in its decision-making processes and how they are variously influenced by movements of opinion to ensure a prolonged and painful death for many, notably when threatened by starvation. For others the "international community" is of course defined by a variety of formal interlocking legal instruments and agreements with particular individuals holding formal roles and responsibilities.

Rather than asking the question what is "al-Qaida" like, it may instead be more fruitful to ask what the "global governance" responding to it is held to be by those holding various understandings of "al-Qaida". After all it is "global governance" by the "international community" that is now being called upon to deal with "al-Qaida". But is it not the negligence of the "international community" that engendered "al-Qaida" in the first place? (cf Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon -- a heartfelt response to systemic negligence, 2004)

Who benefits from the ability to blame "al-Qaida" for immediately obvious disasters rather than give any attention to longer-term systemic challenges of society and the planet?

#5. Learning from premature closure and proximate causes

There is evident danger in "lynch mob" psychology. The serious media was subsequently obliged to reassess and apologize for their role in vamping up the case against Iraq in the light of "evidence" for weapons of mass destruction and the involvement of Iraq in 9/11. There is necessarily little to no reference to the manner in which the media, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, engage in a pattern of censorship. In the USA this may be linked to a need to respond to threats from advertisers who may withdraw their business unless the news is framed in a particular way. Whilst this is also true in the UK (since 1922) and Australia, there it is clearer that the government may easily issue "D-Notices", or "Defence Advisory Notices" to restrict or block coverage of certain themes, considered relevant to defence and security [more | more]. Clearly such notices will have been issued subsequent to 7/7 and 21/7 in the UK.

In the case of 7/7, in the absence of any other information, and prior to completion of the forensic investigation, it was reported by The Guardian (8 July 2008) that:

A group of terrorists, affiliated or inspired by al-Qaeda, carried out the series of coordinated bomb attacks in London, intelligence
The same sources further claimed that:

A group calling itself the Secret Organisation of the al-Quada Jihad in Europe posted a claim of responsibility for the attacks, saying they were in retaliation for Britain's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It was further stated that "the authenticity of the message could not be immediately confirmed". However it was indicated that it had been assumed that:

...the al-Qaida leadership did not have the ability to order a coordinated attack in Britain. But that did not mean a group of individuals broadly sympathetic to al-Qaida did not have the ability to mount attacks on their own initiative.

Furthermore current concerns of anti-terror groups seemingly were focused on individuals or groups "only loosely affiliated to al-Qaida or entirely autonomous". Another report indicated:

Al-Qaida's method is not to give warnings, nor to claim responsibility at first...al-Qaida's claims have been more difficult to authenticate, not least because a variety of different groups with ever-changing names have made claims.

However this did not prevent a terrorism expert from immediately asserting: "There's no doubt in my mind that this is the work of al-Qaida or one of its nodes." How does a concept or movement of opinion engage in concrete action? What "al-Qaida" is the expert referring to? Much was made of the "hallmarks" of an "al-Qaida" attack -- which turn out to be the simultaneity of the explosions. Surely a trivial matter to replicate in any copycat initiative -- or in an exercise in framing?

On the following day, The Guardian reported a source as indicating that the posted message: "was only there for a few minutes, and they misquoted the Qur'an. The bulletin board used was open to anyone. On investigation, the server, based in Texas, was owned by a person who claimed George Bush's former sister-in-law as a friend, as well as his navy secretary. Is this the kind of link that the security services are looking for in tracing terrorist cells? How would the security services respond to telephone records from a proven terrorist to the elites of any country -- potentially rendering them all complicit? How would they ever prove their innocence?

Subsequent to 21/7, Jason Burke (Al-Qaida is now an idea not an organisation, The Guardian, 5 August 2005) notes:

Whenever there has been an attack there has been a knee-jerk search for overseas links or for some kind of overall mastermind. No investigations into the London bombs, or indeed into almost all of those attacks committed in recent years, have revealed any such connections.

Who benefits from premature closure -- and lynch mob psychology?

The desire for rapid closure -- in the face of obvious disaster -- impels some to criticize very strongly any effort at identifying root causes, defined as a new evil of "root causism". Their focus is on bringing the immediate perpetrators to justice at any cost, identifying any responsible command structure, and introducing obvious protective measures -- without any need for further reflection, considered completely unnecessary. The possibility that there may be more fundamental issues that may need addressing is rejected outright, as argued by Norman Geras (There are apologists amongst us, The Guardian, 21 July 2005):

It needs to be seen and said clearly: there are, among us, apologists for what the killers do. They make more difficult the fight to defeat them....The root-causers always plead a desire merely to expand our understanding, but they're very selective in what they want to "understand".... It is the fanatical, fundamentalist belief system which teaches hatred and justifies these acts of murder. That cause somehow gets a free pass from the hunters-out of causes... they have to be fought intellectually and politically. They do not help to strengthen the democratic culture and institutions whose benefits we all share.

Unwittingly, the last words highlight the naive assumption challenged by those on whose behalf the terrorists claim to act -- by no stretch of the imagination are the benefits shared by all. But such a position helps to focus strategic reflection, if the proximate cause can be identified and isolated -- as in the case of mammary cancer for which surgery is sufficient. The perspective is dangerously irresponsible if the cancer has metastasized -- a metaphor increasingly used in relation to terrorism. For example, according to Jon Basil Utley (36 Ways the US Is Losing the War on Terror, AntiWar.com, 3 August 2004): "Al-Qaeda has now metastasized into new semi-autonomous groups in many nations, all motivated by hate for the U.S. and any nation or government that helps it." But who benefits from a narrow proximate-cause perspective? What is the wider perspective that is considered so inappropriate?

By contrast, John Gray (Look out for the enemy within, The Observer, 10 July 2005) calls for a subtler approach to the challenge -- going beyond simple recognition of root causes:

Terror is not now, if it ever was, something that comes to us from outside. It is a part of the society in which we live. Both liberals and neoconservatives believe terrorism can be dealt with by removing its causes. The truth is less reassuring. Al-Qaeda has mutated into a decentralised, often locally based type of apocalyptic terrorism and, in this new guise, seems to be acquiring a
What "resources of wisdom" have been recognized since 9/11? How are they detected in the rush to closure?

#6. Learning from presumptions of "guilt by association"

There have been repeated efforts by the Muslim community to dissociate themselves from the terrorist acts of militant Islamic fundamentalism and its "jihad". Suspicions of Muslims in general remains -- and has already been much increased by 7/7. Victimization and scapegoating are challenging communities. **Who benefits from this?**

Publicly unacceptable racist prejudices are readily disguised as totally acceptable prejudices against Islamic terrorists. Curiously however, Christians make little effort to dissociate themselves from the militant branch of Christianity intimately involved in what it prefers to label as a "crusade" against Islam -- a view shared by its preferred president in the USA. The degree of involvement of radical Christianity in perpetrating the war against Islam should not be forgotten. This was exemplified by the much-publicized declaration to an evangelical church in 2003 of the US Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, General Boykin, regarding the satanic nature of Islam [more | more | more], without making it clear that he was speaking in a private capacity. Boykin's actions were subsequently defended by the US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld [more].

With respect to 7/7, as an illustration of typically premature media closure and jumping the gun, Mohamed El-Menshawy (Washington Report, Center for Defense Information) was asked on CNN World News (9 July 2005) why Muslims around the world did not immediately go into the street to demonstrate against, and dissociate themselves from, those who had seemingly "hijacked their religion" on the occasion of 7/7. The same question might well be asked of those Christians who are faced with an effort by fundamentalist Christians, who have seemingly hijacked Christianity, seeking to frame Islam as satanic in pursuit of their evangelical agenda.

**Muslim death cults**: Mohamed El-Menshawy was also asked on CNN when Muslims would recognize that they had a "death cult" in their midst and act against that -- a question raised by Thomas L Friedman (If It's a Muslim Problem, It Needs a Muslim Solution, New York Times, 8 July 2005). The "death cult" label was also used by Polly Toynbee (In the Name of God, The Guardian, 22 July 2005) in relation to the London attack of 7/21. Again the same question might be asked of ordinary Christians with respect to fundamentalist Christians committed to the military action in Iraq that has resulted in deaths estimated to be between 25,000-100,000 [more].

**Christian death cults**: Friedman's argument was, with respect to the Muslim community: "If it does not fight that death cult, that cancer, within its own body politic, it is going to infect Muslim-Western relations everywhere. Only the Muslim world can root out that death cult" [more]. Does the same not apply with respect to any Christian "death cult"?

Should the Christian fundamentalist doctrinal commitment to "rapture" in the very near future then also be interpreted as an indicator of "death cult" status -- especially given the total indifference to the fate of the "left-behind" and the condition of the planet thereafter? (cf Kurt Seland, The Post-Rapture Survival Guide). Given the sympathy of President Bush for such views, they are a current factor in US inaction on long-term strategic issues, notably climate change (cf Glen Scherrer, The godly must be crazy: Christian-right views are swaying politicians and threatening the environment, Grist Magazine, 27 October 2004). This challenge was confirmed by Bill Moyers in his acceptance speech of the 2004 Global Environmental Citizen Award (Joel Makower, Bill Moyers on Climate Change, Christian Fundamentalists, and the 'Rapture Index', December 2004). From a doctrinal perspective the process of rapture involves a death ("in a twinkling of an eye") and resurrection in heaven (as with the Muslim "suicide bombers").

For those who have then to deal with the consequences of this Christian commitment to their own multiple simultaneous deaths in the near future, the sudden departure of the enraptured are recognized as likely to be the direct cause of multiple deaths of others (for example if the pilot of an airplane is "taken up"). Those to be so enraptured are indeed completely indifferent to these deaths. Just as non-Muslims may have difficulty understanding the Muslim belief with respect to jihadis, so non-Christians may have great difficulty in distinguishing the beliefs of Christian fundamentalists from those of the Jonestown People's Temple who died in a mass "suicide" in 1978 [more] -- an earlier "death cult" of partly Christian inspiration.

The preoccupation with rapture of some fundamentalist Christians is closely intertwined with Israeli policy towards Palestinians (cf George Monbiot, Their beliefs are bonkers, but they are at the heart of power US Christian fundamentalists are driving Bush's Middle East policy, The Guardian, 20 April 2004; Rack Perlstein, The Jesus Landing Pad: Bush White House checked with rapture Christians before latest Israel move, Village Voice, 18 May 2004 ). As noted by William Wallis (Evangelicals see opportunity in Promised Land, Financial Times, 16-17 July 2005):

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Evangelicals draw their backing from Jewish claims to the "promised land" from various passages in the Old and New Testaments...A minority of US evangelicals are Christian Zionists who believe Israel's existence is a necessary precursor to end-times and the second coming of Christ. For theological reasons, some prominent US pastors are unyielding towards Palestinians' own yearning for statehood and have joined settler groups in campaigning against...plans to withdraw from the Gaza strip. They have also helped to fund Jewish settler expansion...one of the main obstacles to resolve the conflict between Israel and Palestinians... evangelicals can also afford more easily to adopt hard-line views.

The Catholic Church is renowned for the torture-assisted processes of its Inquisition, possibly followed by burning at the stake. These were framed as essential to "defending the faith" and "saving the souls" of those who would otherwise be damned. Given the numbers killed by this process, it might also be understood as the activities of a "death cult". The Inquisition was committed to the eradication of heresies -- effectively the process now advocated for Muslims holding views that give rise to what is defined as "terrorism". Few would doubt the terror associated with the Inquisition's processes. Some continue to defend them.
As with other faiths, Christianity has been intimately associated with massacres and genocide throughout history -- for example the millions killed in the Belgian Congo at the beginning of the 20th century. Perpetrators in the past century have often been notable for having received a Christian education, or even of being of deeply committed Christians, like George Bush and Tony Blair. More problematic however is the manner in which Christian churches have been complicit in such slaughter -- or condoned it with only token protest or expressions of regret. It is readily forgotten that the large numbers of deaths associated with the process of colonialization, and the "resettlement" of indigenous peoples, was condoned by Christian churches, whether Protestant or Catholic. As a primarily Christian country, it is most significant that the leadership of the USA now finds itself obliged to guarantee itself -- by various deals -- impunity from conviction by the International Criminal Court for charges of crimes against humanity.

**Religious "slow death" cults:** Ironically, in the light of one of the few agendas which they share, it might even be argued that the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) are all "death cults" -- through their continuing effort to avoid any constraints on population growth, or effective debate on the matter. In the absence of adequate food and water supplies, or the capacity or will to deliver them -- and through associated issues of health and poverty -- this agenda ensures a maximum number of deaths in the immediate and foreseeable future. The numbers involved far exceed those resulting from terrorist incidents. More generally, there are many ongoing violent conflicts around the world sustained by those same religions (cf James A. Haught. *Holy Hatred: Religious Conflicts of the '90s*, 1995).

Whilst religions are highly complicit in the deaths resulting from their support of military action, it might also be asked to what extent the denial by religions of any right to an "assisted death" -- in the event of a chronically painful and undignified health condition -- justifies recognition of them as slow "death cults". The commitment to ensuring the maximum pain of others in this condition, for the longest period of time, is especially repugnant. This commitment is especially evident in the insistence on avoiding abortion of severely handicapped foetuses -- condemning the affected to a life of suffering and discrimination.

Curiously the Abrahamic religions all have blood rituals as key features of their pattern of worship -- whether or not blood is actually or symbolically shed or consumed. In all three religions, blood is an essential symbol of life and is associated with celebrating different understandings of sacrifice -- again an indicator of a "death cult". One commentator suggests that "There is a strong sense in which the holy warrior -- whether crusader, jihadi or zealot -- longs for a literal ecstasis (death)" [more]. For Michael Ortiz Hill (*Mainlining Apocalypse*, 2004):

> The Crusader/Jihadi makes real its cosmos by drawing to itself final things: The afterlife, the end of the world, the full sanctification of the children of God. This sacred solipsism translated into a religious vernacular the Mutually Assured Destruction of the Cold War. Without detente.

**"Shoddy theology":** Ian Buruma (*Homeland Insecurity. Financial Times*, 16-17 July 2005) develops an argument with respect to fundamentalist Muslims that might also be seen as of some relevance to an understanding of fundamentalist Christians in their preoccupation with rapture and their disinterest in the future of the planet:

> The promise of escape, of a new collective identity, of heroic martyrdom, the ideal of dispensing with all rational thought in the name of a great cause, the thought of reaching for heaven will continue to attract second- and third-generation immigrants who feel rejected by a society that consequently fills them with such hatred that the dream of blowing it up.

In the light of the above, current efforts to accuse Islam alone of "shoddy theology" -- with respect to its ambiguous attitude towards declaration of *jihad* and "terrorist" action -- could be usefully extended to encompass all Abrahamic religions.

**Inculcating extremist values:** Suspicions are now attached to Muslim "training camps" and madrasas -- following CIA funding of them to train terrorists against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Current suspicions might, however, be usefully extended to the widespread Christian promotion of the dubiously-named "crusader camps" and the foundations which support them [more]. Whilst there is concern about the encouragement of *jihad in madrasas*, it might be asked whether any attention has been focused on the function of "crusader schools", notably grouped in *The Army Crusader Schools League* in the UK. There are over 100 such schools in the USA. In the USA there are numerous "crusader academies". "Crusader College" was long used as a name for the US Naval Air Station Miramar, which during the 1960s was highly successful in preparing fleet pilots for combat cruises on the F-8 Crusader gunfighter [more].

Questions might be usefully asked about the extreme values and doctrines cultivated in such locations, if only implicitly through the "crusader" metaphor -- and of how these may even drive some to illegal militant action against abortion clinics (cf Teresa Whitehurst, *I'm Ready to Die*: Fundamentalist Christianity instills in millions of American followers a depressing- and dangerous - nihilism, 7 February 2005) or to aspire to Christianize Muslims in their homelands, possibly with military backing. Another comparative thread worth exploring is that relating to the active concept of "Christ militant", notably as adopted by white supremacists and the extremist Patriot movement in the USA (cf Brian Levin, *The Patriot Movement: past, present, future*). It was the armies of "Christ Militant" that comprised the First Crusade and captured Jerusalem on 15 July 1099. Such themes are especially relevant with the recent switch in terminology by the Bush regime from "global war on terror" to "struggle against violent extremism" [more]. Violence does not only take physical forms. As remarked by Johan Galtung, "physical violence is for amateurs".

**Comparing "holy warriors":** Of particular interest in comparing "crusader", "jihadi" and "zealot" is the protests that many of their protagonists would make against the violent military connotations exclusively applied to their own case:

- **jihad:** connotes a wide range of meanings: anything from an inward spiritual struggle to attain perfect faith to a political or military struggle to further the Islamic cause. Although *jihad* can apply to warfare, the term is frequently mistranslated to mean "holy war"
in English. Mainstream Muslims consider *jihad* to be the most misunderstood aspect of their religion by non-Muslims. A person who engages in any form of jihad is called a "mujahid", meaning "striver" or "struggler", though this Islamic term is indeed often used to mean a person who engages in fighting. It is not limited to fighting or warfare however, a Muslim struggling to memorize the Quran is a mujahid, for example [more]

- **crusade**: the crusading spirit and the crusading movement affected every social class and every generation from 1100 to 1500 -- involving virtually every geographic location accessible to Europeans. Since the 17th century, the term has carried a connotation in the west of being a "righteous campaign", usually to "root out evil", or to fight for a just cause. In a broader sense, "crusade" can be used, always in a rhetorical and metaphorical sense, to identify as righteous any war that is given a religious justification and asserted to be holy, however dubious the justification [more]. Ardent activists may also refer to their causes as "crusades," as in the "Crusade against Adult Illiteracy," or a "Crusade against Littering." [more] It is in this sense that the "crusading spirit" can be understood (cf Michael Whitcraft, *Rekindling the Crusading Spirit*, 2005)

- **zealotry**: the corresponding action of Jewish extremists tends not to be explored in the same context even though there is a striking parallel between the actions of modern Islamic fundamentalists (even against other Muslims) and the actions of the early Jewish zealots [more]. Their doctrines had a strong focus on the necessity of violent actions against the enemies of Judaism. Some scholars have argued that Jesus was a zealot [more]. There is also a striking parallel in their willingness to commit collective suicide at Masada -- a defining moment in Jewish history [more]. Traces of the doctrines of the early zealots are evident in modern Jewish fundamentalism. In its more militant form, it might be argued that the behaviour of the *Irgun* in the liberation of Israel from the British has now been institutionalized in the actions of Mossad. In the light of that mindset, conspiracy theorists and those antagonistic to the "Christian-Zionist crusaders" frequently suggest Mossad complicity in terrorist attacks [more] [more] [more] [more]. The radical Jewish organizations *Kach* and *Kahane Chai*, declared illegal in Israel, suggest other examples.

In the historical sense, both "crusade" and "jihad" each tend to be viewed by the other culture as terms for aggression directed toward it. In a non-historical common or theological use, "crusade" has come to have a much broader emphatic or religious meaning -- substantially removed from 'armed struggle.' Thus the Western term "crusade" and the Islamic term "jihad" substantially mirror each other in both the personal and the socio-cultural meaning--such that translators between English and Arabic, for example, may use them interchangeably. In recent years, however, there has been some heightened awareness among Westerners to the historical and political problems with the use of the term "crusade", and where any casual respect for Muslim culture has relevance, the term has largely fallen into disuse. [more]

**Who benefits** from the lack of any objective comparison between the patterns of indoctrination of the religious "schools" and "camps" of those of Christian (Evangelical, Catholic), Muslim or Jewish persuasion -- and their consequences for those of other faiths? What proportion might be assessed as dangerously extreme, and how? How is the radicalism of their respective "clerics" to be assessed -- when, in case, they incite to extreme violence, or condone it?

Within a day of the announcement of the new UK anti-terrorism legislation -- focusing notably on incitement by radical (Islamic) clerics - - the leading US tele-evangelist Pat Robertson, exemplified extreme Christianity when he recommended, on the *Christian Broadcasting Network* (23 August 2005) to his 7 million viewers the assassination of the president of Venezuela:

> "We have the ability to take him out, and I think the time has come to exercise that ability... It's a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with." [more] [more] [more]

Reverend Robertson, a former US Presidential candidate, is founder of the *Christian Coalition of America* -- a prime supporter of George Bush. Neither George Bush nor the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, condemned such incitement with any vigour. Robertson subsequently attempted to deny that he called for the assassination [more]. Evangelists have claimed that evangelist Reverend Robertson does not represent the views of evangelical Christians [more]. This clearly implies that, those whose views he does represent should be "rooted out" in the spirit of eliminating "death cults" from the body of the Christian community. But, most intriguing was the extremely muted media "outcry" in comparison with what would be the reaction to such a statement by an Islamic cleric. On 24 August, for example, CNN endeavoured -- most inappropriately -- to reframe the incitement to assassination through humour. What is the significance of the pressure of evangelical chaplains on cadets in military academies -- exposed in one instance by a resigning whistleblower? Reports indicate that the cadet wing at the Air Force Academy is about 90 percent Christian (about one-third Catholic, one-third mainstream Protestant, and one-third evangelical), but the evangelicals have a much bigger voice among the chaplains there, reflecting the pattern in the chaplain corps of the Air Force overall [more] [more]

The academy in question is located in Colorado Springs, home to NORAD Headquarters, Air Force Space Command, multiple Air Force Bases, and numerous other military installations. One commentator Devlin Buckley (*Theocon Valley: A door in the wall of separation, Theocracy Alert*, 29 April 2005) noted that: "The academy leadership... has proactively contributed to creating a religious institution out of the Air Force Academy". Is there no concern at the nature of their mission as Christians in being primarily responsible for bombing and staffing Iraqi towns -- from on high? How is this issue related to the pattern of promotion of born-again Christians within the military charged with operations against Islamic countries? [more]

The agenda of the early Christian crusaders has not been forgotten in the Middle East. The current suspicions regarding the Islamic agenda towards an *Islamic Caliphate* might now be reviewed in the light of the Christian "Great Commission" and the theology of *dominionism* (cf Katherine Yurica, *Conquering by Stealth and Deception: how the dominionists are succeeding in their quest for national control and world power*, 14 September 2004) [more]. The Great Commission, with its "marching orders for Christians", is "a comprehensive task that aims at developing a worldwide Christian civilization and culture" [more]. This perspective might be reviewed in the light of the agenda of the so-called theocrats in relation to the Bush administration. (cf Sasha F. Chavkin, *Unmasking the Theocons*, 23 March 2005). Bush's use of "crusade" should not be forgotten -- nor its appeal to his supporters (Robert Parry, *Bush's 'Crusade*', 25 September 2001; Peter Ford, *Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists*, 19 September 2001; James Carroll, *The Bush Crusade*,
Christianity

Curiously it is the "stifling of debate and enquiry" that is now a feature of the response to 7/7 -- even within the Parliament of the UK. As a believer in a particular version of Christianity, Tony Blair (Parliament, 13 July 2005) called for the mobilization of the "moderate and true voice of Islam" to tackle the "extreme and evil ideology" associated with 7/7. What would be the "moderate and true voice of Christianity" in Northern Ireland? He stressed the nature of the threat whose roots lay in "a perverted and poisonous misinterpretation of "Acts of God"?

Who benefits from provoking schism within the Umma of Islam -- a global communion which Christianity lacks, as exemplified by the problematic relations between the World Council of Churches, the International Council of Christian Churches, and the Catholic Church?

Stifling debate: The above editorial continues:

It is also important to recognise that the international jihadism franchised by Osama bin Laden is almost entirely a Sunni Muslim phenomenon... It remains a self-inflicted wound at the heart of Islam that the Sunni establishments for all practical purposes closed down philosophical speculation in the 12th century, believing it to be divisive as well as inimical to their monopoly of power. This stifling of debate and enquiry, of curiosity and innovation, is or should be at the heart of debate about Islam and Christianity.

Who benefits from their failure to do so? Who is complicit in this failure,

On a website of the intergovernmental Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Muhammad 'Imarrah (The Tolerance of Islam) states: "The Christian West has sought to Christianize Muslims inside their own abodes under the auspices of Western secularism". He substantiates this using the statement of a conference in Colorado in May 1978:

Islam is the only religion whose original sources contradict the principles of Christianity. Moreover, the Islamic system is the most harmonious religious system concerning social and political affairs. We need hundreds of centers to understand Islam and to penetrate it cunningly. Thus, Christianizing Muslims is the first of all our priorities. (Christianization: A Plan to Conquer the Islamic World, Papers of Colorado Conference, Arabic edition. Malta, 1991).

Whatever the many deficiencies of Islam in the eyes of other faiths, how are those of that faith to distinguish the Christianization agenda from the actions of a Christian-led Coalition of the Willing, especially when a Christian pastor of the same faith can address a much-cited letter to George Bush in the following terms:

I need to ask you: Do you know what the values and vision of Jesus are? I ask the question because I am baffled and confused by your behavior. You claim Christ but act like Caesar. There is blood all over your hands, with the promise of even more blood to come...You claim you are of the Sustainer of Life, but you practice the terror of Death. You are spreading the war....Many people, in the name of God, have taken up the sword. And many have come to ruin. Thinking themselves capable of naming evil, they have become the very evil they name. (Rich Lang, Fire and Brimstone: A letter from a Pastor to the President, 18 April 2002)

Manipulating terror: What indeed is to be said of the images of an afterlife of "fire and brimstone" deliberately cultivated and used by Christian and other religions down the centuries to terrorize their adherents into obedience -- "striking fear into their very souls"? [more | more] For those who have had that experience, why should this not be considered a form of terrorism -- as with the terrifying so-called "Acts of God"? (cf Is God a Terrorist: Definitional game-playing by the Coalition of the Willing? 2004). Ironically many schisms in Christianity resulted from rejection of such interpretations -- although the groups cultivating such views continue to survive in democratic societies. Also ironically, this schismatic process might be seen as a precursor of what Muslims are now being called upon to do in rejecting Islamic extremists.

It might also be asked whether the faith-based leadership of the Christian Coalition of the Willing is effectively regressing to the original source of Christian power in the exploitation and manipulation of existential terror -- vamping up public levels of terror associated with terrorist incidents. It is clear that in terms of power politics leading a terrified nation, in which any criticism is declared to be traitorous, is much easier than leading one in which a diversity of critical views can be expressed.

Matching insight into "shoddy theology" has been that with respect to the shoddiness of foreign policies giving rise to the injustices exploited by such theology (cf Salma Yaqoob, Our leaders must speak up, The Guardian, 15 July 2005).

As noted by an editorial in the Financial Times (14 July 2005):

Common to all Islam is a doctrinal concern to build a just society and to preserve the unity of the Umma, the worldwide community of believers. This is already a powerful and appealing political; combination even before the spark of belief is added. Add to it the familiar list of timeless and actual Muslim grievances, the sense of a religion under assault combined with a sense of lost glory, and what begins to emerge is a liberation theology.

Stifling debate: The above editorial continues:

It is also important to recognise that the international jihadism franchised by Osama bin Laden is almost entirely a Sunni Muslim phenomenon... It remains a self-inflicted wound at the heart of Islam that the Sunni establishments for all practical purposes closed down philosophical speculation in the 12th century, believing it to be divisive as well as inimical to their monopoly of power. This stifling of debate and enquiry, of curiosity and innovation, is or should be at the heart of debate about Islam and modernity.

Christianity

The above editorial continues:

As a believer in a particular version of Christianity, Tony Blair (Parliament, 13 July 2005) called for the mobilization of the "moderate and true voice of Islam" to tackle the "extreme and evil ideology" associated with 7/7. What would be the "moderate and true voice of Christianity" in Northern Ireland? He stressed the nature of the threat whose roots lay in "a perverted and poisonous misinterpretation of "Acts of God"?"
the religion of Islam”. Would it be the Catholics or Protestants who were seen to constitute “a perverted and poisonous misinterpretation of the religion of Christianity” in Northern Ireland -- or both? How does the Christian community deal with abuses within -- and its tendencies to militant fundamentalism or the terrorizing of parishioners?

**Action against evil**: But setting religions against each other in degrees of "death cultishness" or "theological shoddiness" is not helpful, as the following quotes imply:

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer has : "There is nothing quite so terrible as evil masquerading as virtue."
- Anon: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
- Blaise Pascal: "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction."
- Henry Thoreau: "There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root."
- Hannah Arendt: "The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil."

With respect to the Bush-Blair rallying cry for action against evil, as an American sociologist, Wendell Bell (All About Evil, 28 October 2002) points out:

> In all sincerity, we Americans view our own recent aggressions as justifiable, perfectly understandable, and rational acts designed to destroy evil. But in our efforts to destroy members of Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, we also killed and injured civilians, demolished homes and places of work and worship, and created still more innocent victims. "Regrettable collateral damage," we said.

> And what of Osama bin Laden, his Al Qaeda followers, and other violence-prone Islamic fundamentalists? Do they see themselves, as we have defined them, as evil incarnate? If we would take the time to study and to listen, we would learn that no, they do not. They see themselves, just as we see ourselves, as righteous, moral, and sincere as they try to destroy what they regard as evil in the world. They claim to believe that they are following the bidding of their God, willing to become martyrs in the struggle against evil. Thus, their thinking, too, is held hostage by the rhetoric of evil. They are, if you can think an unthinkable thought, mirror images of us Americans as we react with violence to destroy evil in the world.

As the above example from CNN illustrates, the media run the risk of repeating the errors in relation to 9/11 and WMD -- focusing distraction and cultivating denial (cf Destructive Weapons of Mass Distraction vs Destructive Weapons of Mass Destruction, 2003). Under the circumstances, it is tantamount to inciting people to racism. **Who benefits?**

### #7. Learning from manipulative framing of "terrorism": definitional game-playing

Concerns have been expressed at a complicity within the Coalition of the Willing to underreport the death count of their own military personnel associated with the intervention in Iraq. This is notably achieved by focusing on statistics of "killed in Iraq" as a key measure of the cost -- carefully framing the counts maintained by others such as antiwar.com (Casualties in Iraq), GlobalSecurity.org (U.S. Casualties in Iraq), CNN.com ("coalition troop deaths...in the war in Iraq"). Thus the official total of US dead on 21 May 2005 is given as 1,831. But, as argued by Brian Harring (The Harring Report):

> U.S. Military Personnel who died in German hospitals or en route to German hospitals have not previously been counted. They total about 6,210 as of 1 January, 2005.... There is excellent reason to believe that the Department of Defense is deliberately not reporting a significant number of the dead in Iraq.... The educated rumor is that the actual death toll is in excess of 7,000.... In addition to the evident falsification of the death rolls, at least 5,500 American military personnel have deserted, most in Ireland but more have escaped to Canada and other European countries, none of whom are inclined to cooperate with vengeful American authorities.... This means that of the 158,000 U.S. military shipped to Iraq, 26,000 either deserted, were killed or seriously wounded. The DoD lists currently being very quietly circulated indicate almost 9,000 dead, over 16,000 seriously wounded. [alternative site]

There is even a definitional issue relating to statistics on "deaths in Iraq", which may well exclude deaths occurring in a helicopter evacuate wounded to a local military base hospital or deaths in that hospital -- both locations being legally defined as "US territory" rather than "Iraq". The above report has been debunked as disinformation [more], but in a context of assertions and counter assertions (and Pentagon underreporting of Vietnam deaths) there is no great reasons to have confidence in any particular interpretation, or the manner by which it may be credited. It would be helpful if the misused qualifier "in Iraq" was modified to reflect whatever is claimed to be the truth by those who report it. **Who benefits** from such trivial definitional game-playing?

Given the possibility of such definitional game-playing over "deaths", similar definitional issues of selective interpretation are to be expected with respect to "terrorism". As defined by Tony Blair:

> The purpose of terrorism lies not just in the violent act itself. It is in producing terror. It sets out to inflame, to divide, to produce consequences which they then use to justify further terror. (18 March 2003)

> The purpose of terrorism is not only to kill and maim the innocent, it is to put despair and anger in people's hearts. It is by its savagery designed to cover all conventional politics in darkness, to overwhelm the dignity of democracy and proper process with the impact of bloodshed and of terror. There is no hope in terrorism, nor any future in it worth living. And it is hope that is the alternative to this hatred. (8 July 2005)
As discussed elsewhere (cf *Varieties of Terrorism: extended to the experience of the terrorized* 2004), one of the great unnoticed difficulties of the "war against terrorism" is the manner in which terrorism is framed to include:

- acts perpetrated by people of a different culture or belief system against the domain of the state accepting that definition
- acts perpetrated by groups in opposition to the policies of the government of that state

**but to exclude** terror resulting from:

- acts perpetrated for a state
  - by its own military forces, causing terror to people in foreign countries, whilst in purportedly seeking to advance, or protect, the interests of that state (cf Sallim Lone. *Withdrawal would curb terrorism: Of course there is an Iraq-terror link - and it long predates 9/11* The Guardian, 12 July 2005)
  - by its security and covert forces causing terror to people in foreign countries or within the home country
- acts perpetrated by criminals (notably organized crime) against other civilians in the home country
- action of neighbourhood gangs terrorizing the vulnerable -- who, in the UK, may only be restrained by slap-on-the-wrist, "anti-social behaviour orders"
- bullying and harassment (even to the point of death or suicide) in institutionalized environments (army, prisons, schools, workplaces, etc) by other inmates or by the responsible authorities -- who may well tacitly approve hazing rituals as a process of "character improvement" and resist any restraining measures on such institutionalized terror (replicating the recently publicized pattern in religious schools). For example, a spokesman for the Russian Defence Ministry described dedovschchina as "a natural process among men when one of them wants to be a leader...It's no worse in the Russia than in any other European army". It was described as deliberately created to instill discipline. Systematic abuse of conscripts -- labelled as suicides and not investigated. [more]
- acts undertaken by a variety of other bodies (rogue agencies, disaffected agents, corporate "dirty tricks units", etc)

Also necessarily excluded from terrorism as such are acts in some way conducive to terrorism on the part of others:

- acts supportive of terrorism and terrorists, through providing infrastructure and resources. These are a particular concern of anti-terrorism legislation as the terrorism is of the "included" variety
- acts in inciting or condoning terrorism. Again these are a particular concern of anti-terrorism legislation as the terrorism is of the "included" variety
- acts ensuring "terrorism by proxy", analogous to the accepted procedures of torture by proxy through "rendition". These tend to be subject to a particular form of denial, whether they are of the "included" or "excluded" variety.

Much has been made of the just cause of "freedom fighters" as against the illegitimate cause of "terrorists". For example *Wikipedia* indicates:

"Freedom fighter is a relativistic local term for those engaged in rebellion against an established government that is held to be oppressive and illegitimate... Historically, we find that people who are self-described "freedom fighters" tend to be called assassins, rebels, or terrorists by their foes. During the Cold War, the term 'freedom fighter' was widely used by the United States and other Western Bloc countries to describe rebels in countries controlled by Communist governments or otherwise under the influence of the Soviet Union, including rebels in Hungary, the anti-communist Contras in Nicaragua, UNITA in Angola and the multi-factional mujahideen in Afghanistan.[more]

The assumption is readily made for political propaganda purposes that the actions of a group may be those of "terrorists" or of "freedom fighters". The difficulties of distinguishing objectively between the two are clarified in a complex online educational tool developed by Tom March (*Freedom Fighters or Terrorists: A WebQuest on Telling the Difference*). It uses as examples: ANC (South Africa), Oklahoma bombing (USA), Black Panthers (USA), Eco-terrorists, Islam, Israel, and US/CIA.

It is reasonable to conclude that those who frame the definition of terrorism in a manipulative manner are most probably those who would have a predisposition to "framing" those accused of terrorism in any legal process.

**Who benefits** from such a selective definition of terrorism -- focusing on what is done to me and mine by foreigners -- and ignoring what my society does to others? This point was strongly made by London mayor Ken Livingstone (*Mayor blames Middle East policy*, BBC, 20 July 2005), in opposition to the views of Tony Blair, saying he did not just denounce suicide bombers, but he also denounced "those governments which use indiscriminate slaughter to advance their foreign policy... irrespective of the casualties it inflicts, women, children and men".

Individually, those in western societies, through immersion in social tensions induced by advertising, are themselves effectively terrorized on multiple fronts:

- measuring up physically: size, strength, weight, age, beauty, endurance, health
- measuring up emotionally: sociability, relationships, depression
- measuring up intellectually: brains, memory, diplomas
- measuring up spiritually: merit, making it to heaven
- performance and achievement: winning vs losing, competitive sport
- financial security: daily food, mortgage payments, debt repayment
- personal security: home security, social security, street violence, gun culture, terrorism, accidents
- fashion sense: taste, clothing, decor
- status, career, relationships: lagging behind, remuneration, "keeping up with Jones"

Who benefits from ignoring the terror of daily life as experienced by many -- to the point of forcing significant numbers into substance abuse, mental illness or suicide? [more | more] Terror Management Theory (TMT) suggests that culture itself serves as a psychological defense against the terror inherent in human existence (cf M B Salzman, Globalization, Culture, and Anxiety: perspectives and predictions from terror management theory, 2001). Destabilization and destruction of their cultures therefore exposes some to such terror. It is reported that some 250,000 a year commit suicide in China -- with a further 2.5-3 million unsuccessful attempts -- the brightest typically fearing inability to fulfill parental expectations [more].

Whether it takes the form of existential terror, fear, insecurity, panic, anxiety, lack of trust or uncertainty, it affects the most affluent and modern societies (cf Bart Pattyn and Luc Van Liedekerke, Anxiety and Uncertainty in Modern Society, 2001). How should the quality of that terror in western countries be compared with the quality of terror faced by those in developing countries confronted by starvation and the death of their family members? How insulting is it to those passed with such death to have their terror demeaned by a legalistic definition ignoring the form of terrorism that gave rise to it? Who benefits from framing terror as an experience uniquely experienced by people in western countries -- resulting from the actions of terrorists from developing countries?

The unexplored consequence of experience of the terror of daily life is the identification of scapegoats, as described by Jeffrey Johnson (The Epistemology of Panic, 2001):

The creation of scapegoats is an integral part of an epistemology of panic. This is an attempt to formulate a systematic rationalization of one's own insecurity and terror in the face of life's challenges and opportunities. Rather than intelligently, reticently, willfully, and courageously dealing with the reality of a challenging situation, it is easier to react against it through recourse to a palliative for oneself and a caricature of others. This result is the creation of an ideology or set of preconceived notions which serves as a façade for one's panic. The very nature of a reactionary is to be someone in panic. Reaction is a form of panic.

Of particular interest is the extent to which the so-called "franchising" of terrorism by "al-Qaida" has resulted in a tendency to perceive only the exotic "al-Qaida" brand as genuine terrorism. Who benefits from such a successful branding operation? What is the "market share" of the unbranded varieties -- perhaps dismissed as being of lower "terror content", diluted into "anxiety" or "panic", and lacking the life threatening strength of the "al-Qaida" brand?

There is a terrible irony to the avoidance of the terror to be experienced in one's own backyard -- as exemplified by a somewhat different reading of George Bush's very own often-cited words (President Discusses Patriot Act, 9 June 2005):

We're taking the fight to the terrorists abroad, so we don't have to face them here at home. [commentary]

#8. Learning from metaphors of "war" and "terrorism": semantic confusion

The importance of metaphor in war has been explored by George Lakoff (Metaphor and War: the metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf, 1991/2003; Metaphors of Terror, 2001). He makes the strong point that "metaphors can kill" (George Lakoff, Metaphors That Kill: the Nation as Person, and how metaphors frame our perception of war, 19 March 2003).

James William Underhill (The Switch: metaphorical representation of the war in Iraq from September 2002 - May 2003) distinguishes from cited examples in The Economist:

- 13 "protometaphors" descriptive of the nature of "war": Defence; Accepting a challenge; Lighting a fire; Unleashing a wild beast; A film; Surgery; Execution; A game; Problem solving; A vehicle; Reaching a destination; A commodity; and Crime fighting. Of these the final three are considered novel.
- 17 phenomena considered themselves to be "war", again as "protometaphors": Propaganda; Trying to alleviate poverty; Trying to eradicate terrorism; Trying to cure disease; Business; Party politics; International politics; Student protest; Cultural competition; Pacifism; Economic planning; Trying to prevent drug traffic; The consolidation of the EU; Making peace; Trying to eradicate tax evasion; Harming the environment; and Social unrest.

It could be most fruitful to apply Underhill's methodology to "terrorism" as opposed to "war". But with respect to eradicating terrorism is war, he argues:

One of the most dangerous consequences of the general acceptance of trying to eradicate terrorism is war as a literal, straightforward expression, is the way it blurs not only the nature of terrorism and war (which is worrying enough) but the way this blurring spreads to (or contaminates) other concepts. Conjointly with war is crimefighting, trying to eradicate terrorism is war has greatly affected the way we conceive such words as "terrorist", "crime", "murder" and "execution"...It must be remembered that the British government has always refused to acknowledge the IRA's struggle as war. The IRA were always "terrorists" for the government... Either you are a legitimate government maintaining order, or you are one party of a violent power-struggle. Government can't have it both ways. It can't refuse to acknowledge terrorists as forming an army and then engage in a dirty war to crush that organisation. Something of the same desire for both legitimacy and access to illegitimate means to reach their ends can be found in both the British government and the Bush administration. No doubt, it is present in all governments, but the protometaphor trying to eradicate terrorism is war can at times go a long way to extending support for this paradoxical situation
This analysis points to a basic challenge in presenting what is technically termed "asymmetric warfare", namely a situation in which the two sides are mismatched in their military capacities. For those engaged in the "war on terrorism" it has become vital to avoid framing the "struggle" of the "enemy" as a "war" -- however some may understand jihad or "freedom fighter". As noted above, this then allows their action to be framed as illegitimate -- supposedly justifying a non-legitimate response.

It is curious that by so doing the Nazi initiative of World War II is framed as being "legitimate". It also renders illegitimate the struggle of independence movements engaged in guerilla warfare -- such the American War of Independence (1775-1783) -- seemingly then to be defined by this device as "terrorism". The action of the World Council of Churches in support of "freedom fighter" action against the regimes of Southern Africa should seemingly also have been labelled as condoning or supporting "terrorism".

One of Underhill's concerns is the manner in which one usage, such as pacifism is war, is inverted into making the peace is war. Something becomes its opposite. As he notes:

The crowning glory of semantic confusion came in the representation of pacifism, the antirwar movement and the making of the peace after the war all in terms of warfare metaphors. That making peace could be seen in terms of waging a war is indeed curious enough in itself. The justification seems to be that making a lasting peace will take the same unwavering determination as a war campaign. Waging the peace is, it would seem, a daunting task that takes guts, resolute courage and skill. But the representation of those forces which resisted immediate engagement in war in Iraq was even more absurd.

**Who benefits** from such semantic confusion in a world of memetic warfare? (cf Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: Navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space, 2001)

### #9. Learning from alternative metaphors framing terrorism?

If the above analysis by Underhill were to be applied to terrorism, it is probable that many of the metaphorical usages applied to "war" would be applicable to "terrorism" (if only from the perspective of the terrorist). This would give metaphors of "Terrorism as...":

- defence -- a perception of the impoverished societies in which it arises;
- accepting a challenge -- a perception of those faced with an immeasurably more powerful oppressing force;
- lighting a fire -- a perception of those claiming to send a signal of hope;
- unleashing a wild beast -- a perception in response to suffocating, self-righteous complacency;
- a film -- a perception consistent with movie coverage of such events, possibly for purposes of propaganda, and the enthusiasm that they engender;
- surgery -- a perception consistent with targeted assassination for political purposes;
- execution -- a perception consistent with targeted assassination for political purposes and revenge;
- a game -- a perception of cynical strategists;
- problem solving -- a perception of the relevant advantage of use of terrorism as a strategy;
- a vehicle -- a perception of the need for a vehicle to carry a message; etc.

There is therefore a case for exploring a range of alternative metaphors defining the emergence of terrorist incidents in order to avoid such locked-in thinking and the operational decisions made in consequence (cf Donald Schon, Generative metaphor: a perspective on problem-setting in social policy, 1979). Alternative metaphors could highlight possible traps to understanding associated with unfruitful forms of groupthink. This approach follows from the much-cited work of Gareth Morgan (Images of Organization, 1986).

**Haystack and needle metaphor**: One early response by UK Home Secretary, Charles Clarke to tracking the perpetrators of 7/7 used the metaphor of "finding a needle in a haystack" [more]. This metaphor implies a mindset locked into finding the "needle" in order to find the "thread", hopefully still attached to it -- in order to find the "cloth" (al-Qaida) it was being used to "weave" (the al-Qaida strategy). In the case that it might indeed be terrorists of Middle Eastern origin, this metaphor ignores the fact that any "thread" might necessarily be "broken", if it was a "carpet" that was being "woven". The danger of searching for "needles" in this metaphor is that the security services may end up "grasping at straws" -- as well as having a predisposition to "stitching people up" with dubious evidence.

In that "haystack" metaphor, for example, it might be unfortunately concluded that the simplest way of finding the "needle" was simply to burn the "hay" -- which some might conclude was what was now being done to human rights.

**Cancer metaphor**: As suggested (above) by Thomas L Friedman: "The Al Qaeda threat has metastasized and become franchised. It is no longer vertical, something that we can punch in the face. It is now horizontal, flat and widely distributed, operating through the Internet and tiny cells" [more]. As noted by Donald Schon (above), this metaphor suggests a "surgical" response -- echoed by the "surgical" precision with which Coalition forces describe any attacks they undertake.

**Commercial metaphor**: Also suggested (above) by Thomas L Friedman: "The Al Qaeda threat has... become franchised. It is no longer vertical, something that we can punch in the face. It is now horizontal, flat and widely distributed, operating through the Internet and tiny cells" [more]. This commercial metaphor has been used by Olivier Roy (Al-Qaida Brand Name Ready for Franchise: the business of terror, Le Monde diplomatique, 1 September 2004). It is also used by Raymond Whitaker and Paul Lashmar (Franchise terrorism: Trying to hit al-Qaida is like trying to hit jelly' Independent on Sunday, 10 July 2005).

"Franchise terrorism" is now being used to describe the evolution of a loose "al-Qaida" network into an even looser network through which those trained return home to galvanize others and pass on their expertise. This commercial metaphor, as noted above, is ensuring...
that the highly successful "franchising" of terrorism by "al-Qaida" precludes the detection of any other "brand" as being the "genuine product" -- with a consequent lack of ability to detect the "market share" of the "unbranded" varieties, especially those of local origin. Ironically "al-Qaida" may even be faced with what might be termed "counterfeiting" of its hallmark by "unfranchised" terrorists..

**Meteorological metaphor:** Given what is allegedly known of the looseness of organization of "al-Qaida", some have even argued that it might be better framed as an attitude or world view (as in early Christianity, ironically). In this light a "weather" metaphor might, for example, be useful:

- "heat" could model the frustration felt by impoverished Muslims (fruitlessly tracked by surveys and "humint")
- "water" could model aspirations for a better life (fruitlessly tracked by profiling individual water droplets, or puddles, especially when in process of evaporation by the heat)
- "topography" could model the propitiousness of circumstances (tracked as likely opportunities in time and space for terrorist incidents)
- "clouds", potentially forming thunder "storm cells", could model amorphous organizations and their "terror cells" (fruitlessly profiled and individually targeted yet under their ever changing names and forms)
- "wind", potentially driving the "clouds" into topographic features (tracked as fickle changes in movements of opinion), or into a circular motion giving rise to destructive "hurricanes", usefully compared with revolution
- "lightning", after build up of an adequate charge, could model a terrorist strike (whose path could be photographed and fruitlessly traced by surveillance technology)

The point of such a metaphor, of what is above all a complex system, is that conventional security approaches are inappropriate to the elimination of "lightning" -- although a weather report can of course be produced with its attendant uncertainties. The challenge of this metaphor for George Bush is that it suggests that "global warming" may also have a psychosocial analogue that could be as dangerous to ignore. From a strategic perspective such metaphors have long featured in more sophisticated classical approaches to martial strategy (cf Miyamoto Musashi. *A Book of Five Rings: Go Rin No Sho*).

**Geological metaphor:** Another set of possible metaphors for terrorism derives from geology: an "earthquake" or a "volcano". Both are sudden, difficult to predict, events. In both cases they correspond to a relief of stress, the first in relation to tectonic forces and the second in relation to pressure of underground magma. These usefully point to the "underground" nature of movements of opinion giving rise to terrorist incidents.

**Fire metaphor:** In a description of George Bush's second inaugural address Sidney Blumenthal (*A military in extremis*, 27 January 2005) pointed out that the speech was afame with images of destruction and vengeance:

> The terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001, appeared as a "day of fire," a trope combining the *Dies Irae* of the Roman Catholic Mass ("The day of wrath, that day which will reduce the world to ashes") with the *Book of Revelation* ("lake of fire"). Bush never mentioned Iraq, but he spoke of fighting fire with fire. "We have lit a fire as well -- a fire in the minds of men. It warms those who feel its power, it burns those who fight its progress, and one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world."

The phrase "a fire in the minds of men" is a quote from Dostoevski's *Fathers and Sons*. Dostoevski meant it to describe the fanaticism of nihilistic terrorists. Bush twisted the reference to conflate "freedom" with retribution that "burns" our enemies with "untamed" fury.

**Jelly metaphor:** As noted in passing above, the incident of 7/7 has led to the suggestion that al-Qaida is like a "jelly" (cf Raymond Whitaker and Paul Lashmar (*Franchise terrorism: Trying to hit al-Qaida is like trying to hit jelly* "Independent on Sunday", 10 July 2005)

**Cowboy metaphor:** The use of a pack of playing cards of the "most wanted" terrorists [more] was an early way of framing the challenge for Coalition of the Willing. This is typical of antiquated, "good guy / bad guy", cowboy thinking. The unambiguous "black-or-white" distinction extolled by the Bush regime ("you are either with us or against us") is strongly supported in the USA by the emerging literary market for "Christian fiction" of which Douglas Kennedy (*Selling the rapture*, *The Guardian*, 9 July 2005) indicates:

> This is a worldview in which all doubts and dilemmas are solved through either divine intervention and/or the acceptance of God's radiant love... In the brave new world of modern Christian literature, doubters are either those who haven't yet embraced God's light, or hardened secularists who are, by and large, corrupt and venal... There is right and there is wrong. There is good and there is evil. And as in any western, the good guys always wear the white hats.

The metaphor is consistent with the mindset which isolates (and possibly eliminates) stallions to deprive a herd of wild horses of a leader -- before they are domesticated. It is also consistent with understandings of how to "herd cattle" through well-placed fear inducers -- channelling them as required. This may be a challenge to understandings of the role of leadership in a democracy.

**Chemical radical metaphor:** A different metaphor has emerged in the aftermath of 7/7, namely the concern that born-and-bred UK citizens are being "radicalized" as noted by Richard Norton-Tyler (*Security services face worst scenario*, *The Guardian*, 13 July 2005):

> What concerns the security services is that the four bombers appear to have been "radicalised" in Britain, not indoctrinated in training camps and religious schools in the Middle East. How young men apparently from stable backgrounds - as well as from broken or unstable families - are attracted to commit such atrocities has concerned MI5 and the Home Office for a long time....Security sources said yesterday that ministers would have to look again at radical clerics who can encourage extremism and influence young men disillusioned with western culture.
In chemistry, radicals (often referred to as free radicals) are atomic or molecular species with unpaired electrons (therefore electrically charged, rather than neutral) or an otherwise open shell configuration. These unpaired electrons are usually highly reactive, so radicals are likely to take part in a wide variety of chemical reactions. The formation of radicals requires covalent bonds to be broken through a process that requires significant amounts of energy. It could be argued that socio-political "radicalization" is a somewhat analogous process through which conventional psychosocial bonds are broken as a result of the energy differential associated with perceived social disparities and inequities.

The metaphor then suggests that, to avoid activation of a range of psychosocial processes and engagement in them, radicalization should be inhibited, notably by controlling catalysts of dissidence (such as "radical clergies"). It sets the stage for the criminalizing of dissidence (cf William Norman Grigg, Criminalizing Dissent, New American, 1999). The resulting neutral apathy and indifference, framed as desirable, highlights the challenge of mainstream voter apathy (cf Andrea Lynn, 9/11 Day of terror a 'call to arms' for political dissent, scholars say, 2003).

**Root metaphor:** Terrorism, as expressed through the "perverted and poisonous doctrines of Islamic extremism" may be framed as purely evil by associating it with an "evil tree" metaphor. Thus Tony Blair launched a campaign on 13 July 2005, calling for international cooperation, "to pull up this evil ideology by its roots" [more]. For the religious, like Blair, such a tree is typically understood as an esoteric "Tree of Evil" -- more appropriately understood as the biblical of "Tree of Knowledge" of "Good and Evil" (cf Genesis 2:9: In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). Within this metaphorical frame, the strategic objective becomes one of "rooting out" or "uprooting" evil which, at least in biblical terms, is curiously joined to good within the same Tree of Knowledge -- standing as a complement to the biblical "Tree of Life". There is seemingly no separate Tree of Evil to be uprooted [more]. As an operation to separate Siamese twins, this is no easy framing for a strategy. There is also the even more challenging understanding that it is the nature of the Tree of Knowledge to integrate the seemingly incommensurable perspectives of the Abrahamic and other religions -- perspectives that encourage each to define the other as "evil".

One commentator illustrates the danger of this metaphor as applied to the "rooting out" undertaken so surgically by the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq: "In trying to root out a couple of weeds, we set the entire garden alight." [more] If the medical metaphor of cancer-like metastasis is used to describe the transformation of terrorism, then from a surgical point of view any future effort at "rooting out" -- whether applied to terrorism, evil or extremism (as repeatedly advocated by Tony Blair) -- may well be disastrously inappropriate.

**Chemical solution metaphor:** Another chemical metaphor that is descriptive of the emergence of terrorism is that of a "supersaturated solution". This is consistent with the observation that frustration rises to a peak amongst ordinary Muslims in the light of the contradictions in western policies in the Middle East -- and the disparities that arise from them. A small change, or trigger, may then provoke a rapid "crystallization" into an action taking terrorist form.

A variant of this metaphor would be that of the process of effervescence typical of gassified water. Under certain conditions, possibly resulting from a chemical reaction, the gas forms into bubbles. Individual bubbles might then be understood as radicalized individuals or proto-terrorism. The danger is that security and intelligence services focus on the particular bubbles emerging at a particular moment and not on the condition of the fluid from which many bubbles may subsequently emerge.

**Log-jam or silver bullet metaphor:** In effect major terrorist incidents may well result from the motivating power of an attitude, or an idea -- whilst intelligence services endeavour desperately to imply that this idea is effectively embodied in a single individual as a leader -- who could be "taken out" to make the structure collapse. The question is then implicitly framed in terms of the key "log" to free the "jam", or the design of a "silver bullet" to eliminate the evil leader. The strategic assumption is made that eliminating those key individuals will eliminate the attitude. For a society supposedly based on "universal" Christian values -- and a long history of highly-honoured martyrdom -- this is a totally ironic failure to believe in the power of an idea to motivate individual martyrs (or "suicide bombers") in support of their truth.

The above metaphors all provide ways of framing the action of terrorists opposed to the declared strategy of the Coalition of the Willing. The latter strategy has also been framed through its own metaphor -- "spreading" democracy or freedom. The term spreading is however more commonly associated with material substances, notably those well-known to a president with a cattle ranching background. The questionable implication is that a non-material value can be appropriately treated in the same manner. The comparison with "spreading manure", and the mindset and equipment required, has not been lost on some commentators [more more more]. Especially problematic in any such "spreading" is the spread of arms, fundamental to the American concept of democracy, as articulated by the Second Amendment to the US Constitution -- also reflected in the constitutions of individual states of the USA (cf Arming Civil Society Worldwide: Getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire? 2003). To the extent that "democracy and freedom" have become code for "Christian values" within the leadership of the Coalition of the Willing, the use of "spreading" in that connection is especially unfortunate.

The strategic assumptions built around current use of such metaphors have been proven to be totally inadequate to the situation -- despite their potential (cf Developing a Metaphorical Language for the Future, 1994; Metaphoric Evolution: in quest of a manifesto for governance through metaphor, 1988). This is confirmed by the conclusion of the formal investigation of the intelligence community's response to "al-Qaida" and WMD as a classic example of "intelligence failure" resulting from groupthink (see above). Who benefits from such metaphorical confusion -- and impoverishment? (cf In Quest of Uncommon Ground: Beyond impoverished metaphor and the impotence of words of power, 1997).

### #10. Learning from ongoing misframed "wars"

The legitimacy and honourable aspects of "war" have encouraged use of the term in framing metaphorically the struggle of society
against a range of problematic conditions -- especially in politically motivated marketing campaigns. Curiously the strategic implications arising from the possibility of whether such warfare is "asymmetric" are not considered. Nor does the question arise as to whether the dynamics of the "enemy" resemble "terrorism" to a much higher degree than might be admitted or be acceptable -- given current attitudes to "terrorism". Here we are dealing with cases of "war on X" or "war against X", in contrast to Underhill's exploration of "war is X" or "X is war".

Other than the "war on terrorism" (and excluding "trade wars"), examples of "wars on X" declared by governments and international bodies include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: &quot;Official Virtual Wars&quot;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>war on want [more]</td>
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<td>war on poverty [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on drugs [more]</td>
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<td>war on waste [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on hate [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on weapons of mass destruction [more]</td>
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<td>war on pornography [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on illiteracy [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on ignorance [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on traffic [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on noise [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on corruption [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on forced labour [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on slavery [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on guns [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on psychiatry [more]</td>
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<td>war on political dissent [more]</td>
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<td>war on civil liberties [more]</td>
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<td>war on personal responsibility [more]</td>
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<td>war on human rights [more]</td>
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<td>war on political dissent [more]</td>
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<td>war on psychiatry [more]</td>
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<td>war on diabetes [more]</td>
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<td>war on junk food [more]</td>
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<td>war on education [more]</td>
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<td>war on fear [more]</td>
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<td>war on terrorism [more]</td>
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<td>war on religion [more]</td>
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<td>war on tyranny [more]</td>
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<td>war against sin [P]</td>
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<td>war on love [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>war against trade unions [more]</td>
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<td>war on liberal economic order [more]</td>
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<td>war on abortion [more]</td>
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<td>war on hope [more]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other kinds of "wars on..." have been identified, or "declared", by groups of varying degrees of legitimacy (see Table 2). A contrast can be very usefully made between "wars" declared by protagonists (marked "P") and those "wars" noted by groups whose interests are targetted (marked "T"). Some "wars" may be acknowledged -- differently -- by both protagonists and targetted. Those in impoverished conditions would, for example, tend to perceive that "war" has been effectively engaged against them. Some may respond by declaring a "holy war" -- or a "crusade". This can give rise to what is labelled as "terrorism" -- against which "war" can in its turn be declared. "Evil" may be variously detected and itself result in the declaration of a "war in response -- hence preferences for the "crusader" and "jihadi" terminology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: &quot;Unofficial Virtual Wars&quot;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>war on pain [more] (P)</td>
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<td>war on property rights [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war on business [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on gays [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on activists [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on environment [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war against nature [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war on the automobile [more] (P/T)</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on truth [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war of truth [more] (P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>war against the weak [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war against the poor [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war on science [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on children [more] [more] (more) (T)</td>
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<td>war on personal responsibility [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war on civil liberties [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on human rights [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on education [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war on fear [more] (P)</td>
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<td>war on terrorism [more] (P)</td>
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<td>war on capitalism [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war against global crises [more] (P)</td>
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<td>war on halitosis [more] (P/T)</td>
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<td>war on water wastage [more] (P)</td>
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<td>war against population [more] (T)</td>
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<td>war on innovation [more] (T)</td>
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<tr>
<td>war on wisdom [more] (T)</td>
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</table>

With respect to the official "wars" (in Table 1 above), it is clear to all that they are not being won with the current strategies (as supported by the key members of the Coalition of the Willing):

- The "war on drugs" provides the most striking example [more | more]. Labelled a "tragic failure", in the USA it has lasted over 30 years [more | more] -- gradually evoking new thinking from those who engage in it [more | more | more]. The same is true in
the UK (cf Alan Travis, Revealed: how drugs war failed, The Guardian, 5 July 2005). One curious side effect of the "successful" USA-UK attack on Afghanistan was that drug production, constrained by the Taliban, began to flourish anew. Given the continuing military operations there, it might be argued that both "wars" have proven to be a failure.

- With respect to the "war on cancer", one report indicates "30 years ago, the United States declared war on cancer. Three decades later, we're still fighting and dying" [more] Another report asks why access to alternative cancer treatment is so vigorously prevented [more]

- With respect to the "war on poverty" launched in the USA by Lyndon Johnson in 1964: "Since then, the federal government has created vast new bureaucracies and raised taxes to a staggering level not seen since World War Two. L.B.J. helped create welfare..., Medicare, Head Start, the Job Corps, and Medicaid. Worst of all, most of L.B.J.'s War on Poverty was a failure". [more | more]. There is also criticism of the World Bank's approach to the "war on poverty" [more]

- With respect to the "war against hunger", one FAO report indicates: "Given the rate at which hunger has declined since 1990 on average, the World Food Summit goal of reducing the number of undernourished people by half by 2015 cannot be reached. After falling by 37 million during the first half of the 1990s, the numbers of people in developing countries increased by 18 million in the second half of the decade". [more]

The "war on drugs" also provides a very concrete insight into the incapacity of governments to stop the smuggling of explosives by terrorists. Given the market value of drugs, significant quantities are now transported by "drug mules" [more | more] -- namely people who swallow a large number of wrapped balls of drugs to take them undetected through customs on behalf of other parties, prior to excreting them. High quality explosives can be similarly transported. Again, just as drugs can be planted in the luggage of innocent passengers, explosives can be similarly planted to be detonated from a distance -- thus providing a means of manufacturing a "suicide bomber" from any suitable passenger. It is notable that in the "war on drugs" the reasons for the huge demand -- even amongst elites -- are never addressed. Possession may be declared illegal, but to little effect.

The "war on terrorism" is being framed in a similar way to the "war on drugs" and other "official wars", possibly mistakenly (cf Marc O. Hedahl, Stop calling it the War on Terrorism: an argument for moral clarity US Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics: Anti-Terrorist Operations and Homeland Defense, 2003). It has already been announced that the "war on terrorism" may last for decades. There is therefore every reason to believe that it may continue for many decades without being "won". It is therefore legitimate to ask whether catching occasional "mules", or taking out some supply chains, will effectively address the underlying issue. Who benefits from the reallocation of resources to engage in the "war"?

It is interesting that two "wars" that might be said to have been won are the "war against communism" and the "war against colonialism". This conclusion would be disputed.

For Lev Navrozov (What Does This Buzz-Phrase 'War on Terrorism' Mean? NewsMax.com, 17 December 2002):

We can now see what the buzz-phrase "war on terrorism" means. It means invading small and technologically backward countries that have nothing to do with terrorism and provoking thereby hatred for the West, and especially the United States, in the Islamic world, China, Russia and India. A possible result is terrorism in the United States as intense as it is in Israel despite Prime Minister Sharon's "war on terrorism" before and ever since his invasion of the West Bank. In short, the "war on terrorism" is a possible conversion of the West into Israel as far as the intensity of suicidal terrorism is concerned.

There is a curious irony to the challenge of the "war on terrorism", when compared with climate change and the future "war against rising sea level" -- a phenomenon currently denied by the Bush administration. It evokes the curious image of George Bush acting like King Canute of yore in bidding the tide to go back. However, in the case of George Bush, it is his faith-based sense of reality that convinces him that the sea level will not rise unbidden -- until his faith convinces him otherwise. In Canute's case, history records that he only wished to demonstrate the limitations of his power to his sycophantic courtiers. History will presumably record otherwise in Bush's case.

Who benefits from the use of war psychology to pursue virtual wars expected to be never-ending?

Curiously, in July 2005, US officials indicated that the phrase "global war on terror" (known by the acronym GWOT), used by the Coalition of the Willing for four years and predicted to last one or more decades, was to be ‘phased out in favor of more nuanced language’. The newly preferred phrase was indicated as being "struggle against violent extremism" [more] -- presumably to be known by the acronym SAV as a natural reflection of "faith-based" strategic thinking. More curiously, in the light of the commerical metaphor whereby terrorism is described as having been "franchised", this change has also been described using a commerical metaphor (cf Tom Regan, The 'rebranding' of the war on terror, Christian Science Monitor, 28 July 2005). Whereas the Bush regime argues that this reflects a recognition that subtler language is necessary to reflect recognition of a subtler challenge, critics have argued that the change actually reflects a recognition that the "war" was failing [more | more]. Should the terrorized worldwide now coopt the term "global war on terrorism" to refer to the many actions, notably by the Coalition of the Willing, contributing to their terror?

#11. Learning from the unthinkable: movies and infotainment

Movies are no longer interesting (or worth watching) if there is an obvious "good guy" and an obvious "bad guy" -- those belong to the cowboy. Such scenarios are good for kids and to nostalgically recall one's own childhood when values were neatly defined and labelled without any ambiguity or doubt. But unless the "obvious" stereotypes in the movie turn out to disguise a completely unforeseen criminal or hero, the movie has little to offer. Fiction has indeed moved on -- although, in the imagination of some, reality has not caught up with it. It is the new "twist" that sells movies -- but seemingly that proclivity has not sufficiently enabled people, or the intelligence services, to envisage such twists in identifying those responsible for terrorism (cf Twistedness in Psycho-social Systems: challenge to
People have an insatiable appetite for watching others slaughter each other, with body parts flying in every direction -- and the use of torture (by "good" guys and "bad"). It makes for "credibility" and provides a connection with an understanding of "reality". Watching fictional representations of torture is considered acceptable, even a test of strength of character. We like it, we want it, we find it entertaining. For any doubts on this, check box office statistics and internet chat rooms. For some the interest even extends to "snuff movies". Many body-contact sports provide a form of violence-lite.

The news media are especially active in transforming actual warfare into entertainment, as noted by Andy Deck (Demilitarizing the Playground, 2004), who expressed concern that warfare is effectively "sponsored":

Through the ethical vacuum of the corporate media board room, war has become a spectacle that resembles entertainment. The news networks compete with each other in producing specialized war music, graphic design motifs, and play-by-play interviews with former generals. In this round the clock media circus, public impressions about war are increasingly a matter of story-telling, symbolism and misinformation. Given the vaunted freedom of the press in the United States, there would seem to be a lack of a coordinating mechanism that can drive effective propaganda. But the pro-war, flag-waving format has proven profitable. Fearing that they could be perceived as less patriotic than rival networks, brand conscious media corporations have been willing collaborators in the promotion of war.

Movies and books have also extensively explored, if not anticipated, scenarios based on terrorist-type attacks on cities. Ironically one such (Chris Cleave, Incendiary, 2005), involving an attack on London, was published on 7/7 [more].

Most people have been exposed through a multitude of movies to the process of being "fitted up" or "framed" by manipulation of evidence. This only confirms the personal experience of many of miscarriage of justice in legal processes. How is it that there is little recognition, if any, of the possibilities of deliberately using terrorist incidents to frame people, if not whole cultures? Who benefits from such victimization and scapegoating? Who benefits from obscuring this dimension?

With this extensive exposure, one might even ask whether the population is being deliberately trained (if not "groomed") by some agencies to find such processes acceptable. Alternatively it might be argued that the deficiencies of society cause a collective invocation of such twisted scenarios, and role reversals, as a balancing psychosocial force -- consonant with the process of enantiodromia whereby a phenomenon is transformed into its opposite.

Both Hollywood and the Pentagon are open about the "guidance" provided by the Pentagon for a range of movies touching on the military, defence and security. Additionally the Hollywood directors are being encouraged to develop scenarios to "show the heroism of American armed forces (Duncan Campbell, Guardian, 9 November 2001). But it is less well-known, in relation to its own strategic approach to terrorism, that the Pentagon has also sought the imaginative advice, and artificial intelligence expertise, from Hollywood scenarists to explore unforeseen scenarios [more | more].

Who benefits from "grooming" populations into acceptance of violence? Who benefits from numbing sensitivity to violence against any party?

#12. Learning from the unthinkable: historical evidence

It should be recognized that, for strategists inspired by chess:

- **Military intervention, whether provoked or unprovoked, is acceptable:**
  - USA: According to Johan Galtung (Human Rights and the U.S./U.K. Illegal Attack on Iraq, World Tribunal on Iraq, Istanbul, June 2005), by some counts the attack on Iraq is US aggression no. 239 counting from the early 19th century and no. 69 after World War II; with between 12 and 16 million killed in the latter period alone. He reports the words of a Pentagon planner: "The de facto role of the United States Armed Forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends, we will do a fair amount of killing".

- **Collateral damage has long been acceptable:**
  - Nuclear warfare: Herman Kahn (Thinking about the Unthinkable, 1962), originally of the Rand Corporation, was one of the key figures of the so-called "Megadeath Intellectuals", the men who, in the early years of the Cold War, made it their business to think about the unthinkable, and to design the game plan for nuclear war (cf Louis Menand. Thinking the Unthinkable. New Yorker, 25 June 2005).
  - Experimentation on humans: Information continues to be released concerning the extent of biochemical and radiological experimentation on unsuspecting volunteers and prisoners, notably by the USA (cf Rongelap 1956), the UK, and Japan, in order to improve their weaponry.

- **Warfare may be deliberately provoked and instigated:**
  - Vietnam: in this case the war was deliberately instigated in 1964 by the USA (Norman Solomon, 30-year Anniversary: Tonkin Gulf Lie Launched Vietnam War, 27 July 1994)
  - Iraq: leaked information in the "Downing Street memo" (23 July 2002) confirmed that the reasons for invading Iraq had been deliberately fabricated
  - "Settlement": The process of settlement of foreigners in territories long inhabited by indigenous peoples may be designed to occur in such a way that the encroachment of the settlers is resisted by attack (cf Varieties of Encroachment, 2004).
The settlers are then free to claim “innocence” and to have been attacked unreasonably and without provocation. This then justifies any military response against the indigenous populations (David E. Stannard, American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World, 1992)

- **PsyOps: Psychological operations**, most obviously through propaganda in increasingly sophisticated forms, are expected to make deliberate use of negative framing of opponents so that they appear as utterly despicable and worthy of elimination in one form or another. Use of terms like "perverted", "scum", "evil", "inhuman", etc. is standard fare. Unfortunately it then becomes unclear what truth there is to claims against dictators, who may indeed have engaged in many abuses of human rights [more]

- **Assistance may be deliberately withheld**: 
  - **Coventry (UK):** During World War II, having cracked the Nazi's "Enigma" code, British Intelligence learnt of the plan to bomb the city of Coventry. Rather than evacuate the city, so proving to the Nazis that the code had been cracked, Winston Churchill let the city be bombed on 14 November 1940. The city was devastated. [more]
  - **Concentration camps:** Knowing of the existence of the death camps, there has been much debate on whether the Allies should have acted in response to them (cf Michael J. Neufeld and Michael Berenbaum (Eds), The Bombing of Auschwitz: should the Allies have attempted it?, 2000).

- **Ensuring (or envisaging) destruction of one's own assets** (whatever the harm to one's own population) is acceptable to gain strategic advantage (notably through framing others in false flag operations): 
  - **Coventry (UK):** see above
  - **Cuba:** A set of proposals in 1962, by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (codenamed Operation Northwoods) to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, to covertly engineer various pretexts that would justify a U.S. invasion of Cuba. These proposals -- part of a secret anti-Castro program known as Operation Mongoose -- included staging the assassinations of Cubans living in the United States, developing a fake "Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington," including "sink[ing] a boatload of Cuban refugees (real or simulated)," faking a Cuban airforce attack on a civilian jetliner, and concocting a "Remember the Maine" incident by blowing up a U.S. ship in Cuban waters and then blaming the incident on Cuban sabotage. [more | more]
  - **Israel:** With regard to the Israeli Embassy bombing of 1994, an MI5 officer has alleged that the Israelis had actually bombed their own embassy and allowed a controlled explosion to try and get better security and the relevant documents were never shown at the trial of the Palestinians subsequently convicted (cf London has bombed itself before, Prison Planet, 27 June 2005; United Kingdom: Concerns remain on the convictions of two Palestinians accused in connection with the Israeli embassy bombing, 2001)
  - **France (Rainbow Warrior):** In a deliberate act of state-sponsored terrorism, on 11 July 1985 French agents blew up the Greenpeace vessel Rainbow Warrior in the Auckland harbour, killing one person. The involvement of French agents was first denied at the highest level and then treated as heroic. [more]
  - **Oklahoma:** New evidence with regard to the Oklahoma City bombing (19 April 1995) has emerged to implicate the FBI according to Pat Shannan (Terry Nichols Implicates FBI Informant in Bombing, AmericanFreePress.net, 2005). (see also David Hoffman, The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Politics of Terror, 1998)
  - **September 11:** Beyond the many analyses of those dismissed as conspiracy theorists, there are increasingly stronger suggestions that 9/11 was actually instigated by agents of the USA, as indicated by David Shayler (Former MI5 Agent says 9/11 An Inside Job Prison Planet, 27 June 2005)
  - **Anthrax scare:** It has been argued that it was in fact the CIA that was responsible for the 2002 anthrax scare in the USA (cf Wayne Madsen. Anthrax and the Agency: Thinking the Unthinkable, 2002)
  - **Gladic:** Operation Gladio was a decades-long covert campaign of terrorism and deceit directed by the intelligence services of the West -- against their own populations. The purpose was to attack civilians, innocent women and children, and unknown people far removed from any political game, to ensure that they turned to the state to ask for greater security [more | more]. It was associated with the so-called "Stay Behind Network" [more | more | more | more] (cf Daniele Ganser, NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe, 2005)
  - **Transformation of security exercises:** Reports of varying degrees of credibility have indicated that security exercises within a country may be transformed, or some security services, or some element of them, into real disasters through the use of explosive devices. Thus it is reported that there were ongoing NORAD exercises at the time of 9/11 [more | more]. The London subways were being used for a security exercise at the time of 7/7 [more]. The Bologna station disaster of 1980 is now recognized to have been a Gladio event.

The public is now being exposed to the reality of the handling of those suspected of terrorism -- as was so disastrously demonstrated in London following 7/21 when a person unrelated to the incident was shot dead for failing to stop when ordered to do so by armed agents out of uniform. This was justified as part of a new shoot-to-kill policy named Operation Kratos [more], developed with Israeli expertise - and presumably basic to the rules of engagement with suspected insurgents in Iraq, irrespective of whether the suspect can comprehend the orders of the agents or they can be distinguished from ordinary criminals. Who benefits from the lack of necessity to prove that such shootings were justified?

Ironically “kratos”, from the classical Greek notion of rule (and originally the God of Strength), is the lesser-known face of democracy (demos "common people," + kratos "rule, power, authority") -- a democracy that it is the declared purpose of the Coalition of the Willing to spread worldwide. It may be argued that a shoot-to-kill enforcement focus has now been cynically placed on “kratos” in the rules of engagement with “demos” -- under the guise of democracy.
There is probably a serious case for recognizing the emerging realities by which the "kratos" of the 21st century may now be disguised in other related dubious "rules of engagement": aristo-kratos (neocons? Davos alumni?), pluto-kratos (multinational CEOs?), theo-kratos (theocretans? fundamentalists?), bureau-kratos (civil servant mandarins "on the take"?), auto-kratos (Bush? Blair?), techno-kratos (purveyors of "silver bullets"?), merito-kratos (exemplary conformists? laureates?), klepto-kratos (development contractors? mafia?). These tend to accord with realities with which many are familiar -- in contrast to the promoted image of democracy [more].

As documented annually by Amnesty International, torture is now widely practiced. As head of the world's only superpower, the President of the USA considers torture acceptable [more | more | more | more | more | more]. The UK Foreign Office is threatening legal action against a former UK ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, who attacked the use of information obtained through torture by MI6 via the CIA [more]. Which countries, and groups, would not therefore find it acceptable in pursuit of defence of their particular agendas -- in emulation of the leading exponent of the highest values of civilization? Should the Universal Declaration of Human Rights be amended to reflect that reality? (cf Universal Declaration of Human Rights: in the light of God's renewed will, 2004)

An interesting technique in torture, frequently presented in movies, is that of the "good cop / bad cop". Its purpose is to disorient in order to achieve advantage over the victim. In the case of 7/7, having won the Olympic bid for 2012 and indulged in preliminary euphoria -- the incident was a powerful way of introducing disorientation. Who would benefit from such disorientation?

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Given the lack of ability to develop more sophisticated computer-enhanced modes of dialogue between incomprehensible perspectives, it is extremely ironic that there is every possibility that the simplistic mindset from which Operation Kratos arose was that sustained by a new computer game God of War -- coincidentally the subject of a BBC commentary on 7/8 (James Bregman, God of War game reigns supreme, 8 July 2005). This emphasizes Greek mythology with the player assuming the role of Kratos, "a great and powerful warrior that was granted unimaginable power by the Greek god of war, Ares. Kratos turns on Ares and allies himself with Ares' sister, Athena, in an attempt to save Athens from complete and total destruction at Ares' hands". The player takes on "wave after wave of enemy hoardes en route to a massive final battle with a formidable adversary". This probably gives a sense of what anti-terrorist strategists do in their spare moments. As another review indicates in referring to the "gratuitous bloodshed", the game "doesn't just let you kill enemies, it exults in showing you the gory details". [more]

As reviewed by Ivan Sulic (God of War: Who wants to go god hunting? 25 March 2005), the synopsis of the game is:

Beseeched by Athena and the other gods of Olympus, Kratos has been commissioned from on high to discover Pandora's Box and use it to slay the enraged son of Zeus. Once in possession of such divine power, Kratos will unleash one thousand years of godly secrets and wield his newfound strength to kill Ares. But he doesn't care for the plight of the Olympians. He doesn't care for the wake of fire and death that spreads from the heels of war. Kratos doesn't want to save anyone, let alone himself. All he desires is murder. Kratos wants to destroy the god of war for the joy that would come from ripping his heart out. Vengeance is what Kratos seeks -- vengeance and due payment. For what, you must find out.

The relevance of computer games to comprehension of the urgent strategic challenges of society has been explored elsewhere in relation to climate change (cf Playfully Changing the Prevailing Climate of Opinion: Climate change as focal metaphor of effective global governance, 2005). Such points are not lost on the U.S. Army in its efforts at "militainment" -- as an extension of the "infotainment" described above [more | more]. The Army now markets its own America's Army: Special Forces PC game -- described as a compelling example of militainment -- to highlight weapons systems and forces troops engaged in the global war on terrorism as part of its recruitment drive (cf PC Game News, 3 May 2004). It incidentally ties such marketing to that of the God of War game featuring Kratos. It is unfortunate that such technical competence and marketing are not applied to the challenges of dialogue with mutually deadly opponents. Who benefits from grooming the population for war and incitement to warfare against other peoples? How is this to be compared with western complaints about Islamic "hate sites" on the web.

#13. Learning from the unthinkable: current events

The UK and the USA have been involved for several years in regular bombing of locations in Iraq, Afghanistan and -- more covertly -- Iran. This has resulted in many civilian deaths -- estimated at 25,000-100,000 -- an estimate, as noted above, whose accuracy is a matter of indifference to the perpetrators [more]. From a democratic perspective, this "collateral damage" is entirely acceptable to the US and UK populations whose war leaders -- as leaders of the Coalition of the Willing -- were recently democratically re-elected by them.

In labelling perpetrators of terrorist acts as the ultimate "scum of the Earth", one wonders with what adjectives are to be labelled those that set them up, are complicit with such initiatives, or were directly or indirectly responsible for creating the conditions that engendered such fanaticism. Given that the US and the UK, as leaders of the Coalition of the Willing, have willingly and knowingly tortured far more than were killed or wounded at 7/7 -- without remorse or constraint -- there is indeed a challenge in finding appropriate adjectives to describe such representatives of the highest values of modern civilization. In the case of the G8 summit, a common left-wing political adjective, "bloodsucker", was used by the Director of Campaigns and Policy at War on Want, John Hilary (Bloodsuckers Summit: why the left should rendezvous with G8 in Gleneagles, June 2005). Perhaps "vampire" might indeed be an appropriate adjective (cf Global Civilization of Vampires: governance through demons and vampires on spin? 2005).

The Srebrenica massacre in former Yugoslavia is not known by a "number". Ironically its number could in fact also be 7/7, namely the day in 1995 that the Bosnian Serb forces led by (Christian) General Ratko Mladic occupied the enclave to initiate the massacre of some 8,000 Muslim civilians -- supposedly the worst human-rights atrocity committed on European soil (since the Holocaust) [more]. The anniversary of the massacre is currently celebrated on 11 July, namely 7/11 -- although the first killing reportedly started on 13 July [more]. But, as with other incidents currently polarizing society, the commonly disseminated "facts" are themselves in dispute (cf Gilles d'Aymery, Srebrenica, Mon Amour: An Ostracized Narrative 18 July 2005).
It has also been remarked that commemoration of 9/11 might refer to the final acts (on 11 September 1973) of the US-supported revolution in the Chile of Salvador Allende, following which many thousands of people disappeared after being tortured [more | more]. Perhaps "terrorist" acts of the future will exhaust the available numbers:


But it is nevertheless curious that both 9/11 and 7/7 occurred at periods of commemoration of killings initiated by countries with which key members of the Coalition of the Willing were complicit.

Torturing suspects for military intelligence is standard practice. This has been made very clear. It is considered acceptable by the President of the USA and by the UK. No protest against that practice has been voiced by either, nor by representatives of their governments.

The number of "Christians" killed in 9/11 and 7/7, supposedly by "Islamic" fundamentalists, is of the order of 3000 maximum. The number of "Muslims" killed by supposedly "Christian" people in Srebrenica is claimed to be of the order of 8000 -- although the number is disputed [more]. The person considered primarily responsible, General Mladic, remains at liberty in a country that has long been occupied by NATO forces. Does NATO have regulations against torture? Does it respect them? What of the value to the "war against terrorism" has been learnt from the systematic use of torture on "suspects"?

Given the questionable legality of the intervention in Iraq, who benefits from casting aside the constraints of the Geneva Convention or the authority of the International Criminal Court? (cf Robin Cook, It's not political correctness to hold soldiers to account, The Guardian, 22 July 2005). What is to be said of British soldiers accused of beating to death their prisoners, claiming they had not been informed of the strictures of the Geneva Convention, and justifying such unnecessary maltreatment as "silly things" in statements such as:

You are out there to do the job. If you have got to start thinking about silly things that you might be prosecuted for, you're putting people's lives at risk. (Soldiers may refuse to serve over legal threat 21 July 2005)

What job are these defenders of civilization supposed to be doing? Whose lives do they put at risk whilst doing it? Is such treatment of prisoners a consequence of the same minisat that resulted in Operation Kratos in London? Who benefits from framing the challenge in this way?

In the words of Robin Cook: "Osama bin Laden is no more a true representative of Islam than General Mladic, commander of the Serbian forces, could be held up as an example of Christianity" [more]. Who benefits from ensuring such radical distinction between the activities of the "Christian" General Ratko Mladic against "Muslims" and the actions of the "Muslim" Osama bin Laden against "Christians"? The point is well made by the (falsely attributed) urban myth: Former heavyweight boxing champ Muhammad Ali visited the ruins of the World Trade Center on Thursday. When reporters asked how he felt about the suspects sharing his Islamic faith, Ali responded pleasantly, "How do you feel about Hitler sharing yours?"

#14. Learning from denial and the reframing of reality in relation to "terrorism"

The new "faith-based" approach to reality by the leaders of the Coalition of the Willing should not be forgotten. The White House is explicitly recognized to have moved away from "evidence-based" ("reality-based", "fact-based") strategies in favour of "faith-based" strategies (Ron Suskind, Without a Doubt, New York Times, 17 October 2004) [more]. Both George Bush and Tony Blair are specifically recognized as constantly reinventing history -- as unwelcome facts become evident (cf Future Challenge of Faith-based Governance, 2003).

The willingness of such leaders to engage knowingly and deliberately in duplicity, at the cost of thousands of innocent human lives, has now been established and confirmed, notably by the so-called Downing Street memo. What is not known is the nature of the other duplicitous initiatives in which they have been engaged, in which they are currently engaged, or in which they have planned to engage. The huge amounts of classified information, and the efforts to classify increasing amounts of information, are an indication that they have a lot to hide and would have the greatest difficult proving they are not engaged in activities of which their electors would disapprove (cf Globalization within a Global Potemkin Society, 2000).

It is vital also to recall repeatedly the acknowledged complicity of the media in vamping up the case regarding weapons of mass destruction, and the case against Iraq, with the fabricated evidence presented to them.

We are not dealing with an honourable society with honourable leaders pursuing honourable aims (cf Honour Essential to Psycho-social Integrity: challenge of dishonourable leadership to the nameless, 2005).

In the rapid return to faith-based governance, it is appropriate also to recall the confrontation of astronomer Galileo Galilei with the Catholic Church regarding the movement of the Earth around the Sun. The Catholic Church claimed that Earth was stationary, indeed was the center of the universe. Any challenge to that view was considered to be heresy, and the case against Galileo was tried in 1633. Galileo is famously reputed to have muttered the phrase E pur si muove ("But it does move") quietly under his breath, after being forced to recant, in front of the Inquisition, his belief that the earth moved around the sun. He has been referred to as the "father of modern astronomy," as the "father of modern physics," and as "father of science." In 1992, 359 years after the Galileo trial, Pope John Paul II issued an apology, lifting the edict of the Inquisition against Galileo.
A curiously incongruous parallel may emerge between Galileo Galilei and George Galloway, former General Secretary of the War on Want. He has been condemned by his peers in the UK Houses of Parliament for his "poisonous views" regarding UK responsibility for evoking terrorism, -- and unsuccessfully investigated for corruption by the US Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (May 2005) [more]. As faith-based governance increases its manufacturing of consent, and its criminalization of dissent -- with the aid of a new form of "Inquisition" -- Galloway may also be forced to recant his view that the terrorism experienced by those countries was due to their military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. He might then choose to go down in history as having muttered a phrase analogous to E pur si muove. Hopefully the Bush-Blair axis will lift their "faith-based" edict against such views in less than 359 years!

In July 2005, contradicting the continuing assertions of Tony Blair and his Foreign Secretary [more], a report by an expert group from Chatham House (formerly the Royal Institute of International Affairs), said:

There is no doubt that the situation over Iraq has imposed particular difficulties for the UK, and for the wider coalition against terrorism.

Riding pillion with a powerful ally has proved costly in terms of British and US military lives, Iraqi lives, military expenditure and the damage caused to the counter-terrorism campaign.

A majority of the UK population also share that view [more]. Who benefits from enforcing their assertion of the primacy of a reality to which others do not necessarily subscribe? Who benefits from patterns of denial by leadership in a democratic society?

#15. Learning from the "faith-based" manipulation of evidence

Documentation regarding the disinformation relating to 9/11, its links to Iraq, and the existence there of weapons of mass destruction is now extensive. Major strategic decisions by both the USA and the UK have been "faith-based" rather than "evidence-based". Whatever hard evidence has been found would appear to have been adapted to a "faith-based" case -- as with the vamped up intelligence dossier which enabled Tony Blair to obtain necessary support to collaborate with the USA on Iraq.

In addition, however, numerous reports circulate on the web regarding issues that have been inadequately addressed, to the point of having been dismissed or ignored -- typically as the fantasies of "conspiracy theorists". Given the treatment by authorities of what has subsequently proven to be well-founded, and failure to address these issues effectively, can only further erode confidence in the actions and motivations of the intelligence and security services.

Despite recognition of these past problems of evidence and of the amorphous nature of "al-Qaida", the security services and experts on terrorism variously made the following assertions regarding responsibility for 7/7:

- it was immediately, and generally, assumed that "al-Qaida" was responsible -- in the absence of any hard evidence
- Charles Clarke (as UK Home Secretary): "Nothing has been ruled out, nothing has been ruled in as to the likely identity of the nature of the perpetrators of those crimes" (Guardian, 9 July)
- immediately after 7/7 it was prominently reported that the explosions 'bore all the hallmarks' of the use of a type of high-grade military explosive suggesting a sophisticated international dimension to the bombings -- a likely "al-Qaeda" link
- for Charles Clarke there was a strong possibility that an al-Qaida-linked group was behind the bombings, but "Every single possibility remains and I absolutely cannot say we believe it was committed by group X or group Y" (Guardian, 9 July)
- security services claimed to be keeping an open mind about who was responsible (Guardian, 11 July)
- tests on the explosives (and subsequently on those of 21/7) showed them to be of a "home-made" kind -- known to "al-Qaida" from the internet
- Egypt's interior minister criticized the British police for coming to "hasty conclusions" about an Egyptian biochemist who was living in Leeds and who returned to Cairo several days before the London attacks (Guardian, 18 July)
- "The intelligence services have found no evidence that the attacks in Britain were either organised or coordinated by al-Qaida..." (The Guardian, 5 August 2005)

Curiously with regard to 7/7, no questions are seemingly asked about the possibility of faking evidence and claims -- or of "grooming" or "triggering" perpetrators in some way (eg hypnosis, etc) as extensively explored in movie plots. It is curious, when even teenagers can be convicted for penetrating Pentagon high security computer systems, that there is no recognition of the ease with which information claims can be doctorated for wider consumption.

The tendency for some to claim falsely their responsibility for highly-publicized crimes is apparently not taken into account with regard to claims for terrorist incidents. Any claim mentioning "al-Qaida" is given priority and credence -- in absence of any hard evidence whatsoever. Until 7/21, no mention was made of the possibility of hoaxers or copycat crimes -- also common phenomena in public reporting of crimes. Is it possible that the perpetrators of the crimes are quite unrelated to those who subsequently affirm responsibility -- out of pure opportunism to further their quite unrelated agendas? Who benefits from the negligence in considering such possibilities -- which were taken far more seriously in the case of IRA terrorism?

With respect to 7/7, will the process of "getting the evidence" to "fit the story" be transparent? How will it be confirmed how the "evidence" was "found" -- in the light of the track record of tampered and planted evidence in cases of miscarriage of justice in the UK? When the security services believe they "know" who is guilty, why waste time looking for hard evidence when it can be fabricated with far less effort? How is information regarding the treatment of apparent evidential anomalies to be handled in the case of 7/7 as distinct from 9/11? [more][more] What attention is to be given to indications that major security "exercises" were held both on the occasion of 9/11 and of 7/7, inhibiting the response to the disaster when it became "real"?
Will holes in the story be filled with standard issue filler paste: "secret evidence vital to national security"? Will evidence indeed be planted -- who will know? Will suspects be "encouraged" to sign supportive confessions if they are to have any hope of release, avoidance of torture -- or survival? How will those investigating the case ever be able to prove the contrary?

Perhaps of greater concern are the recently announced achievements of a research programme on implanting false memories, long a research theme of Elizabeth Loftus, and a concern in relation to sexual abuse trials, notably involving accusations of satanism [more | more]. Little has yet been said about the capacity to implant false memories in suspects accused of terrorism, whether or not they themselves carried out an attack. The potential would not be ignored by interrogators favouring a rapid and particular conclusion -- and, as the sexual abuse trials illustrated, how would innocence then be proven when the accused has been "persuaded", perhaps "willingly", to confess. As one specialist indicates: "Even when they are not being actively manipulated, there is consistent evidence that people often mistakenly identify 'perpetrators' from a line-up of entirely innocent people." [more].

The 7/7 incident occurs within what some perceive to be a wider pattern of "black flag" covert, illegal, military operations by members of the Coalition of the Willing -- and most notably the USA. To these are to be added "false flag" operations, namely those which may be less covert, but are specifically designed to be attributed to other parties (as with Operation Northwoods mentioned above) [see discussion of the false flag dimensions of the Cui Bono issue on the Guerrilla News Network in relation to 7/7]. As noted earlier, there is no hard evidence that Osama bin Laden has ceased to be a CIA operative. With respect to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, his possible role in false flag operations is explored by Bruce Kennedy (Al-Zarqawi: An American False Flag Operative, Prison Planet, 25 June 2004). Kennedy states:

As America escalates its 'war on terrorism' which in fact is a war on Islam, the need to escalate disinformation and propaganda is also prevalent, particularly when the American public is losing its stomach for the battle, when American lives are being lost each day and when the President continues to be caught red handed in one scandal after another.

To rouse public opinion to support America's colonial war effort, the US intelligence community has created it own terrorist organizations. War propaganda, disinformation and counterterrorism are braided together to achieve the maximum result, for 'terrorism' must remain front and center in the minds of American citizens...

Here's how it works. The disinformation is circulated to the news media and then the intelligence community creates its own terror warnings concerning the very organizations it has created. In some cases, the disinformation appears in advance, in order to pave the way for an up and coming act of 'terror' that roots in a desired political outcome. This problem/solution equation always appears when the war effort is waning and serves to give a face to terror via an expensive advertising campaign.

Whatever the truth of such an analysis, the fact that such possibilities (recognized by many) are not mentioned when considering responsibilities for 7/7, severely reduces the credibility of security service initiatives, arrests of "suspects", and official conclusions of the highest authority. Who benefits from this?

For those advocating a "faith-based" perspective, the rapidly developing world of selective reframing of evidential information, the vigorous promotion of misinformation, and the consequent dramatic loss of credibility of any authoritative source, all contribute to the fragmentation of any absolute truth. This is particularly ironic since the latter is notably promulgated by the fundamentalist perspective inspiring the Christian-led "global war on terrorism". Its effect is therefore to accelerate the development of that which such Christians most abhor, namely relativism.

#16. Learning from the unthinkable: lifestyle choices

There is a widely recognized contradiction between the exaggerated consumption patterns of some and the impoverished conditions of others. A strong point made by Charlotte Denny (Cows Are Better Off Than Half the World, The Guardian, 22 August 2002) was reiterated on the occasion of the July 2005 G8:

For half the world's population the brutal reality is this: you'd be better off as a cow. The average European cow receives £2.20 (€1.40) a day from the taxpayer in subsidies and other aid. Meanwhile, 2.8 billion people in developing countries around the world live on less than £2 a day.

Such inconsistencies do not significantly constrain leisure air travel to distant tourist locations, nor the importation of exotic foodstuffs from those locations by air. The fact that some of these lifestyle choices are directly associated with the death of other people is totally acceptable to all but a few.

Many lifestyle choices are widely recognized to be damaging to health and well-being. Typical examples include substance abuse -- most visibly resulting in obesity. Some forms, such as alcohol consumption, contribute significantly to road accidents -- of which the total exceeds by far the numbers that are victims of terrorist bombing. This is considered so acceptable that hit-and-run drivers, if convicted for manslaughter, may well receive sentences far inferior to those associated with "terrorism".

Although ensuring the death of some through lifestyle choices is considered acceptable, as with the torturing of others, it might be considered unthinkable that people in civilised societies should seek deliberately to damage themselves. And yet body piercing of every imaginable kind is not considered unthinkable. It is widely accepted as a fashion statement by those admired in society -- such as the pop stars of the Live8 initiative. Some forms are even considered a desirable feature of the most sensitive parts of the human anatomy -- on which, ironically, modern torture typically focuses.
It might also be argued that there is a curious symmetry between the use of needles to deliver drugs, as a lifestyle choice, and the use of needles to deliver drugs in many forms of interrogation -- the latter supposedly to ensure communication of truth and the former to make painful reality sustainable through reframing perception of it.

As noted earlier, it is clearly a lifestyle choice to select repeatedly and consistently movies portraying, if not celebrating, scenes of violence. It is no wonder that there may be electoral approval of those who can make them a reality -- provided they can be enacted elsewhere by those who wish to participate, and not at home where one may be personally involved. And yet again, the increasing extent of road rage and its analogues, and the enthusiasm for weapons, suggests that there is ever greater willingness to engage violently with others. The phenomenon of pub-related violence is widely accepted in UK urban environments -- regretted only by a democratic minority.

It would appear to be the case that the most civilized societies deliberately cultivate an indulgence in self-damage in one form or another. Why would they then have any inhibitions in damaging others? **Who benefits** from the promotion of unhealthy, self-damaging lifestyles -- and from the predisposition they offer in projecting such lifestyles onto the cultures of others?

### #17. Learning from ideological intransigence

The current challenge to civilization is framed in terms of opposing world views in which each seeks to uphold, defend and promote its own value system, mode of organization and way of life. Each assumes that everyone wishes to subscribe to its own pattern of belief, possibly after appropriate "encouragement" to disassociate others from the errors of their past. Each frames the other as misguided, if not evil -- even satanic -- in its opposition to this divinely inspired agenda.

The consequence is that each only tolerates and encourages a discourse in which its own values are perceived as uniquely good and universal -- to be protected at any cost, including the killing and torturing of others. Withholding assistance to others when they are in dire straits is also completely acceptable -- as illustrated by Dafur.

George Bush, like his father on the occasion of the 1992 Earth Summit, has specifically indicated that the American "way of life" is "non-negotiable". Presumably he is thus offering an unconditional guarantee that SUVs, as dubious symbols of that way of life and its greed for resources, will continue to be operated by American citizens come what may -- and even if the African people have themselves to be converted into biogas to fuel them. As a response to 7/7, both the Queen of the UK and its Prime Minister, Tony Blair, chose specifically to declare that the British people will also not change their "way of life". Blair declared (at Gleneagles, 7 July 2005) that:

> It is is important that those engaged in terrorism realise that our determination to defend our values and our way of life is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction to innocent people in a desire to impose extremism on the world [more]

At the same time, however, both the USA and the UK are continuing highly destructive bombing operations in Iraq -- with considerable (but carefully undocumented) death of innocent civilians -- in an effort to force them to change their "way of life". Whether or not "civilization" is to be solely identified with the cause of the Coalition of the Willing -- excluding the cause of those marginalized by its initiatives and depredations -- will be for history to judge. The standard excuses of "civilizers" (whether Christian, Socialist or Communist), for the abuses and failures on their watch, do not justify their assumption that their approach -- appropriated self-righteously as "universal" -- is without flaw and that other voices should not be heeded.

**Who benefits** from distinguishing so carefully and self-righteously between "heroic missions" of bomber pilots, at so little risk to themselves, targeting Iraqi towns to change their "way of life" -- in contrast with the "despicable missions" of suicide bombers targeting the populations whose leadership commanded the targeting of the Iraqi towns?

### #18. Learning from avoidance of dialogue -- at any cost

It might be argued, if either was prepared to engage in meaningful dialogue, that both the so-called Christian world and the world of Islam have reasons to deplore practices of their respective societies. However, neither culture considers that it has anything whatsoever to learn from the other. Each represents for the other the deplorable world of ignorant unbelievers: lost souls for the Christians, *jahiliya* for Muslims.

As Christians, both Bush and Blair would be proud to convert all Islam to Christianity -- and the loss of any number of human lives in that cause would be assessed as acceptable, as with the early crusaders. It is no wonder that the Christian leadership seeks to frame Islamic agendas in the way most offensive to Christians -- a technique reminiscent of military "psychological operations" and negative advertising campaigns. It is no wonder that Islam seeks to protect its values -- however aggressively and offensively it endeavours to extend its own community elsewhere. Each is a natural mirror for the most reprehensible features of the other.

Curiously in this context, and whatever the number of deaths, it is considered completely justified to avoid any investment in the challenge of dialogue with those who are apparently totally intractable -- unless it is done under conditions of interrogation, assisted by electrodes or whatever other forms of "encouragement" seem appropriate. In 1998, for example, a now declassified study for the US State Department recommended that the Clinton administration "initiate a dialogue with the Saudi Arabian religious establishment" -- but the recommendation went unheeded [more].

For the personal representative of the UN Secretary-General for the **Year of Dialogue among Civilizations** (2001), "dialogue with terrorists often results in death" [more] -- an attitude which helps to explain the precautionous approach of the UN peace-keeping force to situations like Srebrenica and Rwanda. The same might however be said of "dialogue with nature" characteristic of many extreme sports in which people voluntarily engage in celebration of being alive -- knowing the risks (cf annual mountaineering deaths). It is curious that
no "dialoguers" seem to have the courage to engage in "extreme dialogue". There is no fearless "Dialogue Delta Force" or "Dialogue SAS" going boldly "where others fear to tread" -- rather a culture of dialogue cowards -- despite the protective "dialogical armour" and overwhelming superiority in "dialogical weaponry".

This incapacity exists in striking contrast to the ability of some (often extolled in movies) to dialogue with violent criminals (notably in hostage situations), with the criminally insane, or with those bent on suicide. It is also in striking contrast with the ability of the Coalition of the Willing to develop a working relationship with certain inhumane leaders of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan -- or to develop an accommodation with governments in that region known to practice the most repugnant forms of torture.

A spokesperson for Tony Blair indicated on 20 July 2005 in respect of a dialogue with Muslims that:

".... there seemed to be, to use the Prime Minister's words of yesterday, a twisted logic that in some way we had to get extremists on board. What we were actually doing was tackling head on the extremist viewpoint and mobilising the moderate Muslim element along with other mainstream thinking to take on that extremist view. This was not about bartering with the extremist view. It was about taking on that debate at a local, national and international level. The twisted logic was that in some way you had to concede to the extremist viewpoint. You did not....As the Prime Minister had said the central problem and difference, apart from the use of violence, was that their demands were of such a nature that you could not negotiate with them. [text]

This argument would seem to ignore the merits of actually encountering those who hold a radically distinct perspective, rather than admitting total incapacity to do so. Any "barter" or "negotiation" only comes after seeking out some basis for communication. The pejorative notion of "twisted logic" fails to acknowledge that any encounter between distinct cultures involves an impression of twisted logic (cf Twistedness in Psycho-social Systems: challenge to logic, morality, leadership and personal development, 2004). The agenda of the leadership of the Coalition of the Willing has itself been described as based on twisted logic. The complexity of any interface with "twistedness" needs to be respected in a period in which "complexity research" supposedly provides insights into previously inexplicable phenomena -- which might be considered a key characteristic of differing religious perspectives (cf Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness, 2004).

Where physicists can expend vast amounts of public funds on investigating the twistedness characteristic of "anti-matter", governments exhibit a high order of timidity in developing any viable approach to those holding radically distinct perspectives. The planet has every right to fear such irresponsible incapacity in the event of the arrival of extraterrestrials (cf Distinguishing Patterns of Assumption in Dialogue with Aliens: Communicating with Aliens, 2000)

A fruitful articulation of the challenge, perhaps overly cautious, is that of Hans Herbert Kögler (Is Dialogue with Terrorism Possible? 25 October 2001) who distinguishes between "dialogue with terrorism" and "dialogue with terrorists":

"At the same time, making sense of terrorism will have to involve a real dialogue nonetheless. It will have to address, not directly those who are fanatically engaged in a "jihad" against the evils of Western civilization per se, but all those, not terrorists themselves, who applaud the destruction of symbols of Western power, who support the idea of attacking the super-power of the USA, and who consider Osama bin Laden a much-needed Muslim fighter against the West. It is crucial, I believe, to enter into a real and probing conversation with the sympathizers and supporters of anti-Western terrorism-at least to signal, from our side, the openness to such an exchange. It is important to understand what fuels such discontent, what enables the support of students, workers, mothers, etc. of such acts of aggression, and to be willing to address what might have to be done from their point of view.....

What would a new "language of dialogue" require? What would it look like? Certainly, a basic premise would be an attitude of openness toward the experiences and concerns of the other, an empathetic sense of how they might feel, experience, and conceptualize events and encounters with us. Such a dialogical imagination, necessary to overcome a self-absorbed monologue within the confines of one's own cultural self-understanding, is essential as a sign of equal recognition-another premise of ever moving beyond fruitless and violent confrontations between them and us.

But even the possibility of dialogue is itself considered unreasonable by such as Polly Toynbee (In the Name of God, The Guardian, 22 July 2005) commenting on 7/7:

"Enlightenment values are in peril not because these mad beliefs are really growing but because too many rational people seek to appease and understand unreason. Extreme superstition breeds extreme action. Those who believe they alone know the only way, truth and life will always feel justified in doing anything in its name. You would, wouldn't you, if you alone had the magic answer to everything? If religions teach that life after death is better then it is hardly surprising that some crazed followers will actually believe it.

The existential timidity in the face of "extreme dialogue" is unworthy of a civilization "reaching for the stars" and potentially dependent on fusion energy. The latter is famously dependent on the craziest "Theories of Everything", as illustrated by the much-quoted statement by Niels Bohr in response to Wolfgang Pauli: "We are all agreed that your theory is crazy. The question which divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct. My own feeling is that is not crazy enough." To that Freeman Dyson added:

"When a great innovation appears, it will almost certainly be in a muddled, incomplete and confusing form. To the discoverer, himself, it will be only half understood; to everyone else, it will be a mystery. For any speculation which does not at first glance
Could the challenge of dialogue with, and between, the "crazy" perspectives of religions be fruitfully seen in this light? Investment in this possibility might offer more hope than seeking cruelly to eliminate and demonize insights that may, in some as yet unknown way, be vital to the future creativity and diversity of humanity?

Forgetting who were perceived as "terrorists" in the 1917 revolution, for President Vladimir Putin (6 February 2004):

"But the commonly accepted international principle of fighting terror is an unconditional refusal to hold any dialogue with terrorists, as any contacts with bandits and terrorists encourage them to commit new, even bloodier crimes. Russia has not done this, and will not do this in future." [more]

Forgetting who were labelled "terrorists" in the American War of Independence [more], or in the American Civil War (cf the Bushwackers and Jayhawkers), for President Bush (2 May 2002):

"And there is never any reason whatsoever to establish dialogue with, or between, the "crazy" perspectives of religions. It is supposed that in some as yet unknown way, these "crazy" perspectives may, in some as yet unknown way, be vital to the future humanity."

This presumably follows from the advice of specialists such as Ralph Peters (When Devils Walk the Earth: the mentality and roots of terrorism, and how to respond, GlobalSpecialOperations.com, 2005):

"Do not be drawn into a public diolog with terrorists, especially not with apocalyptic terrorists. You cannot win. You legitimize the terrorists by addressing them even through a third medium, and their extravagant claims will resound more successfully on their own home ground than anything you can say. Ignore absurd accusations, and never let the enemy's claims slow or sidetrack you. The terrorist wants you to react, and your best means of unbalancing him and his plan is to ignore his accusations."

Forgetting the fear associated with IRA terrorism, Ian Baruma (Homeland insecurity. Financial Times, 16-17 July 2005) argues, following 7/7:

"The IRA was the armed wing of a political party, whose aims, as we now know, were at least negotiable. Suicide bombers and jihadis, however, represent no state; indeed they do not recognise one outside the wholly imaginary community of pure faith. There is nothing to negotiate with people who wish to kill as many infidels as they can to establish a divine realm of the faithful. Worse, those holy warriors, who see mass murder as an existential act, who cannot conceive of themselves as anything else but divinely inspired assassins, are evasive beyond the ale of religious orthodoxy; they are pure killers...."

Emphasis tends therefore to be placed on the acts resulting from dissidence, described as terrorism, rather than on research into means of dialoguing with those holding opposing viewpoints -- that are prepared to back them with extreme violence:

- Bishop of Southwell George Cassidy. (cf Bishop urges dialogue with terrorists, 5 May 2004)
- Talking with the Enemy: opportunities and risks of dialogue and negotiation with terrorist and insurgent groups (Seminar, Rome, 15 November 2003)
- Presbyterian Church Leaders Meet with Terrorists in Lebanon: ADL says "irresponsible" decision furthers interfaith rift, Anti-Defamation League, 20 October 2004
- A Debate in the Saudi Press on Dialogue with Saudi Al-Qa'ida Members. Middle East Media Research Institute, November 2003
- Europhobia: Talking with terrorists 20 years on, 14 September 2004
- Nabil Sultan. Dialogue with terrorists: some say why not. 25 May 2004
- Ze'ev Schiff. Is Hamas a dialogue partner? Haaretz.com, 8 July 2005

However, most representatives of governments would rather die than dialogue. Some dissidents have already been obliged to recognize that. Suicide bombing has consequently been transformed into a mode of communication with the very hard of hearing. There is an interesting parallel between the refusal of government to enter into meaningful ongoing dialogue with its own population (eg the challenges of the European Constitution) and the refusal of government to enter into dialogue with those with grievances in other countries in which it intervenes. In each case government denies the legitimacy of the grievances and uses every conceivable device to inhibit effective two-way transfer of meaning and learning. Who benefits from denying that the consequence is predictable?

Vastly disproportionate resources are now allocated to investigations to identify isolated culprits of marginal significance -- compared to the modest resources required for any dialogue necessary to ensure that such acts are not repeated. In consequence, the "technology" for effective dialogue with potentially violent dissidents is not being developed -- and is effectively non-existent. It is supposedly much cheaper to invest further in the technology of yet higher levels of surveillance, policing, detention and destruction, and to bomb, torture or assassinate people into submissive consensus. How much narrower a strategic focus is it possible to have when the chairman of the Crisis Management Committee in London (on 27 July 2005) foresees a decade or more of extremely heavy policing -- supposedly because "We have no choice"? Who benefits from closing down the strategic options through a pattern of groupthink and cross-party..."
Such a perspective contrasts with both the essential message of Christianity and that of the Qur'an, as noted by Robin Cook:

After all, it is written in the Qur'an that we were made into different peoples not that we might despise each other, but that we might understand each other. [more]

How ironic that 9/11 should occur in the UN's *Year of Dialogue among Civilizations*. What of relevance to dialogue with dissidents, and those with grievances, was then learnt by the UN? But, as Cook also notes:

The danger now is that the west's current response to the terrorist threat compounds that original error. So long as the struggle against terrorism is conceived as a war that can be won by military means, it is doomed to fail. [more]

But, on the other hand, for the Director General of Political and Military Affairs of the EU Council of Ministers, Robert Cooper (*The morality of amorality in foreign policy*, *Daily Times*, 14 July 2005):

The threat of terrorist attack causes people to re-examine human rights and legal standards. It may be more important instead to look at the language in which we discuss terrorist incidents. At times dialogue with terrorists may be needed; there may be reason to avoid making this impossible by fixating too rigidly on moral imperatives and condemning all terrorists as unspeakable criminals.

Even Cook argues for isolating terrorists rather than dialoguing with them. This is curious since so many leaders of newly independent countries have been labelled "terrorists" by those from whom they sought independence (starting with France and the USA, and including Israel and South Africa). Were Gandhi and others not labelled as "terrorist"? [more] At some point it was necessary for the labellers to dialogue with Gandhi, Kenyatta or Mandela, for example.

The approach adopted in the case of 7/7 is to expel any "radical clerics" -- instead of learning from the challenge of dialogue with them as a unique resource. The most virulent micorganisms are carefully studied in special laboratories. *Who benefits* from removing those capable of articulating the "terrorist" position -- in order to avoid such learning?

But for Cook:

Success will only come from isolating the terrorists and denying them support, funds and recruits, which means focusing more on our common ground with the Muslim world than on what divides us. The G8 summit is not the best-designed forum in which to launch such a dialogue with Muslim countries, as none of them is included in the core membership... We are not going to address the sense of marginalisation among Muslim countries if we do not make more of an effort to be inclusive of them in the architecture of global governance. [more]

Cook rightly notes that:

The breeding grounds of terrorism are to be found in the poverty of back streets, where fundamentalism offers a false, easy sense of pride and identity to young men who feel denied of any hope or any economic opportunity for themselves. A war on world poverty may well do more for the security of the west than a war on terror. [more]

In the larger sense of terrorism, noted above, it is however only too true that it is bred in the poverty within "Christian" industrialized countries as much as within impoverished "Muslim" countries elsewhere. How successful are the industrialized countries in responding to the challenges of their own backyards? Is the "war against terrorism" in fact a welcome distraction from their incapacity in that respect?

*Who benefits* from the systematic denial of the possibility of dialogue between those of intractably opposed views?

### Conditions for doing the unthinkable?

In any normal criminal investigation, the best investigators (eulogized in popular fiction and movies) are prepared to envisage the unthinkable. The problem is that, in cases involving secretive agreements between governments and security agencies, it remains unclear what lines of inquiry have been deliberately "dropped" for whatever reason -- never to be mentioned in any subsequent report or media analysis.

The question is then whether some groups in society (the "big boys" and "hard men" who deal with the "real world" through *realpolitik*) are operating under conditions which they consider provide every justification and opportunity for whatever seems necessary to advance their agendas. It appears to make little difference whether these are purely self-interested agendas or appeal to some understanding of values perceived to be of the highest spiritual order -- possibly confirmed by divine mandate.

The modern approach to governance is highly dependent on sources of cheap labour, whether or not this is achieved by ensuring that some countries and peoples remained relatively impoverished (Nigel Harris, *Thinking the Unthinkable*). It is also dependent on expanding markets -- however these are to be achieved. The case has also been made that governance of societies is increasingly problematic when
there are no external enemies against which to act (cf Needing Evil Elsewhere, 2001). This absence tends to evoke internal enemies dividing society in problematic ways. To simplify the challenges of governance, there would then be a "legitimate" case for some to engender external enemies -- whatever justification is put forward. As noted in the introduction, the neocons of the USA have specifically benefitted from the analysis of Leo Strauss in this regard [more].

The capacity of the unrefined institutions and procedures of modern governance is much challenged by increasingly dramatic problems of society -- however much effort is invested in denying their significance or publicizing tokenistic responses (typical of the G8). In a very real sense modern governance has "lost the plot" -- both the moral high ground and any image of being able to provide coherent responses to those challenges.

Intellectually it is the critics of current policies, such as those long favoured by the World Bank, that now have far greater legitimacy and credibility -- in addition to being far more genuinely associated with the highest human values. The contrast was in part evident in the G8-Live8 polarity, as it had been evident before 9/11 in relation to US alienation from international principles of human rights (notably on the occasion of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, September 2001).

The challenge of coherent global governance prior to that time was viewed through traditional frameworks:

- alternative action groups, achieving coherence through criticism, protest and demonstration
- civil society groups achieving coherence through humanitarian projects and good works
- religious fundamentalists (of all persuasions) achieving coherence through worship
- scientists and technocrats achieving coherence through development of knowledge and applications
- unaffiliated majorities achieving coherence through entertainment, sport and consumption
- business enterprises achieving coherence through mutually beneficial deals
- armed groups (military, mercenaries, terrorists) achieving coherence through direct action

Like it or not, "terrorist incidents" now offer a quick and cheap way of reframing the priorities of global governance in the eyes of the population to discredit "new thinking" and reinforce "business as usual" -- supported by ever more repressive measures (cf Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: Strategy of choice for world governance, 2002).

Whether or not figureheads pronouncing worthy discourses, as is required by their role, are directly involved in "terrorism", there is a strong case for asking the question whether others are acting for them who are far less scrupulous. Whether or not the figureheads are aware to any degree of the range of actions undertaken (supposedly in their name), or on behalf of what they represent, they are formally responsible and to that extent complicit in those actions.

It is important to remember that it is typically the very same people who lied about weapons of mass destruction who will affirm, with the utmost sincerity and conviction (endorsed by their respective spiritual advisors), that their governments are in no conceivable way responsible for any acts of terrorism. Lying is what they do -- when they can get away with it -- and it is increasingly difficult for them to prove otherwise. The religious factions whose moral backing they seek, and who so specifically support them, are complicit in that duplicity. Leaders will however argue that it is irresponsible in the extreme to even consider that possibility. And for a person of honour, it is even to be understood as deeply insulting -- possibly even to be subject to criminal procedures.

Has the stage not been created in which any group, with any agenda, can create a "terrorist incident", and expect the blame to fall naturally, and even unquestionably, on an amorphous "al-Qaida" -- of "Middle Eastern" origin? Who benefits from this?

As noted by Seymour Hersh (The Coming Wars: what the Pentagon can now do in secret. New Yorker, 17 January 2005), regarding the second-term of the Bush administration:

"The President has signed a series of findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as ten nations in the Middle East and South Asia."

Under these new directives, there is no obligation upon the Pentagon to report any covert operations to Congress oversight committees. The core problem in selecting Iran as the next target is that it is believed by the Bush administration to have successfully hidden the extent of its nuclear program, and its developmental progress -- surely reminiscent of the WMD case against Iraq. The directives now permit the Pentagon to operate unilaterally in a number of countries where there is a perception of a clear and evident terrorist threat -- and to create a "global free-fire zone". As noted by Hersh:

"...military operatives would be permitted to pose abroad as corrupt foreign businessmen seeking to buy contraband items that could be used in nuclear-weapons systems. In some cases, according to the Pentagon advisers, local citizens could be recruited and asked to join up with guerrillas or terrorists. This could potentially involve organizing and carrying out combat operations, or even terrorist activities."

The approach enacted, according to Hersh's informant, parallels that of the right-wing execution squads in El Salvador -- the military-led gangs that committed atrocities in the early nineteen-eighties. These had been founded and financed by the USA. The new objective is to recruit locals in any area without informing Congress. This is consciously framed as 'riding with the bad boys', by forming groups of "pseudo-terrorists" following strategies notably articulated by defense analyst John Arquilla (cf Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Miltiancy, RAND, 2001). Given this stated policy, how should evidence regarding the status of the possible perpetrators of 7/7 be assessed?
According to Hersh, these secret operations will be carried out with virtually no oversight; in many cases, even the top military commanders in the affected regions will not be told about them. The American people, of course, will never know what’s being done in their name. [interview | commentary] Given the intimate involvement with major corporations benefitting from a variety of war-related contracts, it is far from clear in whose interests these actions are being taken and whether any moral principles are being respected and defended.

In this context, objectively speaking, credibility can be most effectively ensured by the judicious use of terrorist incidents and threats of terrorist incidents -- to promote cross-party unity within countries and consistent policies between countries. Threats of bombs can be judiciously made to doubting countries to keep them in line. The other face of the Coalition of the Willing is thus the Coalition of the Threatened. To whose benefit?

It is in the light of the above that it is important to approach evidence for the responsibility for terrorist incidents. Who amongst the possible suspects in Table 3 (below) would be expected to have any qualms about loss of life in a society -- whatever statements are made to preserve their honourable value-upholding image? How are their potential benefits to be compared with what they have to lose -- if anything?

Following the subsequent exploitation of the sense of humiliation and injustice imposed upon a proud German people by the Treaty of Versailles (1919) -- and which fuelled the anger of Mein Kampf -- will the world come to regret the degree of humiliation forced upon those of Muslim faith in retribution for their complicity in terrorism? Who will benefit?

Who benefits? Making the menu of options transparent

Table 3 constitutes a checklist worth considering in any professional investigation -- and in communicating with the public. The items are not mutually exclusive. The estimate columns in Table 3 could have been based on a separate table which would have assessed the degree of benefit/risk for each row below in relation to each of the "who benefits?" (Cui bono?) questions above. The figures given on a scale of 0-10 can only be guesses as a focus for discussion. The table could serve as the basis of a survey of those with informed opinions.

Table 3: Clustered checklist of options in determining "who benefits" from major terrorist incidents like 7/7 (tentative)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency (secret or rogue) promoting French government interests</td>
<td>[false flag operation] destabilize role of UK in G8 and European presidency; pique in response to symbolic significance of Olympic loss</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency (secret or rogue) promoting US government interests</td>
<td>[false flag operation] justify US foreign policy agenda (notably to preserve oil supplies); justify present and future internal repressive policies; displaces attention from unwelcome policies (climate change, debt relief, aid, etc); distraction from some other planned initiative (eg attack on Iran); need to demonstrate who is &quot;boss&quot;; reminder of the need to be &quot;on programme&quot; and &quot;singing from the same hymn sheet&quot;</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency (secret or rogue) promoting UK government interests</td>
<td>[false flag operation] justify present and future repressive policies by ensuring cross-party consensus; justify involvement in Iraq; ensure a stake in future oil; distraction from some other initiative (Byers memo); a planned exercise (cf Churchill and Coventry) in which suitably profiled individuals were persuaded to simulate a terrorist attack, unknowingly equipped with genuine explosives</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency (secret or rogue) promoting Russian government interests</td>
<td>[false flag operation] justify present and future repressive policies; distraction from some other initiative</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency (secret or rogue) promoting Israeli government interests</td>
<td>[false flag operation] focus support for Israeli policies; justify present and future repressive policies; marginalize Muslim perspective; distraction from some other initiative in the Middle East, notably in relation to the perceived nuclear threat of Iran</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conspiracy of secret service(s)</td>
<td>[false flag operation] bigger budgets and control; reframe an image of incompetence and groupthink associated with WMD issue; distraction from some other initiative</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret elite society</td>
<td>calculated destabilization to increase control of power centres (as imagined by conspiracy theorists)</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret esoteric society</td>
<td>symbolic or esoteric agenda; blood ritual; etc (possibly consistent with some more extreme views regarding the rupture-related agenda)</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Islamic fundamentalists (al-Qaida)</td>
<td>revenge for &quot;Zionist Crusaders&quot;action in Middle East; provoke destabilizing repressive measures within western societies; offer inspiration to disadvantaged Muslims; ensure vengeful action against Muslims to increase their alienation from western values</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Christian fundamentalists</td>
<td>focus anti-pathy to Islam; ensure victimization of Muslims; occupy the moral high ground; increase pressure towards rapture agenda; develop militant crusader mentality (cf anti-abortion initiatives)</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Jewish fundamentalists</td>
<td>focus anti-pathy to Islam; ensure victimization of Muslims; further agendas towards construction of a Third Temple</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing extremists (UK or other); white supremacists</td>
<td>promote unquestioning implementation of repressive legislation (biometric IDs, etc); xenophobic; action against immigration; frame the Muslim ethnic group and alienate white society from them; ensure victimization of Muslims</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical anti-globalization group</td>
<td>reminder of ignored poverty agendas</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical environmental activists</td>
<td>reminder of ignored agendas</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical animal rights activists</td>
<td>reminder of ignored agendas</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Security company(s) ensure increased sale of security products and services | Profit | 8 | 4 | 4
Corporation as explored in Goldfinger-style movies | Profit | 6 | 3 | 3
Agency (secret or rogue) promoting multinational corporation interests ensure access to oil reserves; benefit from reconstruction budgets; promote expenditure on reinforcement of security of buildings; distraction from some other initiative | Profit | 8 | 5 | 3
Mercenaries acting for profit on behalf of any other party | Profit | 8 | 4 | 4
Aggrieved family member(s) blind revenge for gratuitous death of relatives at hands of UK operatives | Personal | 6 | 3 | 3
Sebrenica Muslims commemorating the 10th anniversary of the 8,000 massacred at Sebrenica (whilst UN peacekeeping forces stood by) in sympathy with Muslims in Iraq | Revenge | 6 | 3 | 3
Blackmailing group set up conditions for future blackmail; execution of ignored threat following blackmail attempt; providing proof of capacity to some other client | Profit | 9 | 4 | 5
Criminal group (mafia) exploit distraction | Profit | ? | 5 | 2
Anarchists promote and exploit panic | Ideology | 5 | 3 | 2
Alienated, disaffected group disruption with no ideological or other aim; unknown agenda | ? | 4 | 3 | 1
Sociopath(s) enjoy panic and destruction | Personal | 4 | 2 | 2
Extraterrestrials unknown agenda | ? | ? | ? | ?
Unknown conspirators unknown agenda | ? | ? | ? | ?

Conclusion

The virtual "wars" identified in Tables 1 and 2 make it very clear that humanity is very much on a multi-front war footing in response to its challenges -- in addition to the multitude of ongoing conventional wars around the world. These unconventional wars may be understood as humanity's effort to deal with "reflexive modernity" -- a term proposed by social theorist Ulrich Beck (World Risk Society, 1998) to refer to the problems that humanity has itself created, in contrast with "natural problems" (improving provision of food, shelter, sanitation, health care, education, etc) (cf A Summary of Ulrich Beck - Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity). Given the limited success of these unconventional "wars", it is worth reconsidering whether this is the appropriate way to frame the strategic challenge.

Given the strategic trap in which western civilization now finds itself, it is worth recalling the words of an early policy scientist, Geoffrey Vickers (Freedom in a Rocking Boat: changing values in an unstable society, 1972): "A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped". Given the role of "think tanks" in articulating strategy in response to terrorism, it might also be worth exploring the metaphorical traps their approach engenders (cf Tank-thoughts from Think-tanks: constraining metaphors on developing global governance, 2003).

Until genuine concerns are addressed, rather than repeatedly denied, dissidents of every kind are liable to become increasingly active and disruptive -- thanks to the weaponry developed and enthusiastically sold worldwide by governments for profit. The "promises" of summits, such as the G8, have an extremely problematic track record. They are readily and frequently broken, even if their commitments are not totally diluted or warped in the small print of the agreements. Many of those of the 2005 G8, for example, will only have effect in the distant future, if then.

Terrorism may be understood as being fundamentally the result of a complete and total failure of dialogue -- reduced to the simple gestures of "suicide bombing" and torture. By framing the "other" as unreasonable, irrational and dangerous, the absence of such dialogue is justified. Efforts at such dialogue may even be criminalized as conspiring with terrorists. How did it work in the case of IRA terrorism -- funded by sympathizers in the USA? Essentially a degree of breakthrough emerged as a result of dialogue via Sinn Fein.

The marginalization of "dissident" (namely non-mainstream) perspectives is a standard feature of the much-vaunted democratic process. Dissidents may well be completely ignored -- to the point of making a complete joke of the democratic process and all that it is supposed to represent in relation to democratic values (cf Practicalities of Participatory Democracy with International Institutions: attitudinal, quantitative and qualitative challenges, 2003). This contrasts strangely with the needs of the security services to monitor the opinions of every citizen -- as expressed by phone or e-mail [more]. One might wonder why such capacity can be deployed so quickly and effectively to gather information for repressive purposes -- but not in order to comprehend the diversity of concerns and proposals in society in a more proactive manner.

More worrisome is the emerging trend, in the UK for example, of rushing through legislation to criminalize any form of dissent that may be interpreted as "indirect incitement to terrorism," "acts preparatory to terrorism," or "condoning terrorism" -- despite definitional problems highlighted earlier. It remains to be seen how such legislation is to distinguish unambiguously:

- "fire and brimstone" Christian preachers terrorizing their parishioners from their Muslim "radical cleric" equivalents,
- training of special forces for covert (possibly illegal) operations from those of genuine terrorists,
- efforts by scholars or mediators to comprehend those engaging in terrorism from those advocating it as a strategy (possibly in state-supported defence think tanks),
- the planning and practice of neighbourhood terrorism by local gangs from that undertaken by foreign terrorists,
- the forms of long-term, low-profile terrorism characteristic of harassment, bullying and hazing in institutions from that perpetrated dramatically in publicized incidents

More problematic, and consistent with the tendency to grouponthink, is the extent to which a suffocating consensus is developing regarding the nature of terrorism and those responsible for it. One commentator, Joanne Smith (Blood and circuses, The Independent on Sunday, 10 July 2005), reacting to the preceding "feel-good atmosphere" in the UK of the 2012 Olympic decision and the G8, and the associated emotional manipulation, called for "more vigorous debate, less soupy unanimity -- and less crowd-pleasing of the type Juvenal rightly dismissed as panem et circenses". In the same vein, commentator, Jackie Ashley (Speak up, Speak out, The Guardian, 14 July 2005), reacting to "soupy consensus" in the UK Parliament, noted:
Opposition is going out of fashion....Across the Commons there was the nearest to complete unity I can remember....Making any connection between the government's policy on Iraq and terror attacks in Britain, at all, is apparently beyond the pale, in some strange way it is seen as disrespectful to those who died.... But the Commons is in real danger of sliding into a sentimental, soupy consensus, too scared of being accused of saying anything that gives comfort to the many-headed and anonymous enemy.... Saying that the bombings have nothing at all to do with Islam is fatuous -- as fatuous as saying that there is no connection between Christians and anti-abortion militants in the US. It might be a perverted strain of Islam, or one variant of Christianity, but there's a connecting "of". This too needs to be honestly and openly debated in parliament, without the nervous thin syrup of evasion.... If this doesn't happen, not only will governments continue to make mistakes unchecked by argument in parliament, but people will continue to turn away from democracy itself.

Who indeed benefits from avoiding any mention of many of the possibilities in Table3? Who benefits from stampeding the UK Parliament into further restrictive measures in what has been described in The Guardian (21 July 2005) as:

... part of a rapid evolution of policy by consensus which will see cross-party legislation in the autumn to close legal gaps, and criminalise "acts preparatory to terrorism", indirect incitement short of "glorifying or condoning" terrorism, and those "giving and receiving terrorist training".[more]

And again from Seumas Milne (It is an insult to the dead to deny the link with Iraq, The Guardian, 14 July 2005):

Respect for the victims of such atrocities is supposed to prelude open discussion of their causes in the aftermath -- but that is precisely when honest debate is most needed. The wall of silence in the US after the much greater carnage of 9/11 allowed the Bush administration to set a course that has been a global disaster.

In commenting on the deep denial of those refuting any link between the Iraq war and 7/7, Gary Younge (Blair's Blowback, The Guardian, 11 July 2005) argues:

Shortly after September 11 2001, when the slightest mention of a link between US foreign policy and the terrorist attacks brought accusations of heartless heresy, the then US national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice got to work. Between public displays of grief and solemnity she managed to round up the senior staff of the National Security Council and ask them to think seriously about "how do you capitalise on these opportunities" to fundamentally change American doctrine and the shape of the world....

The space to mourn these losses must be respected. The demand that we abandon rational thought, contextual analysis and critical appraisal of why this happened and what we can do to limit the chances that it will happen again, should not. To explain is not to excuse; to criticise is not to capitulate.

Who benefits from leadership that indulges in misleading assertions (in the case of WMD) despite evidence to the contrary, and misleading denials (in the case of the Iraq factor and 7/7) despite expertise to the contrary?

Further comments on the pattern of denial by Tony Blair and colleagues was made by Richard Norton-Taylor (Use and abuse of intelligence, The Guardian, 19 July 2005) who concluded, following comments on the Downing Street memo:

The limitations of intelligence were amply demonstrated in London on July 7. The security and intelligence agencies have said they will learn lessons. Is it too much to hope that Blair and his foreign policy makers will too?

Following extensive comment on his denial in the face of expertise, including that of Seumas Milne (It is an insult to the dead to deny the link with Iraq, The Guardian, 14 July 2005), on 26 July Tony Blair denied that he had ever said that 7/7 had nothing to do with the UK attack on Iraq. As noted by Gary Younge (Never mind the truth. The Guardian, 31 May 2004):

Declaration and proclamation have become everything. The question of whether they bear any relation to the world we actually live in seems like an unpleasant and occasionally embarrassing intrusion. The motto of the day both in Downing Street and the White House seems to be: "To say it is so is to make it so". These people are rewriting history before the ink on the first draft is even dry.

However Blair went on to say "Let us expose the obscenity of these people saying it is concern for Iraq that drives them to terrorism. If it is concern for Iraq then why are they driving a car bomb into a group of children and killing them? Why are they every day in Iraq trying to kill people whose only desire is for their country to become a democracy?" [more].

Curiously this last question in the printed report -- regarding the altruistic aims of the UK -- was censored from the online Guardian archive. It is however not difficult to understand that those in Iraq exposed to indiscriminate cluster bombing (or depleted uranium and thermobaric weaponry), on the instructions of Tony Blair, would have some difficulty accepting the sincerity of such altruistic motives - - whether or not the weapons had "God Bless You" inscribed upon them and were blessed by military chaplains. Of course the spiritual motivation of Islamic fundamentalists exposing innocents in the west to bombs of any kind is to be seen as equally questionable -- whether or not they have "Allah Akhbar" inscribed upon them and were blessed by radical clerics.
From a larger perspective, both parties might be understood to be engaged in a peculiarly barbaric form of dialogue -- typical of the failures of 20th century thinking. The question is when the bombing by each side can be "upgraded" to some more fruitful form of dialogue. Given Tony Blair's style, there is however every possibility that he will at some stage in the future deny (despite evidence to the contrary) that he had every declared that dialogue with terrorists was impossible. This would after all be consistent with the UK's long history of eventually talking appreciatively to the declared "terrorists" of every territory emerging from the UK's altruistic colonial domination (starting with the USA, and including Israel).

Typical lag-times before dialogue with terrorists becomes possible are indicated by: Israel (Irgun active as a declared terrorist organization from 1931 to 1948, under the leadership of Menachem Begin, who subsequently became the sixth prime minister of Israel and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate); South Africa (ANC terrorism commenced in the 1960s and continued until the group was legalized in 1990, a period exemplified by the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela, prior to becoming president); Kenya (Mau Mau, declared a terrorist organization in 1952 and Jomo Kenyatta arrested, released in 1961, and president in 1964); Zimbabwe (Mugabe arrested in 1964, elected prime minister in 1980). Such figures suggest an average "pre-dialogue learning period" of 18 years -- notably for the UK government. It is therefore understandable that it is being suggested that the "global war against terrorism" will last one or more decades. The same non-dialogue mindset is calling the shots -- or rather evoking them.

From this perspective, any independence process in recognition of human rights might be usefully recognized as a "terrorist laundering" process -- a concept that might encourage "Washington" to live up to its name. It is just a question of the price the Coalition of the Willing is prepared to pay in innocent human lives to stave off the moment of historical recall. Who benefits from avoiding dialogue for as long as possible?

Why not prepare the way with a permanent neutral dialogue zone as a laboratory for lower ranking representatives (porte-paroles) of various dramatically opposed perspectives -- an "Oslo process"? The long-term dialogue between North and South Korea in a state of continuing belligerency suggests one model, however unsatisfactory (cf James M. H. Lee, The Korean Armistice and North-South Dialogue, 2001). It would be vital that the context was not designed on the assumption that any one position was the right and appropriate one -- or that a particular western style of facilitation was appropriate, or that agreement was the only desirable outcome. There is a need to learn to talk to people who are totally unreasonable from one's preferred perspective (possibly like one's parents, one's teenage children, one's mother in law, or one's noisy neighbour!). What would such research cost -- in comparison to the cost of vainly chasing after terrorists long after they may have blown themselves up? Who benefits from avoiding insights that might emerge from such research?

Such dialogue might lead to a more daring initiative following the precedent of the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. According to Kevin Avruch and Beatriz Vejarano (Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: A Review Essay and Annotated Bibliography, 2002), since 1973, more than 20 'truth commissions' have been established around the world, with the majority (15) created between 1974-1994. Even the exercise of scouting out how this might work between religions would be of value. Given the manner, noted above, in which negotiation with "terrorist" groups is framed as either "impossible" or "inappropriate", it is interesting to note the paper by Eric Brah (Truth Commissions) on a website named BeyondIntractability.org -- specifically devoted to "information on more constructive approaches to difficult and intractable conflicts" (an Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base Project of the Conflict Research Consortium of the University of Colorado).

As noted by William Dalrymple (A largely bourgeois endeavour, The Guardian, 20 July 2005):

> Of course, we must condemn the horrific atrocities these men cause; but condemnation is not enough. Unless we attempt to understand the jihadis, read their statements and honestly analyse what has led these men to blow themselves up, we can never defeat them or even begin to drain the swamp of the grievances in which they continue to flourish.

A credible response is envisaged by David Clark (This terror will continue until we take Arab grievances seriously, The Guardian, 9 July 2005):

> An effective strategy can be developed, but it means turning our attention away from the terrorists and on to the conditions that allow them to recruit and operate. No sustained insurgency can exist in a vacuum. At a minimum, it requires communities where the environment is permissive enough for insurgents to blend in and organise without fear of betrayal.

Avoiding dialogue and new insight, who benefits from Tony Blair's interpretation of this to mean "big brotherly" collection of intelligence on local Muslim communities -- intelligence that could be used abusively for other purposes? (cf Vikram Dodd, Special Branch to track Muslims across UK, The Guardian, 20 July 2005). Rushing in legislation for more comprehensive identity profiling and installation of thousands of surveillance cameras everywhere -- as the key to effective response to terrorism -- may be especially ironic if the association of "al-Qaida" with a database (as mentioned earlier) is confirmed. As was perhaps originally intended, the final result of the "war on terrorism" may then be the online recording of whole populations in a database. "Al-Qaida" may then turn out to have been the codename for an exercise in control -- the ultimate worldwide expression of anal retentiveness by fundamentalists.

There is a curious irony to the parallel between the challenge of "dialogue with terrorists" and of "dialogue with polluters" (in relation to climate change). Tony Blair was quoted at the G8 as saying:

> My fear is that if we do not bring the US into the consensus on tackling climate change, we will never ensure the huge emerging economies, particularly China and India, are part of a dialogue... If we do not have the US, India and China as part of that...
To the extent that "al-Qaida" can be usefully understood as a label for humanity's "collective unconscious" -- or that of a dominant segment of industrialized society -- it would seem that rejection of any form of dialogue should be interpreted as a failure of the "consciousness" of humanity to come to terms with that which it suppresses. From a psychoanalytical perspective, the failure of consciousness to "get the message", or even to acknowledge the legitimacy of the message, can only result in the escalation of the "irrational" violence that the "unconscious" will imaginatively continue to inflict on the "conscious". For humanity, seeking to win a "war" against it's shadow is not a fruitful undertaking (cf Attacliong the Shadow through Iraq, 2002).

As to the calls by Tony Blair (13 July 2005) to "root out" the "perverted and poisonous misinterpretation of the religion of Islam" in order that the "moderate and true voice of Islam" can prevail, one wonders whether there is not a case for "rooting out" the "perverted and poisonous misinterpretation of democracy" in order that its "moderate and true voice" might prevail. To whom should that call be addressed? Is Blair part of the problem or part of the solution? (cf John Pilger, Blair Is Unfit to Be Prime Minister, The New Statesman, 25 July 2005)

To what extent has the point been reached at which western leadership is now imitating the legendary demonic archetype -- offering, with the highest spiritual assurances, to solve humanity's problems provided humanity will sacrifice its human rights and civil liberties? (cf Saad al-Fagih, Give up your freedoms -- or change tack, The Guardian, 11 August 2005; Tania Branigan, Britons would trade civil liberties for security, The Guardian, 22 August 2005).

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