

War and peace

Derek Gregory

Since the end of the Cold War two modes of 'new war' have been distinguished. One, the Revolution in Military Affairs, transforms advanced state militaries (particularly in the global North) through an emphasis on stripped-down, highly specialised forces deploying cutting-edge technology with unprecedented precision. The other is waged by non-state militias and guerrilla forces (particularly in the global South) and relies on light, even improvised weapons, focuses its violence on civilians and is implicated in the criminal circuits of a shadow globalisation. Rhetorically, the first sustains a late modern 're-enchantment of war' – war as surgical, sensitive and scrupulous – whereas the second reactivates a profoundly non-modern 'disenchantment of war' as indiscriminate, callous and predatory. In practice, however, each bleeds into the other, so that it becomes necessary to expose the continuing horror of wars waged by the global North. One critical response is to show the production of three spaces of advanced military violence – the abstract space of the target, the alien space of the enemy Other, and the legal-lethal space of the exception – and then to disrupt them through a series of counter-geographies that challenges their claims to legitimacy.

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"But war – countries like yours they always fight wars, but always somewhere else. The disease always happens somewhere else. It's why you fight more wars than anyone else; because you understand war least of all. You need to understand it better." (Shamsie 2009)

Introduction

My title is taken not from Tolstoy's novel of the Napoleonic invasion of Russia but from two paintings produced by Picasso in 1951 as part of his response to the war in Korea. *War* showed a naked human figure, with a dove perched behind a shield/face, raising a sword against an advancing tank/skull bristling with gun barrels; *Peace* showed the same scene but with the dove and the shield/face greatly enlarged and the tank/skull now in frenzied retreat. Tolstoy's novel has much to tell us about critical responses to modern war too, but I draw on Picasso here because much of what I have to say focuses on armies of the global North fighting wars in the global South, but also because I am particularly interested in the visual economies of war involved in its conduct and its critique.

Although my emphasis is on war, I presented this lecture exactly 80 years after the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed on 27 August 1928 by 15 states, including Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States. The signatories condemned 'recourse to war for the solution of international controversies', renounced war 'as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another', and resolved 'that the settlement or solution of all disputes shall never be sought except by pacific means'. The agreement contained no provisions for enforcement, however, and by the 1930s it was a dead letter. On 14 June 1940 the armies of the Third Reich swept in to Paris where the 'peace pact' had been signed. Soon after the war, the World Peace Congress met there, and on Louis Aragon's urging adopted Picasso's dove as its symbol. By then the Cold War had transformed the political and military landscape, and in September 1951 *Time* magazine dismissed the dove as a 'bird that walks like a bear' and described the 'peace propaganda campaign' as a 'calculated master plan' by the Soviet Union to further its geopolitical ambitions. The article ended with a ringing

quotation from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: 'War is peace.'

These vignettes are sombre reminders of the deadly embrace of war and peace: they are not simple antonyms. Picasso's *War and Peace* are not mirror images of one another, and there is an important sense in which each reappears in the other but with a difference. This should surprise nobody; the entanglements of war and peace have become a commonplace amongst historians and theorists, politicians and generals. 'Peace', declares Michael Howard (2002, 2, 104), is 'a far more complex affair than war': 'artificial, intricate and highly volatile'. Ulrich Beck, the diagnostician of a contemporary risk society, identifies the emergence of 'post-national' wars that liquefy the distinctions between military and police, conflict and crime, soldier and civilian – and war and peace. In the 'war on terror', he writes, the apotheosis of post-national war, 'the distinction between war and peace is spatially and temporally eliminated' (Beck 2005, 8, 18). Former President George W. Bush – who gave that war its name, described himself as the 'war president' and once boasted that he made decisions on foreign policy 'with war on my mind' – reassured those who didn't know their Orwell that 'when we talk about war, we're really talking about peace'. General Sir Rupert Smith announced in his account of 'the art of war in the modern world' that 'war no longer exists'. He did not (quite) mean that peace no longer exists either. He argued instead that a 'paradigm shift' had occurred 'from armies with comparable forces doing battle on a field' – the classical conception of war – 'to a strategic confrontation between a range of combatants, not all of which are armies, and using different types of weapons, often improvised'. The old paradigm was of war between states; 'the new one is the paradigm of war amongst the people' (Smith 2005, 1, 3, 278).

These examples could be multiplied many times over. In response to such developments, Münkler suggests that war has 'lost its well-defined contours' (2005, 3). This is more than metaphor: the contemporary contortions of political and military violence re-spatialise war in ways that I want to explore in detail. Münkler was drawing attention to what he and others call 'new wars', a term that is usually understood in a highly specific sense, and yet, if 'the world is at war again', as Hardt and Negri (2004, 3, 14) observe, 'but things are different this time' – not least because, so they argue,

'the limits of war are rendered indeterminate, both spatially and temporally' – then it is necessary to interrogate this presumptive novelty and difference. Claims like these have been made repeatedly, and have considerable rhetorical power, but in their ungrounded form they license a highly abstract critique that fails to engage the historical and geographical specificities of the present moment and, at the limit, risk reverting to global war as 'little more than a metaphor for the operation of power' (Chandler 2009, 248). For these reasons I begin by examining attempts to calculate the fortunes of war: is war becoming less common or more frequent? This is a deceptively simple question, and the answers turn out to depend, naturally enough, on what war is understood to be. And so I turn to a consideration of the conceptual apparatus that has been developed to delineate the 'new wars' that punctuate our own present, and I pay close attention to the politics of these conceptual formations. This raises a series of questions about the geographical ground of modern war, and so I conclude by exploring some of the performances of space through which contemporary war is conducted and juxtaposing these to a series of counter-geographies developed by visual artists and others.

Calibrating late modern war

Ferguson opens his survey of war in the middle decades of the 20th century ('the lethal century') with the claim that 'the hundred years after 1900 were without question the bloodiest century in modern history' (2006, xxiv). This extraordinary violence was highly concentrated in time and space. For Ferguson the central wasteland of what he variously calls 'the Fifty Years War' and (after H.G. Wells) 'the war of the world' – which he dates from the Japanese invasion of Russia in 1904 to the faltering end of the Korean War in 1953 – was the Second World War. His geographical focus is on central and eastern Europe, Manchuria and Korea, and his explanation for the locus of political violence has much to do with the disintegration of empires and the turbulent formation of nation-states. But he insists that the extreme violence of the 20th century cannot be reduced to warfare between states, which overlooks the significance of intra-state violence, nor to the clash of arms, which ignores the toll of civilians. Yet Ferguson's interest in these questions is foreshortened and he does not pursue them through the closing decades of the

20th century. Although he reasonably refuses Gaddis's (1987) description of the Cold War as 'the Long Peace', and writes instead of 'the Third World's War' fought 'indirectly in new and more remote theaters, where the strategic stakes (though not the human costs) were lower' (Ferguson 2006, 606), he says remarkably little about it.¹

Ferguson is not alone in his silence. Many of those who regarded those continuing conflicts as 'remote' – which excludes the millions to whom those 'theatres' were their homes – elected to repress or to re-script the role of the global North in provoking violence in the global South. Hence Mueller's (2009) claim that, asymptotically, 'war has almost ceased to exist', at least between 'advanced states' or 'civilised nations'. Within those states, amnesia has now become so common that Judt (2008) describes the 20th century as the forgotten century. 'We have become stridently insistent that the past has little of interest to teach us', he writes: 'Ours, we assert, is a new world; its risks and opportunities are without precedent.' He suggests that 'in our haste to put the twentieth century behind us', to lock horror and misery in the attic-rooms of our memories and museums, we – particularly the 'we' that is US, so to speak – 'have forgotten the meaning of war'. The parenthetical qualification is necessary because in Europe the remains of two world wars are etched deep into the cultural landscape. There, some have seen salvation in Europe's construction of 'civilian states' out of the wreckage – 'the obsolescence of war is not a global phenomenon', Sheehan (2007, xvii) argues, 'but a European one, the product of Europe's distinctive history in the twentieth century' – while others have sought redemption in the constitutively ('core') European pursuit of Kant's perpetual peace (Habermas 2006). But the meaning of modern war is not confined to those terrible global conflicts, and their exorbitation of war as 'total war' was not a bolt from the blue. Its arc can be traced back to the Napoleonic wars. Bell locates the origins of a recognisably modern culture of war in those ferocious campaigns and their 'extraordinary transformation in the scope and intensity of warfare' (2007, 7). It was then, too, that the ill-fated French occupation of Egypt in 1798 and the savage expeditions through the Levant inaugurated what Said (1978, 87) saw as a modern, profoundly martial Orientalism that was to be reactivated time and time again throughout the 20th and on in to our own century. We should remember, too, that

Napoleon also had to contend with insurgencies in Egypt and in Europe; 19th-century war cannot be reduced to a succession of battles between the armies of contending states, any more than it can in subsequent centuries when, as Judt (2008, 6) reminds, war has 'frequently meant civil war, often under the cover of occupation or "liberation"'.

If these observations qualify the usual European genealogy of modern war, then its supersession cannot be a European conceit either. Across the Atlantic a number of critics worry that, in the wake of 9/11, the United States continues to prepare its 'serial warriors' for perpetual war (Young 2005; Bromwich 2009). The Pentagon has divided the globe into six Areas of Responsibility assigned to unified combatant commands – like US Central Command, or CENTCOM (Morrissey 2009) – and relies on a veritable 'empire of bases' to project its global military power (Figure 1).² And yet Englehardt reckons that

it's hard for Americans to grasp that Washington is a war capital, that the United States is a war state, that it garrisons much of the planet, and that the norm for us is to be at war somewhere at any moment. (2009)

Writing barely a year after the presidential election, he ruefully observed that the Bush administration, 'the most militarily obsessed administration in our history, which year after year submitted ever more bloated Pentagon budgets to Congress', was succeeded by the Obama administration that had already submitted an even larger one. There are of course differences in foreign and military policy between the two, but re-scripting the war in Afghanistan as 'the good war', a war of necessity, even a Just War – the comparison is with Bush's Iraq war – continues to license the re-scripting of a succession of other wars from Korea or even the Philippines to Afghanistan (and beyond) as the imaginative scene for a heroic interventionism by the United States and its allies – Kipling's 'savage wars of peace' now waged by a stern but kindly Uncle Sam (Boot 2003a) – that endorses a hyper-masculinised military humanism (Barkawi 2004; Douzinas 2003).

The shifting fortunes of inter-state wars and 'small wars' since the Second World War have been charted by two major projects: the Correlates of War project (COW) at the University of Michigan, devoted to 'the systematic accumulation of scientific knowledge about war', and the joint attempt to establish an Armed Conflict Dataset by the

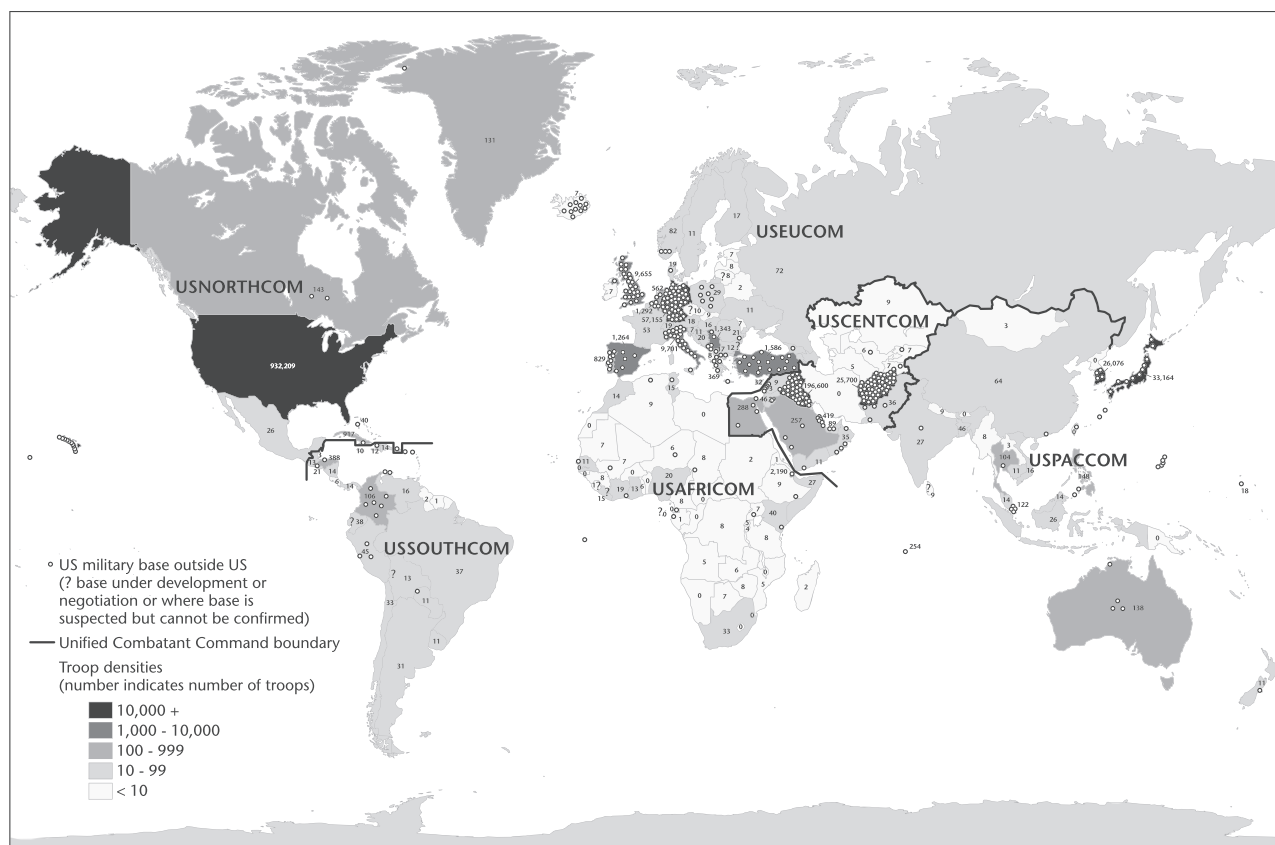


Figure 1 US bases and combatant commands (after Vine, 2009)

Uppsala Conflict Data Program in Sweden (UCDP), the International Peace Research Institute in Norway (PRIO) and the Human Security Report Project in Canada (HSRP). Any quantitative assessment is a battlefield of its own, involving disputes over definitions and data and, for that matter, over the reduction of military violence to abstract metrics and body counts. This holds for individual wars – think, for example, of the debates that have raged over estimates of casualties in Iraq – but it applies *a fortiori* to any global audit. The sources for such studies are inevitably uneven and, as Østerud (2008a 2008b) reminds us, ‘deaths from decentralized and fragmented violence are probably under-reported relative to deaths from more centralized and concentrated violence’ (2008a, 226). The screening and sorting devices that have to be used in these approaches only compound the difficulty. Most quantitative studies count as a ‘war’ only armed conflicts that produce at least 1000 deaths each year, which is a necessarily arbitrary threshold, and the common restriction to ‘battle-field’ or ‘battle-related deaths’ excludes many other deaths attributable to military or paramilitary violence.

Although these tallies include civilians caught in the crossfire, they exclude deaths from war-induced disease or starvation and, crucially, ‘the deliberate killing of unarmed civilians’. These are serious limitations. To erase the deliberate killing of civilians makes a mockery not only of the ‘new wars’ I describe below, which are widely supposed to focus on civilians as targets, but also of old ones. What are we then to make of the bombing offensives of the Second World War? For these reasons, I also rely on a third, more recent project, the Consolidated List of Wars developed by the Event Data Project on Conflict and Security (EDACS) at the Free University of Berlin. This provides a database that reworks the thresholds used in other projects and, in distinguishing inter-state wars from other kinds of war, operates with a threshold of 1000 military *or* civilian deaths (Chojnacki and Reisch 2008).

These body counts (and the temporal limits their exclusions assign to war) are defective in another sense, however, because casualties do not end with the end of war. Nixon (2007, 163) writes about the ‘slow violence’ of landmines, cluster bombs and

other unexploded ordnance. It costs roughly 100 more to remove a landmine than to lay it, and in consequence:

One hundred million unexploded mines lie inches beneath our planet's skin. Each year they kill 24,000 civilians and maim many times that number. They kill and maim on behalf of wars that ended long ago... In neither space nor time can mine-terrorized communities draw a clear line separating war from peace. (Nixon 2007, 163)

But, as Nixon emphasises, other lines can be drawn. Unexploded ordnance is heavily concentrated in some of the most impoverished places on the planet, often on the front lines of the Cold War in the South, including Afghanistan (the most intensively mined state in the world), Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Landmines not only kill directly; they also have a dramatic effect on local political ecologies, since they are typically used to interdict land-based resources and hence food supplies. In Mozambique, for example, large areas of prime agricultural land were sown with mines and have remained unworkable for years, which has forced farmers to bring marginal lands into cultivation with serious consequences for land degradation and food security (Unruh *et al.* 2003). Other slow killers that disproportionately ravage populations in the South also reach back to attack those in the North. Thus Blackmore (2005, 164–99) writes of 'war after war' – the long-term effects of exposure to agents like dioxins or depleted uranium³ – and there are countless killings 'out of place' by veterans returning to the North from war-zones in the South suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

These remarks are not intended to disparage the importance of quantitative studies. While I despair of those who reduce war to a mortuary balance-sheet – what Arundhati Roy (2002, 111) called the algebra of infinite justice: 'How many dead Afghans for every dead American?' – the raw numbers *do* mean something. But there is a world of meaning hidden behind the tallies and tabulations, which can never summon up the terror, grief and suffering that constitute the common currency of war (cf. Hyndman 2007). With these qualifications in place, the most relevant findings from these projects for my purposes are these. First, casting a long shadow over everything that follows, more than two million battle deaths have occurred worldwide in nearly every decade since the end of

the Second World War. It bears repeating that this figure underestimates the carnage because the toll is limited to 'battle deaths'.⁴ Second, the number of inter-state wars has remained low since the end of the Second World War; they declined and even briefly disappeared in the last decade of the 20th century, but reappeared at the start of the present century. Third, while intra-state wars were more frequent than inter-state wars throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (with the exception of the 1930s), by the end of the 20th century their numbers were increasing dramatically, with a corresponding increase in intra-state wars that drew in other states. The considerable rise in the number of armed conflicts between the end of the Second World War and the end of the Cold War was almost entirely accounted for by the increase in conflicts within states in the global South (Sarkees *et al.* 2003, 61–4). The number of intra-state wars declined steeply after 1992, though they continued to account for the vast majority of armed conflicts around the world; some have seen this trend continuing into the 21st century – in 2005 the *Human Security Report* trumpeted 'a less violent world' – but others have detected a marked increase since the last fin de siècle (Chojnacki and Reisch 2008; Harbom and Wallensteen 2009).

Whatever one makes of the small print, it is clear that it is 'small wars' (wars that are not fought between sovereign states) that dominate the databases. Today's intra-state wars have overlapping geographies: they are staged disproportionately in the global South, they involve a complex and shifting reticulation of territorial allegiances, and they are the selective sites of military intervention by the global North. But as Orford (2003, 85–7) notes, it is often the nexus of South–North relations that provokes violence there in the first place. She calls into question the 'imaginative geography of intervention' that creates a convenient distance between 'the space of the international community and the space of violence or terror', in order to represent the North as 'absent from the scene of violence and suffering until it intervenes as a heroic saviour'. On her contrary reading, international institutions (not least the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) are often structurally implicated in these situations long before political violence erupts. This is an indispensable qualification; small wars are rarely purely local affairs. Chojnacki (2006) describes them as 'the dominant war phenomenon on the global scale' and distinguishes

'ordinary' intra-state wars between a state and non-state actors (a war of secession, for example, or a military coup) from 'sub-state wars' between (mostly) non-state actors. In his view, it is the latter that have increased most significantly over the last two decades (Figure 2), and he argues that they have involved a substantial change in the 'structures and dynamics of conflict':

The state has lost its monopoly of the legitimate use of force ... or is unwilling to enforce it effectively against combating local groups (e.g. in Nigeria or parts of Pakistan). In other sub-state wars the monopoly of violence has at least temporarily collapsed (Somalia, Lebanon) or is geographically restricted to the capital or confined regions (Chad, Afghanistan). In exchange, non-state actors (warlords, local or ethnic militia) are able to establish alternative, territorially restricted forms of centralized violence. In these instances, actor constellations can no longer be reduced to the state on the one hand and more or less organized rebel groups, which direct their political and military strategy in accordance with the principle of statehood on the other. Rather, multiple zones of military and political control emerge, giving rise to partially overlapping loyalties and identities. (Chojnacki 2006, 39–40)

Chojnacki (2006, 42) concedes that the mutation and hybridisation of war makes these typological distinctions increasingly problematic – or at any rate turns their black and white categories into so many shades of grey – and draws particular attention to the transnationalisation of conflict and the emergence of complex conflict systems involving proxies and privatisations. Østrud (2008a, 230) goes

further, insisting that 'the seamless web of contemporary violence' makes the categorisations of the databases actively misleading. In many contemporary conflicts, 'there are deadly *no peace – no war* situations in which the prevailing types of violence are missed by the categorizations and coding rules of the most prominent databases on war'.

In fact, the blurring of categories and the indeterminacy of parameters have become the watchwords of war. War, observes Joenniemi (2008), has become unfixed, its concepts un-moored. This is not a scholastic affair; the new slipperiness has the most acutely material consequences. The terms used to describe war (or to claim that it is something else altogether) shape its public response, its military conduct and its legal regulation. For this reason, some have sought to reinstate the conventional categories – fighting to fix the old concepts – while others have sought to elaborate new ones. It is to this that I now turn.

Conceptualising late modern war

Schematically two sorts of 'new war' have been identified, whose conceptual arcs are closely associated with the end of the Cold War.

Revolutions in Military Affairs

The conceptual origins of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) lie not in the post-Cold War world nor in the United States but in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. In a series of papers, Marshal N.V. Ogarkov, Chief of the General Staff,

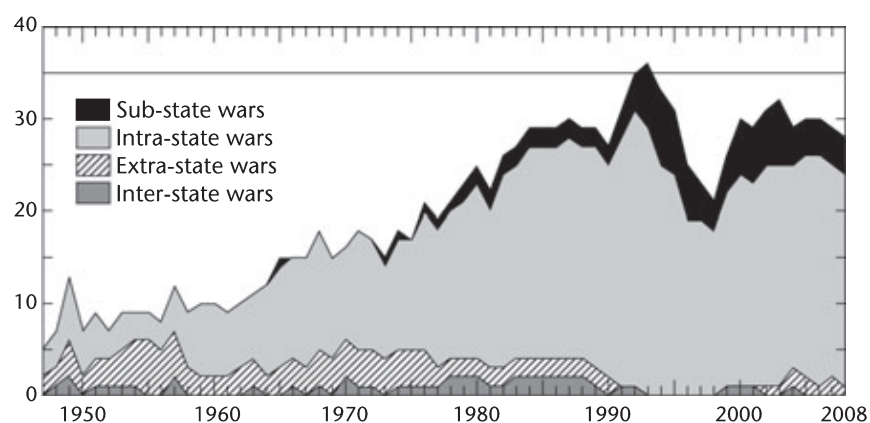


Figure 2 Incidence of wars, 1946–2007

Note: Inter-state wars are wars between at least two sovereign states; extra-state wars are wars between a state and one or more non-state groups outside its boundaries; intra-state wars are wars between a government and one or more non-state groups within the boundaries of an internationally recognised state; sub-state wars are wars mostly between non-state actors within or across borders

Source: Chojnacki and Reisch 2008

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proposed a dramatic change in the future conduct of war that amounted to a 'military-technical revolution'. The emphasis would be on pre-emptive strikes using a combination of new, non-nuclear precision weapon systems and information technology to reduce collateral damage and achieve a decisive military advantage. But Ogarkov was frankly pessimistic about the ability of the Soviet military to realise such a revolutionary project, and after 1989 the momentum lay with the United States (FitzGerald 1987).

The American-led RMA describes not a single, episodic transformation but an ongoing, highly uneven series of changes that draw on multiple sources. The most prominent are engineering, computer science and management science, with anthropology, geography/GIS and psychology as a (recently reinforced) second echelon. Two expert languages run through the first and often reappear in the second, where they work to establish particular privileges. First, the language of Science is mobilised not only to advance the research and development process but also to secure the *legitimacy* of the result: killing is made to appear objective and objectifying, executed in the service of Truth and Reason.⁵ Second, the language of the Corporation is deployed not only to organise the research and development process but also to guarantee the *efficiency* of the result: killing is rendered cost-effective and competent, regulated by benchmarks, metrics and performance indicators. The military translation of these languages can be traced back to the development of operations research during the Second World War and more immediately to the conjunction of techno-war and the corporate model in Vietnam (Cullather 2003; Chwastiak 2006; Gibson 1986).⁶ But they have been radicalised by the RMA, where they have underwritten its central promise: to fight present and future wars with fewer ground troops through the intensive use of high technology. Its architects advocate the use of advanced systems of sensing and surveillance from air and space platforms, systems of information management, and weapons systems revolving around pilotless aircraft, robotic vehicles and precision-guided weapons in order to project what the Pentagon calls 'full spectrum dominance'.

From this vantage point, traditional ideas of territories and borders as containers are compromised and the significance of physical distance is radically diminished (Ek 2000). Missiles can now be

launched from ships hundreds of miles from their targets, while drones are flown over Afghanistan and Iraq by operators thousands of miles away in the United States. When Robert Kaplan visited Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field (now Creech Air Force Base) in Nevada, he saw the trailers from which the drone missions were flown. 'Inside that trailer is Iraq; inside the other, Afghanistan', he was told. 'Inside those trailers you leave North America which falls under Northern Command, and enter the Middle East, the domain of Central Command.' 'So much', he concluded, 'for the tyranny of geography' (Kaplan 2006). The accent is on 'compressing the kill-chain', on what Cullather (2003) calls 'bombing at the speed of thought', and since the RMA draws such a close parallel between force transformation and corporate restructuring, it is no stretch to describe this as 'flexible destruction' and 'just-in-time warfare'. In fact, one of Donald Rumsfeld's central priorities as Secretary of Defense was to transform Pentagon culture so that its officials would act 'less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists' (Rumsfeld 2002, 29).

This frictionless war is as much hype as it is real (even hyper-real), but faith in its spatial dissolutions has not been confined to the political-military establishment of the United States and its allies. Thus a critic like Bauman (2001 2002) could claim on either side of 9/11 that contemporary war is distinguished by the death of geography and 'a symbolic end to the era of space' (2002, 81). Bauman construed these theses in particular ways and, like other writers, fastened on the liquid mobility of both advanced militaries and transnational terrorist organisations. Their 'nomadic' capacities derive from a model of network-centric warfare that implies not merely the compression of time and space but their reconfiguration. This transforms the terms of military engagement. The battle space is no longer a conventional, linear form with its geometry of fronts and battles, advances and retreats, and armed forces and their antagonists now 'swarm' in complex, fluid formations through multiple theatres of war that are simultaneously virtual and physical, 'coursing through the capillaries and conduits that comprise network society itself' (Dillon 2002, 74; Duffield 2002).

This first phase of the RMA was 'a-geographical' (Graham 2008, 28) in the important sense that it promised to project American power globally, seamlessly and uninterruptedly. It performed a military version of what Haraway famously called

the 'God trick', the ability to see everything from nowhere in particular, by capitalising on the increased capacity of satellites and aerial sensors to render battle space transparent. Some commentators detected this 'omniscient eye' in the first Gulf War in 1990–91 (Harris 2006), but protagonists of the invasion of Iraq dismissed that as the last of the old wars. The new war was heralded in Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the UN Security Council on 6 February 2003, which relied on a cascade of communications intercepts and satellite images to establish a rhetorical distinction between (Iraqi) deception and (American) discovery, (Iraqi) evasion and (American) exposure. Leaflets were dropped over Iraq warning: 'We can see everything. Do not use nuclear, biological or chemical weapons' (Figure 3).

The ability to see not only what was there but also what was *not* there must have caused consternation in Baghdad, but the rapid-fire success of the invasion was initially seen as a vindication of the RMA and the force transformation demanded by Rumsfeld. By the time American troops crossed the Iraqi border, many of them were also crossing a digital divide. Ground commanders had an unprecedented ability to track their forces across the battle space and they could rely on highly sophisticated surveillance and targeting systems. Boot (2003b) declared the inauguration of 'the new American way of war', and Nider (2003) hailed the invasion as the triumph of network-centric warfare:

minimal ground forces (less than 10 000 troops) had defeated the much larger Iraqi military in 26 days to establish the holy trinity of 'lightning speed, precise targeting [and] information dominance'. They both agreed that the key was information technology. Sensors, weapons systems and communications systems had been networked to 'cut through the fog of war' and provided 'the clearest picture of the battlefield that soldiers have ever known'. Der Derian (2009, xxxi–xxxii) calls this 'Virtuous War', the God Trick made material, in which the RMA ascends 'to an even higher plane'. At the heart of his thesis is the conjunction of the virtual and the virtuous that works to establish 'the technical capability and ethical imperative to threaten and, if necessary, actualize violence from a distance – with no or minimal casualties'.

British author and critic Rebecca West once warned that before a war 'military science seems a real science, like astronomy; but after a war, it seems more like astrology' (Liddell Hart 1937, 199). She was talking about the First World War, but she might just as well have been talking about the alignment of stars (and stripes) over Iraq. If the RMA came of age in Iraq, then Der Derian argues that 'the first full-fledged virtuous war' conducted under its sign 'proved to be a perfect disaster' (2009, 271–2). The techno-triumphalism of the invasion was undone partly by imperfections in the RMA (commanders could track their own troops but not the movements of enemy forces, while



Figure 3 'We can see everything'

Source: US Department of Defense/US Central Command, Leaflet IZD038, 2003

exasperated combat brigades outside the experimental process improvised their own information systems and so introduced major problems of interoperability into the battle space), but it was also dislocated by mutations in the nature of the conflict itself. As war bled into occupation and back into war, and as the insurgency multiplied and intensified, so the military was compelled to engage with the textured geographies of urban warfare and to implement a radically new 'population-centric' counterinsurgency doctrine. Although this has been described as a counter-revolution in military affairs, spearheaded by dissident field commanders and drawing anthropologists and other scholars into its orbit, this 'cultural turn' is more accurately seen as a second phase of the RMA that developed its own technical armature (Gregory 2008a).

This phase is often signalled in shorthand by the 'Surge' in Baghdad in 2007, but the emphasis on more boots on the ground is misleading. This was a short-term strategy, after all, and the main thrust continues to be a stripped-down military. This all-important minimalism is made possible by two continuing priorities. The first is the accelerated development of remote sensor systems – including Predators and Global Hawks flown by operators in the United States, and Ravens and Wasps controlled by ground troops in theatre, to provide close-in, real-time visual feeds – and the rapid deployment of automated and robotic weapons systems: there were 2400 of them in Iraq in 2005 and 12 000 by 2008 (Graham 2008; Singer 2009). The second is the extended use of private military contractors. In itself this is nothing new, but the scale of outsourcing marks a wholesale transformation in the business of war. These corporations maintain small permanent staffs but large databases that enable them to deploy specialists rapidly and withdraw them speedily (providing highly flexible 'surge capacity') – many of them are former soldiers from the USA, the UK and South Africa – while they subcontract back-up services like laundry and catering to workers recruited from around the world (often from South Asia) (Singer 2005). At the height of US military operations in Iraq there were around 160 000 US troops supported by 180 000 private contractors, whose tasks ranged from maintaining, loading and operating advanced weapons systems to conducting special operations; they also assumed responsibility for non-combat functions in key areas like training, logistics and support services. Their numbers have

since fallen as US combat brigades have been withdrawn, and there has been a corresponding increase in outsourcing in Afghanistan as the Pentagon's priorities have switched from one theatre to the other. By June 2009 there were 74 000 contractors in Afghanistan (most of them locally recruited in line with the new counterinsurgency strategy) supporting 58 000 US troops. These figures all understate private sector involvement, however, because they refer to Pentagon contracts alone and take no account of the State Department or other agencies; they also exclude other contractors employed elsewhere in CENTCOM's Area of Responsibility to support the continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Singer (2001/2, 187) claims that private sector involvement on this scale has not been seen since the 18th century. These modern corporations compete openly for contracts on the international market, and their use by state militaries has been increased by the introduction of markets and quasi-markets across all fields of government under the sign of neo-liberalism. The consequence has been not so much the privatisation of power, important though that is, as a *de-politicisation* of military affairs: there are many ways in which outsourcing strengthens the hand of the state, but the role of private military contractors in lobbying, consulting and training also gives them considerable leverage to frame issues of security in narrowly *instrumental* terms of technical appraisal and operational competence (Avant 2005; Leander 2005; Leander and van Munster 2007).

The use of robotic systems and private contractors raises troubling ethical and legal issues – to do with accountability rather than accountancy – and these have not been ignored.⁷ But they have been minimised by the intensified convergence between military operations and the advanced sectors of the global economy. The close connections between the Pentagon and the armaments, telecommunications and software industries make the extended involvement of other private contractors if not automatic then axiomatic. These circuits reach far beyond the United States; the RMA has been driven by the Pentagon and sourced by major American corporations, but it has drawn in companies and customers from around the world. The world's major arms suppliers are the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom, which were responsible for almost two-thirds of arms deliveries in 2007; the major markets are in the Middle East and South Asia (Figures 4–6). The

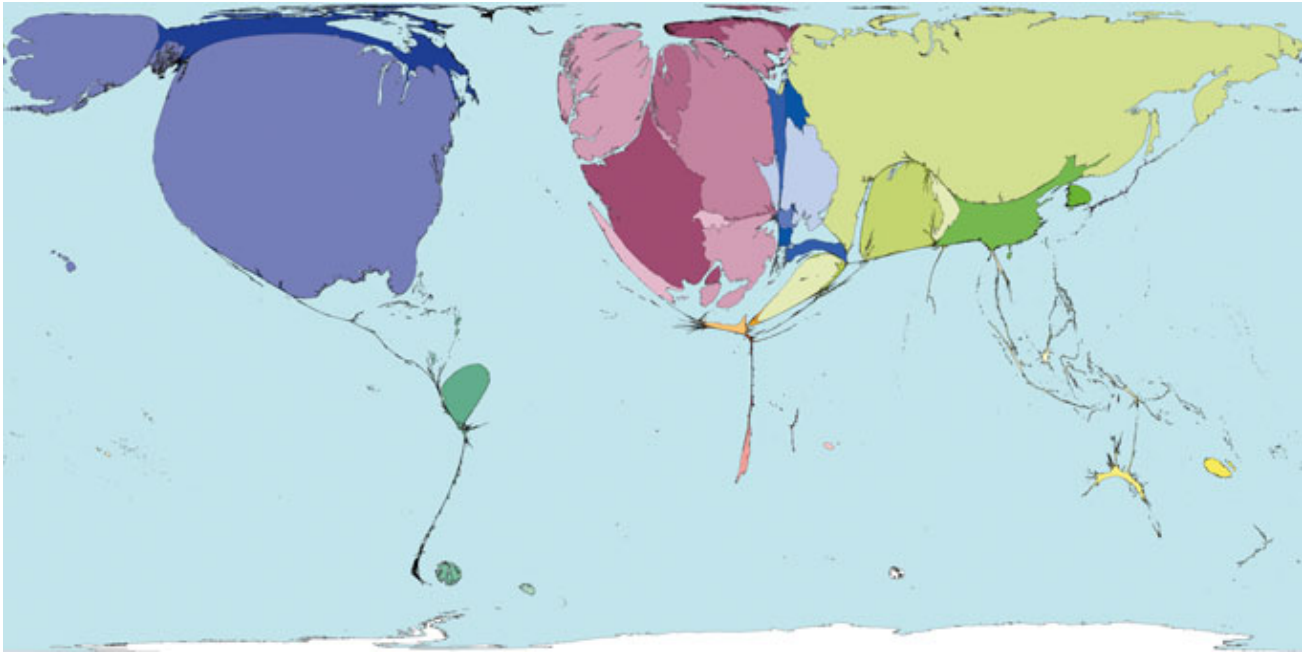


Figure 4 Arms exports (2004)⁹

Source: www.Worldmapper.org © 2006 SASI Group (University of Sheffield) and Mark Newman (University of Michigan)

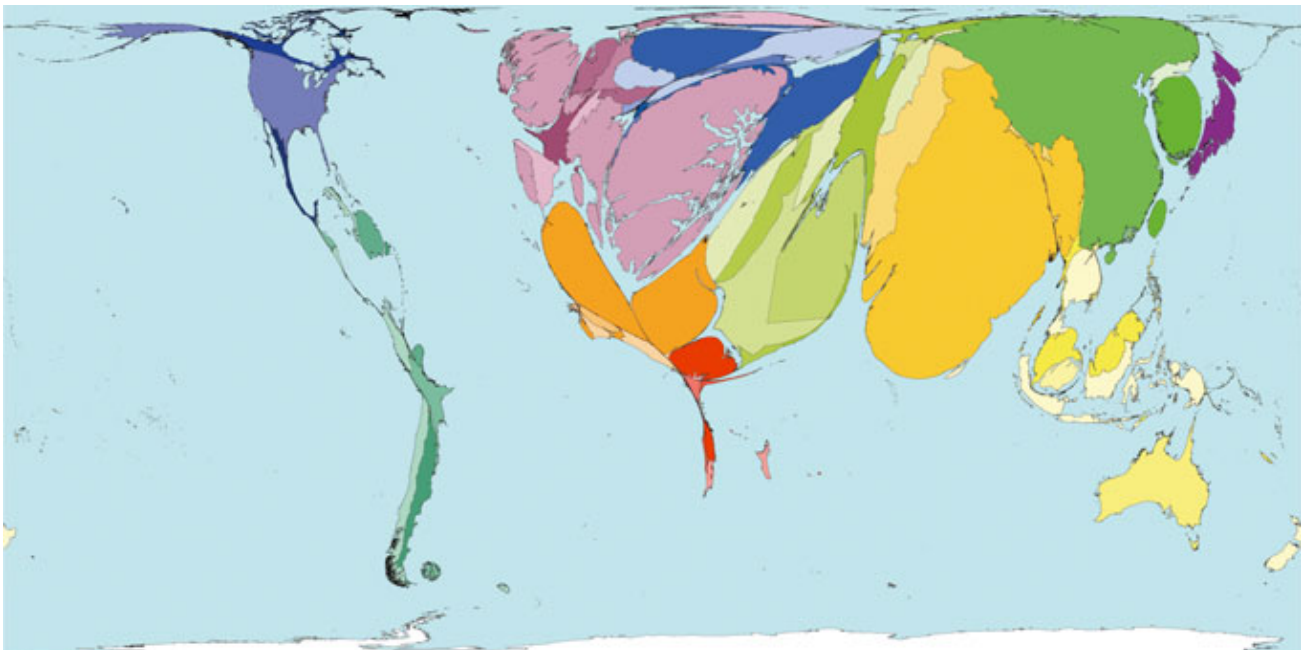


Figure 5 Arms imports (2004)

Source: www.Worldmapper.org © 2006 SASI Group (University of Sheffield) and Mark Newman (University of Michigan)

value of international arms transfer agreements in 2007 was nearly US\$60 billion, of which the United States was responsible for almost US\$25 bil-

lion; the value of international arms deliveries was US\$31 billion, of which the United States was responsible for US\$12.8 billion.⁸



Figure 6 Global arms exports (2006)¹⁰

Source: www.armsflow.org © Armsflow

These figures confirm the pivotal role of the United States, but what is sometimes called ‘military globalization’ (McGrew 2007) is about more than the insertion of the arms trade into the circuits of globalisation that enable its smooth operation: the military violence made possible by these transactions is itself a major driver of globalisation. Thus Bauman (2001, 16–18) argues that the ‘globalising wars’ fought under the sign of the RMA are invested in the production of an unstriated global space for capital – Friedman’s ‘flat world’ – and, like capital itself, are predicated on an ‘ability to descend from nowhere without notice and vanish again without warning’.¹¹ As Bauman knows very well, this model of war raises deeply disturbing ethical questions even as it advances its own ethical claims – the ‘military humanism’ I spoke of earlier – and so it is scarcely surprising that the military–industrial complex has not only been extended since President Eisenhower warned Americans of its dangers in his farewell address in January 1961: it has also been radically transformed into what Der Derian (2009) calls the Military–Industrial–Media–Entertainment Network (MIME-NET). The incorporation of the last two components is significant for many reasons, not the least of which is their role in selling America’s

wars as ‘virtuous war’. Coker (2004) calls this more generally (and approvingly) the ‘re-enchantment’ of war, in whose optic precision weapons and surgical strikes successfully target combatants and minimise civilian casualties, death virtually disappears from the battle space, and the military prepares for its humanising ‘operations other than war’.

In fact, the US military has become acutely conscious of the role of digital media in the public display of late modern war and seeks to shape its staging through blogs, podcasts and its own Iraq channel on YouTube and through its involvement in the production of videogames and other entertainments (Stahl 2010). Images are absolutely focal to this project. A vast visual economy regulates their production, selection and circulation, but Figure 7 captures the symptomatic imagery. Gun-sight videos became common during the first Gulf War, and while their resolution has improved they are still conspicuously empty of people:

It is the death of a vehicle, not of its driver that is made visible to us; we see the very instant of the destruction of a building from a vantage point that betrays nothing so explicit about the fate of the occupants or whom they might have been. (Beier 2006, 268–9)



Figure 7 The re-enchantment of war

Source: All images and photographs: US Department of Defense

The iconic figures that do appear on this artfully mediated ground of war are gentle soldiers and grateful recipients, actors in what the new US counterinsurgency doctrine describes as 'armed social work'. These twin visual motifs emphasise the operative *agency* of the global North in general and the US in particular.

'New wars'

In the closing decades of the 20th century a series of new terms was proposed to describe what has still never really been settled as the 'new wars'. In Germany, this 'quest for concepts', as Münkler (2005) called it, included 'wildcat wars', 'molecular civil wars' and 'neo-Hobbesian wars'. According to Kalyvas (2001) this conceptual proliferation was caused by the collapse of the Berlin Wall, which also demolished the black and white categories that had been used to characterise non-state, often proxy wars. He

and others were adamant that the neologisms were unnecessary, whereas Münkler and others attempted to specify what was new about 'new wars'. Even those who agreed that these conflicts were in some substantial sense new, however, differed about the terrain on which they were to be theorised. In some (military) circles these discussions overlapped with debates about the RMA: as early as 1989 William Lind and his Marine collaborators urged the United States to prepare for 'fourth-generation warfare' against the asymmetric tactics of non-state actors. In other (academic) circles, the conceptualisation of the new wars was largely independent of these hypermodern developments. But both groups found common ground in a belief that the 'most radical change' was that 'the state loses its monopoly on war' (Lind 2005, 13).

Historically, such a monopoly has been the (modern) exception rather than the rule and, as I

have suggested, its breach through the outsourcing of some operations to private contractors by advanced militaries has prompted the conceptual remapping of both state and economy. Yet these new wars have been theorised most effectively in relation to the global economy and the illicit circuits of what Nordstrom (2004) calls 'shadow globalization', and much less so in relation to the state, in particular the rejection of modern state structures by political actors in some regions (Schetter 2007) and the pathologies of what Mbembe (2001) portrays as 'the postcolony' in others. This uneven conceptual development matters because each opens up a different rhetorical space. The usual narrative of a 'failed state' may be read as an invitation to intervene, whereas the criminalisation of conflict almost always provides a compulsion to do so. This is why it is significant that, unlike the RMA, these wars have not been theorised in the terms I describe here by those who conduct them. Like the RMA, they are a construct produced almost exclusively in the global North. None of the rival terms I listed earlier was innocent; they were all freighted with normative assumptions about the supposedly different, and for that matter superior nature of modern ('Western') war, and this runs like a red thread through virtually all conceptions of these new wars too.¹²

The RMA's quicksilver capacity to transform the conduct of war; the premium it places on speed, fluidity and flexibility; its rupture of territories and borders; its symbiosis with the logics of the market: the valences of all of these are reversed under the sign of these new wars to make them not merely an antimony but an *affront* to late modern warfare. Thus these wars are fought not by professional armies but by a volatile mix of para-state and non-state actors, including militias and guerrilla forces, whose alliances and allegiances are notoriously unstable. Kaldor (2006, 101) emphasises the rag-tag nature of these 'armies' (the scare-quotes are hers), which lack the 'hierarchy, order and vertical command systems' of modern armies and guerilla forces alike. She describes them as

horizontal coalitions of breakaway units from the regular armed forces, local militias or self-defence units, criminal gangs, groups of fanatics, and hangers-on, who have negotiated partnerships, common projects, divisions of labour or spoils. (2006, 101)

Mbembe (2003, 32–5) calls them 'war machines', mobile, polymorphous and diffuse, with complex

and changing links to state actors. This fluidity is not seen as adaptive or pre-emptive, however, but as mutant, as 'wars are now waged by armed groups acting behind the mask of the state against armed groups that have no state but control distinct territories'. Although these conflicts are not wars between states they often spill across borders, which in many cases are colonial impositions on complex, continuous cultural landscapes. It is not simply that they *become* transnational wars, in which combatants move freely through grey zones like the tribal territories that straddle the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. In the absence of effective, centralised authority the 'patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights to rule' that Mbembe (2000 2003, 31) describes in sub-Saharan Africa emerges in many other regions too, 'inextricably superimposed and tangled, in which different de facto juridical instances are geographically interwoven and plural allegiances, asymmetrical suzerainties and enclaves abound'. But the container model of territory is also shattered by the agencies of the global North, and not only by its long-range missiles. The distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' is blurred because access to capital, credit and resources (including armaments) within 'quasi-states' depends on their transnational recognition by other states and nominally external banks, corporations, NGOs and other non-state actors who are structurally embedded in the situation. A complex spatiality is thus inherent in the emergence as well as the unfolding of new wars as 'network wars' (Orford 2003; Leander 2006, 164). Bauman (2001) calls these 'globalization-induced wars' and suggests that they are about the protection of the particularities of place, so that their exemplary, close-in violence is a 'boundary-drawing device'. Ironically, however, this is a version of what Gibson-Graham (1996, 124–6) describes as the 'rape script' for globalisation, where places are pre-constituted as fallen, violated and damaged, always and everywhere potential targets for a colonising capitalist modernity. Even as Bauman acknowledges agency – he identifies these wars with a 'tooth-and-nail defence' – he retains victimhood, and so minimises the multiple ways in which these conflicts are not mere responses to globalisation: they are also deeply involved in its trans-local formations and deformations.

If these are not purely local skirmishes, then, those who fight them rely not on intelligence from

satellites and sensors but on forms of grounded local knowledge. Their weapons are not long-range or technically sophisticated but cheap, light and often improvised. SIPRI claims that small arms and light weapons are involved in more conflict-related deaths than any other weapons system. Some are bought legally on the open market – the global sales of small arms and light weapons are worth at least US\$4 billion a year – but many are diverted into other circuits, often from state stockpiles, and then trafficked illegally within a matrix of black-market transactions: one estimate attributes 60–90 per cent of all conflict deaths every year to ‘undocumented trade’ (Lumpe 2000; Naylor 2005).¹³ The most widely used weapon in these new wars is the Kalashnikov (AK-47) assault rifle, and Kahaner (2007) claims that its ubiquity and lethality combine to make it ‘the most devastating weapon on the planet’ (see also Kalashnikov and Joly 2006; Carr 2008). Its attraction is that it has only nine moving parts, so that it is easy to make, cheap to buy and simple to operate: a child can learn to strip, reassemble and fire an AK-47 in 30 minutes. The gun rarely jams and can fire 600 rounds a minute so that, as Singer notes, ‘a handful of children now can have the equivalent firepower of an entire regiment of Napoleonic infantry’ (2006, 47–8). As many as 100 million may have been manufactured since its invention in 1947; the USSR exported millions to its proxies during the Cold War, and its global diffusion was accelerated in the 1980s by the United States which supplied AK-47s to insurgent groups in Afghanistan and Nicaragua, making them key entry points for traffic into Asia and the Middle East and central and South America. The collapse of the Soviet Union did nothing to halt its spread: procurement networks have become more extensive and, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, there is a remarkably liquid trans-border market in assault rifles that has steadily driven the price of a Kalashnikov far below those in other conflict zones (Killicoat 2007; Kinsella 2008).

These armed groups are typically led by warlords whose saddlebags are stuffed through pillage and predation, and whose coercive rule is maintained by visiting exemplary violence on their enemies, providing rich pickings for their supporters, and offering protection at a price for the populations trapped between the two. This is a familiar, even too familiar figure that conceals wide geographical variations. Different circumstances shape different structures of violence and authority (‘local

security architectures’), and in many cases warlords have a variable rather than unflinchingly hostile relation to the state. They often take over state positions, becoming ministers, provincial governors or police commanders, while simultaneously failing to fulfil state functions (Schetter *et al.* 2007; Marchal 2007). The image of the warlord as despot and desperado recycles Orientalist notations and fails to recognise that the interpersonal networks in which they are involved cannot be reduced to a purely economic calculus (Stanski 2009). Nevertheless, what is usually held to distinguish the new warlords from their predecessors is their pivotal position within the transnational networks of an open war economy, which provides them with a powerful role in the articulation of extra-regional flows of people and resources. Many of the armed groups in these conflicts are supported and funded (at least in part) by émigré communities; they draw recruits from populations in refugee camps, shantytowns and cities who have been forcefully excluded from the licit global economy; and they are involved in extensive networks that are non-formal and extra-legal, which in many cases traffic not only in weapons but in conflict commodities like drugs and diamonds (cf. le Billon 2008). These networks are not, of course, confined to war zones in the South, but reach in complex loops into the very heart of the North, and Münkler (in counterpoint to Bauman’s thesis) insists that this is precisely what makes new wars ‘new’: their insertion into the circuits of shadow globalisation, which in its turn elicits ‘the development of new constellations of interests geared not to the ending of war but to its theoretically endless continuation’ (Münkler 2005, 22–3; see also Jung 2003).

The emphasis on criminality disavows the legitimacy of these conflicts. We are told that these are not wars of ideas, ideals or interests; that they are not fought for any definite goals or purposes; that this is ‘unauthorised’ war that is ‘waged for its own sake and nourishes those who wage it’. In short, crime is made the *raison d’être* of the new wars (Kaldor 2006, 15; Münkler 2005, 22–3; Sofsky 2003, 152; McMullin 2009). It would be a mistake to minimise the interpenetrations of crime and military violence in the modern world, but these characterisations foreshorten analysis, partly because they fail to apply the same standards to ‘authorised’ war – its own investments in shadow globalisation, the pursuit of profit by the private companies and corporations that provide its resources, and its strategic role

in accumulation by dispossession – and partly because they direct attention to the criminality of particular acts, to their facticity as crimes, rather than to the conditions and circumstances in which they are carried out and through which they are constructed as criminal (or not) (Dexter 2007, 1068).

Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan provides a vivid example. The opium poppy is a low-risk crop in a high-risk environment, and its cultivation is, for many desperately poor families, their sole means of making a living. Much of the microcredit in Afghanistan continues to be based on the poppy because it involves such low risks, while other crops require investment in irrigation systems and fertiliser that is beyond the reach of most households. But the normative status of its cultivation is structured by more than the exigencies of survival, and for much of the last 20 years its production has not been illegal. In 1994/5 the Taliban tried to eradicate the poppy fields, but its popular support amongst the rural population plummeted, and so the Taliban moved from tolerating poppy cultivation through taxing it to encouraging it. From 1996 until the end of 2000 Goodhand (2008) reports that the opium poppy was 'a de facto legal commodity' in Afghanistan. In 2000, for a variety of reasons, Mullah Omar issued a *fatwah* outlawing its cultivation again, but its forced eradication drove poor farmers deeper into debt and more or less compelled them to plant more poppies the following year. With the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the continued criminalisation of the crop forced producers to look for protection beyond the state – and, as Goodhand notes, there was no shortage of non-state 'specialists in violence' – which is how local militia leaders ('warlords') were drawn deeper into the trade. This war economy has since mutated into what Goodhand calls a criminalised *peace* economy, where a highly flexible 'pyramid of protection and patronage' provides 'state protection to criminal trafficking', which has in turn allowed these 'military and political entrepreneurs' to capture large parts of the state (Goodhand 2008; see also Farrell and Thorne 2005; Felbab-Brown 2005). This is a bare bones summary of an evolving situation, but even in this skeletal form it should be clear that the legal status of the poppy trade cannot be treated as an invariant, given that its most rapid expansion coincided with two periods of state-building under the Taliban and the Karzai regime, and that the relationship between poppy producers, traffickers and state officials has thus been a

constantly changing and not unremittingly hostile one.¹⁴

In most accounts of the new wars, the criminality of these conflicts is compounded by their violation of international law. In Kaldor's influential view, conduct proscribed by the laws of war 'constitutes an essential component' of the new wars. Her main concern is the deliberate targeting of civilians, and she places considerable weight on the claim that, at the turn of the 20th century, the ratio of military to civilian casualties in wars was 8:1, whereas by the end of the century this was 'almost exactly reversed' (Kaldor 2006, 9).¹⁵ Others have made similar assertions, but no evidence was cited for them either, and the *Human Security Report* insists that such claims have 'no basis in fact' and dismisses them as a myth. For much of the 20th century there are no reliable, systematic data to make such a calculation possible, but in a searching analysis of intrastate wars since 1946 one team of researchers has concluded that since the end of the Cold War – when the claims about 'new wars' gained ground – both battle-related deaths and direct violence against civilians have significantly *decreased* and that, if anything, the ratio of civilian to military casualties has in all probability also decreased (Melander *et al.* 2009).¹⁶ This does not mean that new wars are not brutal and violent, only that this is not a new dimension of today's 'uncivil wars'. But then neither is the targeting of civilians confined to new wars and to undisciplined, rag-tag militias. State militaries have access to more powerful, long-distance weapons, and their targeting of civilians has often been devastating – the history of bombing from the air begins before Guernica and continues beyond Grozny¹⁷ – and the invasion of Iraq confirmed that humiliation, sexual violence and atrocity are hardly foreign to wars waged by the professional armies of modern states. Shaw (2005, 94–5; see also Smith 2008) goes further, and argues that there is also a systematic tendency within militaries equipped by the RMA to fight what he calls 'new Western wars' to minimise the risk to their own combatants and transfer the risk to civilians. Civilian casualties are then rhetorically diminished by erasing them from the image space, by implying that the victims were complicit in the violence and thus architects of their own destruction, or by exonerating their deaths as accidental, 'collateral damage'. Recent, limited attempts to reverse this calculus in Afghanistan – by replacing the priority of force protection

with a version of the population-centric counterinsurgency strategy implemented in Iraq – have met with outraged (and outrageous) reactions whose vitriol supports Shaw's diagnosis. One Republican Congresswoman denounced the new rules of engagement because they 'put our troops at greater risk in order to go to such extremes to avoid Afghan casualties', while former Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters railed against the 'moral cowardice' of 'the Obama Way of War' and its renewed commitment to a counterinsurgency doctrine that presumes the key to military success is 'to hand out soccer balls to worm-eaten children'.¹⁸

The sentiments are repugnant, but none of this means that new wars are not hideously violent too. There is no doubt that local people are often pressed to provide recruits or supplies for the war machines; that they are humiliated, terrorised and subjected to sexual violence; that many of them are expelled from their homes and forced to flee for their lives; and that, at the limit, thousands are murdered in deliberate campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Mbembe describes all this as a (new) form of governmentality:

The extraction and looting of natural resources by war machines goes hand in hand with brutal attempts to immobilize and spatially fix whole categories of people or, paradoxically, to unleash them, to force them to scatter over broad areas no longer contained by the boundaries of a territorial state. As a political category, populations are then disaggregated into rebels, child soldiers, victims or refugees, or civilians incapacitated by mutilation or simply massacred ... while the 'survivors', after a horrific exodus, are confined in camps and zones of exception. (2003, 34)

This violence is close-range and face-to-face, and while this is also true of other wars – including wars in the 20th century and beyond (Bourke 1999) – in these new wars fighters are supposed to take an exorbitant delight in the infinite cruelty of killing, inflicting extreme pain and then degrading the bodies of the dead. 'Technologies of destruction have become more tactile', Mbembe (2003) observes, 'more anatomical and sensorial', and the killing fields are a far cry from the sterilised battle spaces of the RMA. This is not war without bodies but war made flesh, haunted by mutilated victims and hung with charred corpses. This is not Virtuous War but Venal War, conducted by (war) criminals and pursued for profit. This is not Just War but Diabolical War, soaked in the blood of innocents and spear-headed by rape, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

These sentences may seem hyperbolic but they are not fantasies of my own making. In contrast to the anemic descriptions of the RMA, much of the writing about the new wars uses tropes like these to sustain a rhetorical 'disenchantment' of war. This imaginary is captured in the title of Roméo Dallaire's account of his service as force commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda in 1994–95: *Shake hands with the Devil* (Dallaire with Beardsley 2003). The book was the basis for a film of the same title, and the most powerful staging of these new wars is still through a visual repertoire. Campbell (2007) has written compellingly about what he calls 'the visual performance of the social field' in Darfur, in which the faces of the perpetrators are rarely seen and the images are overwhelmingly of refugees: 'passive and pitiable'. Similarly, Münkler claims that the new wars 'are visible to us mainly through the refugee flows, slum camps and famished populations' (2005, 15). The image gallery is more extensive in other war zones – child soldiers, warlords, suicide bombers, mutilated bodies, mass graves – but the performative effect is much the same. In contrast to the agency of the global North and the rationality of its Revolution in Military Affairs, we are presented with a spectacle of the passivity of the South and its supposed self-victimisation.

'Global warring': convergences and partitions

Each of these modes of warfare depends on the other as its constitutive outside: thus rationalised, regulated war versus informalised, anarchic war; 'state-making' war versus 'state-breaking' war; 'globalising' war versus 'globalisation-induced' war (see also Table I). It is a mistake to theorise them separately, however, because it is their increasingly common coexistence and combination that is crucial in understanding what Reyna (2008 2009) calls 'global warring'. They have converged with an extraordinary intensity in the military operations undertaken by the US and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq and by Israel in southern Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank, where the advanced weapons systems of state militaries have confronted makeshift missiles, improvised explosive devices, suicide bombs and guerrilla attacks. In some cases the two modes of warfare have become commingled. The US invasion of Afghanistan involved a technically sophisticated air war in

Table I The rhetorical spaces of 'new wars'

'NEW WARS' (1)	'NEW WARS' (2)
REASON SCIENCE LAW	PASSION TRADITION CRIMINALITY
High technology: professional, specialised armies surveillance from air and space platforms long-distance, precision-guided weapons	Low technology: warlords and militias local, ground-based knowledge short distance, often improvised weapons
Globalisation: global arms trade private (often foreign) contractors accumulation by dispossession	Shadow globalisation: illegal and small arms trade diasporic recruitment traffic in conflict commodities
The re-enchantment of war: violence targets combatants the 'erasure' of the body enforcement of international law Just Wars and military humanism	The disenchantment of war: violence targets civilians war made flesh violation of international law wars of economic predation

support of a ground war fought by US troops acting in close concert with the militias of the fluctuating and highly factionalised Northern Alliance. The Taliban's record of human rights transgressions was well known, but the Alliance was no band of angels. Its militias had been involved in attacks on unarmed civilians, sexual violence and summary executions, and during the invasion its fighters committed new atrocities, including the massacre of thousands of Taliban prisoners captured in an operation directed by US Special Forces. Handed over to militiamen, they were suffocated or shot to death in metal shipping containers; US authorities consistently rebuffed attempts at an official investigation of the incident (Gregory 2004, 63–5). Or again, the price of the uneasy pacification of Baghdad in 2007 was a series of deals brokered between the US military and various militias and members of insurgent groups, some of whom continued their participation in ethno-sectarian violence, extortion and other criminal activities (Gregory 2008b). In Afghanistan the militias were supposed to have been dismantled between 2003 and 2006, but they have been reincarnated as 'armed support groups' – according to one estimate there are as many as 1000–1500 of them – which are routinely employed by the US military and its international allies.

Many of their commanders have been responsible for human rights abuses, they continue to be involved in criminal activities and they use the revenue to bribe state officials (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009).

Such marriages of military convenience might be seen as sacrifices on the altar of the 'lesser evil' – shaking hands with the devil while counting your blessings (or your fingers) – but the contracts are systematically re-written to remove any taint of ('their') new wars. As the two modes of warfare have become entangled in one another, therefore, the distinctions between them have been reaffirmed. Drawing on US interventions in Somalia (1992–4), Haiti (1994) and Bosnia (1995), US Marine General Charles Krulak once proposed a model of the 'three-block war' to describe the combination of war fighting, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance 'within three city blocks' that the US military would face in future conflicts; he recognised the challenges posed by irregular, non-state actors, but he was careful to keep any trace of the new wars on the other side of the conceptual fence. In the wake of Israel's war against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon in 2006, the US military has focused its attention on 'hybrid warfare', a schema that acknowledges the new wars debates and so recognises what Hoffman calls the 'blurring of modes of war', the coexistence of 'conventional capabilities, irregular tactics, indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder' (2009, 5). And yet, while he insists it is a mistake to compartmentalise them, Hoffman's strategy is to develop 'agile, rigorously multipurpose forces' that would nevertheless keep the barbarians outside the rhetorical gates.

It is not surprising that the US military should police the distinctions between new wars and its own New Wars, but they are not lone rangers on the planetary frontierlands. In November 2008 the Complex Terrain Laboratory sponsored a symposium at University College London under the title 'Feral cities and the scientific way of warfare'. I doubt that this was the intention, but oppositions like these none the less work to sustain an imaginative geography in which 'our' wars are construed as humane wars because they are fought within the space of the modern – the space of Reason, Science and Law – whereas 'their' wars are inhumane, even non-human ('feral') because they are located outside the modern: driven by Passion, Tradition and Criminality. This is dangerous terrain for, as Butler reminds us:

If we assume that everyone who is human goes to war like us, and that this is part of what makes them recognizably human, or that the violence we commit is violence that falls within the realm of the recognizably human, but the violence that others commit is unrecognizable as human activity, then we make use of a limited and limiting cultural frame to understand what it is to be human. (2004, 89)

To understand how this happens or, in Butler's terms, what it forecloses and what it opens up, it is helpful to identify a double move through which the partition is put in place: a genealogical-historical claim (the new wars are fought by what Eric Wolf (1982) memorably called 'the people without History') and a political-legal claim (the new wars are outside the modern system of politics and law).

Several commentators on the new wars trace their line of descent (literally so) back to the Thirty Years War (1618–48). 'In many respects the new wars resemble those of the early modern period', Münkler (2005, 2) believes, because these too were about devastation rather than pitched battle, and their victims 'were not so much the soldiery on either side (they conveniently kept out of the way) as the peasants, women and children who were dragooned, plundered, raped and murdered.' In his view, the new wars are a throwback, a return to a stage before the state possessed the monopoly of the legitimate means of violence. Similarly Sofsky compares the 'marauders' of contemporary 'wildcat wars' to early modern 'bands of lansquenets [soldiers of fortune] and mercenaries, [who] roamed Central Europe burning and pillaging, robbing the local population' (2003, 157). He adds: 'Not for nothing were they called *écorceurs* – extortionists.' Others muster the new wars under the banner of a neo-medievalism. Cerny (1998 2005) illuminates a crowded picture of intersecting power structures above, below and cutting across the state; of competing institutions with overlapping jurisdictions; of fluid territorial boundaries fractured by indeterminate zones 'where the rule of law does not run'; and a world of multiple, fragmented loyalties. The result, he suggests, is that the new wars look very much like the order – or rather 'durable disorder' – of late medieval society and its riot of civil wars (cf. Friedrichs 2001; Winn 2004). Such comparisons are inevitably inexact, since any historical repetition is always a repetition with a difference, but they are also *necessarily* inexact: otherwise there would be nothing 'new' about the new wars (Newman 2004, 179).

When Kaldor represents the development of new wars as 'part of a process which is more or less a reversal of the processes through which modern states evolved' (2006, 6), however, she is also making an ethical claim. Dexter (2007, 1063–5; see also 2008) argues that her analytical framework is also a moral framework: 'In Kaldor's analysis, war becomes a conflict between two ethical positions.' If the new wars are out of time, they are also out of order, and for this reason (Reason) Kaldor draws 'a normative distinction between death by machete and death by smart bomb'.¹⁹ The appeal to smart bombs and by implication to precision weapons and other devices of the RMA (which are often remarkably dumb and tragically imprecise) has the effect of de-legitimising all forms of warfare except those that can be waged by the advanced armies of the global North, while simultaneously providing them with a warrant to police the border between the two. The implication, as Beier realises, 'is that only the United States and perhaps a very few others can rightly take the offensive to their enemies since only they, we are urged to believe, have at their disposal the means by which to discriminate'. At the (foreseeable) limit, as Beier emphasises, to 'authorize a full range of action by the world's most powerful states while permitting others no more than a defensive posture is tantamount to sanctioning predation' (2003, 422–3). This is an ironic reversal of the predatory nature of the new wars, but the corollary only reinforces their barbarism. In such circumstances, Beier asks, 'why should we expect likely adversaries of the US to choose to practice warfare in traditional ways? The peremptory answer to this question is that we should not' (Beier 2006, 277). This likelihood was foreseen by a passionate advocate of the RMA, the Pentagon's Director of Net Assessment Andrew Marshall, who warned that the development of precision weapons would force opponents to resort to unconventional, asymmetric tactics that would be more difficult to target than military formations. Such countermeasures have subsequently been ruled out of court not only by conceptual manoeuvres that counterpose the RMA to the new wars – and by legal posturing – but also by the deployment of rhetorical devices in reporting transnational conflicts. Thus 'their' resort to improvised explosive devices to attack our troops is consistently vilified as a crude and cowardly tactic, whereas 'our' use of missiles and drones to take out a target is the height of scientific reason.²⁰ Faced with such an impasse

there is only one legitimate course of action (which is why I talk of legal posturing):

The putative defenders can do nothing both practically and legitimately and, therefore, are denied a subject position in warfare; they are acted upon, but may not act. This is the truly revolutionary transformation of our time. (Beier 2006, 278)

Killing spaces

If the result of these conceptual formations is the re-enchantment of war, then to break its spell we need to attend to the spaces that make such wars possible. In part, this will involve an interrogation of the conjunction of geopolitics and geo-economics, but it will not be enough to expose the strategic wiring of late modern war: what Cowen and Smith (2009) identify as the 'logics' that impel its violence. Of course it is necessary to disclose the imaginative geographies that shape security and insecurity, the material interests that orchestrate the march of war, and the circuits that connect war to geographies of accumulation by dispossession. But war is not a single design projected onto a plane; it is over-determined and cannot be reduced to a single cause, and it is distributed and works out in different ways in different places. This directs attention to the spatialities through which war is conducted: the assemblages that must be mobilised – not least through that empire of bases – and the mediations that must be activated for war to take place. In the final instance it is in the raw, desolate intimacy of these killing spaces that the re-enchantment of war has to be undone: it is within their confines that that we need to expose the camouflage of military violence, of a war without bodies, and so comprehend the continuing horror of wars waged in our name.

The wars initiated by the Bush administration in Afghanistan and Iraq have undergone several mutations but the common thread has been a conviction that these are new wars. They present radically new challenges to American power, so it is argued, because – consistent with the threat of 'global warring' – they are (or have become) conflicts between state and non-state actors in which the United States military confronts opponents who move in the grey zones between insurgency and terrorism. This situation has supposedly transformed the American way of war on three main fronts. First, the Pentagon claims that it deploys

weapons systems of unprecedented speed and accuracy. This is a familiar assertion, fully consistent with the RMA, but it has been given a new urgency by the omnipresence of civilians in the war zone: 'war amongst the people' places a premium on selective targeting. Second, the Pentagon acknowledges that these wars are being fought on unfamiliar cultural terrain and that it must develop a capacity for culture-centric warfare. If the protection of the local population is at the centre of its counterinsurgency strategy, then an intimate knowledge of local culture is indispensable. Third, the gravity of the threat posed to the United States and its allies by transnational terrorism is held to exceed the reach of international law: the exceptional, emergent nature of the danger demands a revolution in – a new paradigm for – the legal armature of late modern war.

These three transformations are not independent; they collide, reinforce and on occasion contradict one another. But each of them can be identified with a different set of spatialising practices – locating, inverting and excepting (I explain these below) – that invokes a distinctive economy of representation through which 'not only "threats" and "enemies" but also the *means* of war are discursively shaped' (Shaw 2005, 68). This requires the performative power of discourse to be taken with all possible seriousness. Within each of these regimes, which correspond to different military-social registers, representation is sutured to realisation and to rationalisation. Each of them has the power to produce a particular space of military violence: the abstract space of the target, the alien space of the enemy Other, and the legal-lethal space of the exception (Table II) (cf. Gregory 2004, 248–9). These are not object-spaces but 'event-ful spaces', spaces that are made to *happen*, that exist in and through their performance. More than this, however, their contours ensnare both those involved in war and those who witness it: Butler is right to say that

there is no way to separate, under present historical conditions, the material reality of war from those representational regimes through which it operates *and which rationalize its own operation*. (2009, 29)

Table II Performances of space in late modern war

Locating	<i>techno-cultural register</i>	abstract space
Inverting	<i>cultural-political register</i>	alien space
Excepting	<i>politico-juridical register</i>	lethal-legal space

In short, these performances of space are also rhetorical performances that seek to legitimise the conduct of late modern war – as surgical, sensitive, scrupulous – which *makes them inseparable from the constitution of political subjects*. And yet the performative power of these discursive regimes is always contingent and conditional. In this final section, therefore, I want to juxtapose them to counter-geographies that call into question these performances that make ‘our’ wars seem so reasonable. In doing so, I have chosen to focus for the most part on responses by visual artists. There are of course others.²¹ But wars have always been shaped by their visual fields, but late modern war is distinguished by the coincident formation of a Military–Industrial–Media–Entertainment Network that allows visualisation to modulate into a virtualisation that drives both the execution and the endorsement of its violence. For that reason, visibility has become a strategic site of struggle and so interventions by visual artists have a vital political charge.

Locating

‘Locating’ describes the techno-cultural production of targets: the reduction of places and people to an abstract space. Late modern war, especially from the air, capitalises on advances in compression and contraction. Compression refers to the acceleration of the targeting process, which reduces the time between target identification and execution to provide for more efficient and at the limit pre-emptive action. There are two modes of targeting. Deliberative targeting involves the assignment of (fixed) targets to aircrews before takeoff. In the Second World War the kill-chain that was the backbone of the combined bombing offensive against Germany assumed a dispersed, assembly-line form that extended from the production of aerial photographs through the collation of target books and the construction of target maps to the briefing of bomber crews and the conduct of the mission (Gregory 2010). After the war the USAF sought to consolidate the process within a Directorate of Targets tasked with compiling the Bombing Encyclopedia of the World (now the Basic Encyclopedia). Work started in 1946 on the identification of potential targets in the Soviet Union but the database quickly became global, and by 1960 contained 80 000 entries. Machine processing was in its infancy, and the USAF faced formidable problems of information management (Eden 2004, 99–109). Ten years later these had not been resolved, and

for these and other (political) reasons the air war in Vietnam largely retained the extended form of its predecessors. Since then, however, the fantasy of ‘bombing at the speed of thought’ has come closer to reality. By the time of the Gulf War the cascade from data to targets to data – the cycle from target identification through the assignment of aircraft to bombing and damage assessment – had been cut to three days (Harris 2006). Deliberative targeting was used in the ‘Shock and Awe’ air strikes against Baghdad in 2003 – which in fact were planned over many months – but since then the kill-chain has been radically compressed by the widespread adoption of a second mode of targeting. Dynamic targeting involves the direction of cruising aircraft to emergent (usually mobile) targets of opportunity by ground troops. This played its part in Vietnam, but its role has been revolutionised by the use of drones in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. They can maintain a persistent presence over a war-zone – ground crews change shifts so that some aerial systems can remain on station for up to 42 hours – and since drones combine video feeds with strike capability a mission can be executed from a single platform. In consequence, the USAF now envisages a kill-chain of under two minutes.

Contraction refers to the increased precision of weapon systems, measured by progressively collapsing a circle centred on the aiming point. Technically, this is described as the Circular Error Probable (CEP), a radius within which 50 per cent of strikes ought to fall. Under ideal test conditions and using the latest technologies, the CEP fell from 3300 ft over Germany to 1000 ft over Korea, 400 ft over Vietnam, and is now estimated at 10–40 ft. The most recent contraction is attributed to advances in precision weapons: during the first Gulf War only 7 per cent of the bombs deployed were guided weapons, but almost 70 per cent of those used in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 were guided (Conetta 2004; Deptula 2008). These raw figures imply the ever more successful isolation of a target (and hence the minimisation of civilian casualties), but this is at best a half-truth. Deliberative targeting assigns values to targets based on their location within a network whose geometries displace the coordinates of precision weapons so that their effects intentionally surge far beyond any immediate point of impact (from a power station to hospitals, sewage plants and pumping stations). Yet the very syntax of targeting – with its implication of isolating an objective – distracts attention

from the cascade of destruction set in train by a single, successful strike (Gregory 2006a). Dynamic targeting does not allow for advance modelling of these effects at all: 'Every [emergent] target is inscribed in a network or chain of events that inevitably exceeds the opportunity that can be seized or the horizon that can be seen' (Weber 2005, 18). Ground forces call in targets that pilots are unable to verify and whose selection is not integrated into an overall view of the battle space, and so it is scarcely surprising that most direct civilian casualties in Afghanistan now occur when troops are suddenly 'in contact' and call in close air support.

The previous paragraphs are terribly abstract because the modern project to render the battle space transparent requires it to be transformed into the abstract space of the grid within which targets are assigned the coordinates that constitute them *as* targets. In late modern war this involves an electronic disjuncture between 'our' space and 'their' space – between 'the eye' and 'the target' – that enforces a separation between the embodied viewer and the flat screen (Chow 2006, 36). This entails not only an abstraction of the target, however, but also an abstraction of the process through which the target is produced, which is rendered as a purely technical division of labour whose outcome is logical and rational: target as telos. The production of such an abstract space entrains those who produce it, constituting them as agents of a nominally scientific assemblage, and the sense of optical detachment which this induces is captured perfectly by one American pilot describing his experience of bombing Iraq: 'The navigation computer opened the bomb bay doors and dropped the weapons into the dark' (Singer 2009, 124). Thus the conduct of war comes to be ever more calculative than corporeal.

Faced by such effacement, Jabri (2006) has urged the contrary capacity of the visual arts to reinstate the corporeality of late modern war. She praises Rebecca Horn's work 'Painpaper' (2004) because it aims 'to disrupt and interrupt sanitized renditions of the aerial bombardment' in which we are otherwise 'removed, at temporal and spatial distance, from those on the ground and in the event'. Horn does so by showing not broken bodies, however, but an abstract geometry. Yet I think a number of other artworks are more effective because they disclose the process of abstraction that makes targeting possible. A common response is transposition – for example superimposing a map of the

bombing of Baghdad over a map of Boston, New York or San Francisco – which Philippa Levine calls a 'hybrid mapping' in which acts of violence return to haunt their sites of origin.²² Her project, and others like it, also involved performances on the ground, but some of the most powerful interventions remain suspended in the air in an attempt to induce the viewer to re-cognise the abstracted violence of targeting. Thus Caren Kaplan's (2007) 'Dead Reckoning' explores the connections between the history of perspective, technologies of sight and modern war and invites the viewer to perform a series of interactive tasks that bring the process of targeting into focus. Still more unsettling is the sequence of images of bombed cities produced by elin o'Hara slavick (2007). Although the sources for her work are the media of modern war – aerial photographs, surveillance imagery and maps – slavick works by hand in the hope that her viewers will, like her, 'take their time' with them and 'work to understand them on a deeper and more complicated level than they might when seeing a photograph'. She begins by dropping ink or watercolour onto wet paper, and uses 'this common ground of abstract swirling or bleeding' to suggest 'the manner in which bombs do not stay within their intended borders' (slavick 2006). In doing so, she adopts an aerial view – the position of the bombers – in order to stage *and to subvert* the power of aerial mastery. The drawings are made beautiful 'to seduce the viewer', she says, to draw them in to the image only to have their pleasure disrupted when they take a closer look. 'Like an Impressionist or Pointillist painting,' slavick explains, 'I wish for the viewer to be captured by the colors and lost in the patterns and then to have their optical pleasure interrupted by the very real dots or bombs that make up the painting' (slavick 2006, 249). Her strategy is thus one of deliberate abstraction, and yet, in layering the ghosts of maps and air photographs over the bomb bursts on the ground, and composing beneath and around them a spectral, almost subliminal cellular imagery that, in slavick's own words, 'conjures up the buried dead' ('replicated stains in the background, connected tissue in the foreground, concentric targets like microscopic views of damaged cells'), these drawings topple the assumption of aerial mastery by setting in motion a dizzying, vertiginous glissade *from within the aerial view itself*. As the bomb-doors open so the viewer is precipitated into the dying city (Figure 8) (Gregory 2010). In a parallel fashion, Hanna Mal



Figure 8 Baghdad (elin o'Hara slavick)

Allah has produced several artworks that re-present US air strikes on Baghdad through an extraordinary tactility that breaches the vertical separation between the bomber and the bombed. The surfaces of her 'Baghdad City Map' or the multiple maps contained in 'Omen of the Burning City' (both 2007) (Figure 9) are slashed, burned and blackened, violently perforated by what Selim calls 'modern warfare's vicious trigonometry'.

Inverting

'Inverting' describes the cultural-political production of enemies as radically Other: the reduction of

places and people to an alien space. This involves the fabrication of what Said (1978) called imaginative geographies in which distance is folded into difference, so that 'their' space becomes the inverse, even the negation of 'our' space. There is a long tradition of military Orientalism that contrasts 'Western' and 'Eastern' modes of war (Porter 2009), but another version of Orientalism haunts what Ucko (2009) describes as 'the new counterinsurgency era'. American counterinsurgency strategy recognises that American ideas of what is 'normal' or 'rational' are not universal. This is a considerable advance, and yet this cultural turn continues the exorbitation



Figure 9 Baghdad city map (Hana Mal Allah)

of cultural difference that is the mainspring of Orientalism. It acknowledges that there are cultural practices and values to be understood – the Other is no longer the incomprehensible threat or the opaque signifier – but locates these in a separate space that provides no accommodation for commonality, mutuality or transculturation. Such an attempt to hold the Other at a distance while claiming to cross the interpretative divide produces a diagram in which violence has its origins in ‘their’ space, which is endlessly partitioned in an obsessive preoccupation with cultural division, while the impulse to understand is confined to ‘our’ space, which is constructed as open, unitary and generous: the source of a hermeneutic invitation that can never be reciprocated (Gregory 2008a).

Mirzoeff (2009) argues that visibility plays a central role in these new strategies. Certainly the cultural turn can be read as another attempt to make the battle space transparent, ‘a form of total cultural awareness’ that Bickford (2009, 147) claims echoes ‘the panoptic conceits of early anthropol-

ogy’. In so far as this involves a rush to the intimate, then perhaps he has a point: the new conflict ethnography does not seem to accept many limits to its inquiries, and I’m still trying to understand how the US military could conduct ‘census operations’ in a Baghdad ravaged by ethno-sectarian violence in which people were asked to identify their religious affiliation. Mirzoeff himself suggests that the new counterinsurgency doctrine embraces a ‘sovereign visibility’ in which the commander is supposed to see the battle space as a totality and where its unfamiliar cultural territory is turned into a simulacrum of a video game that troops can navigate with supreme confidence. I think Mirzoeff overstates his case, but the trope of ‘human terrain’ and the technology of counterinsurgency do suggest that ‘culture’ is viewed as a sort of screen on which biopolitical threats to the body politic can be detected (Gregory 2008b): and he is right to wonder about the prospect of a counter-visibility.

In fact, two sorts of counter-geographies have already emerged in response to these

developments. On one side are artworks that reverse the inversion by a strategic de-familiarisation: making 'our' space strange through the sort of transpositions I described earlier. Some artists have repatriated military violence to American homes and streets. Thus Martha Rosler's 'Great Power' sequence of photomontages (2004–8) revisits her Vietnam project, 'Bringing the war home: House beautiful' (1967–72), to show the Iraq war erupting into the American home. Captives are paraded around gleaming kitchens on leashes, combat troops stalk in living rooms, while beyond the drapes fires flicker, a grieving woman slumps on the deck, and an Army patrol files by. Domestic critics have frequently noted the interchange between security regimes inside and outside the United States; they insist that the 'war on terror' ruptures the divide between inside and outside, and draw attention to its impact not only 'there' but also 'here'. But Rosler's sharper point is to goad her audience beyond what sometimes trembles on the edge of a critical narcissism ('we are vulnerable too') to recognise how often 'our' wars violate 'their' space: her work compels us to see that what she makes seem so shocking in 'our' space is all too terrifyingly normal in 'theirs'. A different, collective project, 'You are not here/Baghdad in Brooklyn' (2006–7), uses mash-ups and ground performances 'to explore Baghdad through the streets of New York'. A map with New York on one side and Baghdad on the other is used to guide participants to sites in Brooklyn where signs invite them to call the 'Baghdad Tourist Authority' for a pre-recorded message. 'In a reality in which urban space is deformed by smart bombs and distorted through information technology', the designers claim to have reactivated the Situationists' *dérive* 'as a counter-action to passive information consumption habits'. They use walking the streets of New York as 'the medium through which to explore such a distant space' and in some measure to transcend the distance between here and there.²³ Projects like these provide what Ingram calls 'a radical and contrapuntal remixing' of imaginative geographies, re-folding our space and their space 'into a space where a kind of simultaneity is possible that is otherwise foreclosed' (2009, 267–8).

On the other side are projects that originate in 'their' space and work to render it if not familiar then at least recognisable by showing it as a peopled place. This has been achieved most effectively by those who have used the so-called 'new media' to respond to

our new wars. In Iraq blogging blossomed after the invasion, and writers did not shrink from detailing the air strikes, night raids and murders. But the focus was often on showing how those who continued to endure almost unimaginable violence nevertheless struggled to hold together the fragments of a normal life that would be taken for granted by most people in the United States or Britain. The blog form fostered an unusual intimacy, not the intrusive 'conflict ethnography' of the occupier but a principled invitation to enter. In Baghdad, meeting with family and friends, obtaining cooking oil, petrol, electricity, water: all of these became fraught with difficulty and even danger in a city under military occupation and convulsed by ethno-sectarian killing, and yet the familiarity of these commonplace acts invited recognition and elicited empathy. As Whitlock has argued, such blogs can be read as 'a tactical attempt to alter the lines of sight that target Baghdad and to suggest that Iraqi people might be just like us: bodies that count' (2007, 34). This affirmative impulse was realised most effectively in those personal narratives that openly refused the enclosures of Orientalism. One of its most poignant (and pointed) expressions is this post from a young Iraqi woman:

Bush speaks of 'abroad' as if it is a vague desert-filled land ... a land of inferior people – less deserving of peace, prosperity and even life ... Don't Americans realize that 'abroad' is a country full of people – men, women, children who are dying hourly? 'Abroad' is a home for millions of us. It's the place we were raised and the place we hope to raise our children – your field of war and terror.²⁴

Excepting

'Excepting' describes the use of politico-judicial instruments to exempt categories of people from the responsibilities or the protections of the law. Within these spaces law and violence feed one another: 'the legal and the lethal animate and inhabit one another' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 31). In describing this process as an exception I am invoking Agamben's (1998 2005) seminal discussions, but a major lacuna in his account is the nexus between emergency, war and international law. It was Benjamin ([1921]1999) who distinguished law-making and law-breaking violence, which provides Agamben with his spur, but in war these twin modalities fertilise the same ground. 'The law was born in burning towns and ravaged fields', Foucault (2003, 50–1) once reminded us, and in

consequence law-in-war has a double character. On one side, law trails in the wake of war, re-defining legitimacy and so regulating the future conduct of war. As Kennedy (2006, 45–7) notes, international law has come to shape the institutional, logistical and physical landscape of late modern war. But, as he also emphasises, this law ‘is no longer an affair of clear rules and sharp distinctions’. On the contrary, it has become ‘a law of firm rules and loose exceptions, of foundational principles and counter-principles’, which, at the limit, ‘offers the rhetorical – and doctrinal – tools to make and unmake the distinction between war and peace’ (2006). Its fluidity means that the arrows can be reversed so that, on the other side, war becomes a means of re-making the law. This requires military lawyers to move within a zone of indistinction between the legal and the extra-legal as they advise on tactics and strategy. Daniel Reisner, who served as Head of the International Law Division of Israel’s Military Advocate General’s Office, explained it like this: ‘If it’s white I will allow it, if it’s black I will prohibit it, but in cases of grey I will be part of the dilemma: I do not stop at grey.’ The objective is to turn grey into white – to sanitise what might otherwise be deemed illegitimate – through a legal offensive that is also a military offensive. Indeed, Weizman (2009) argues that to operate at the margins of international law is one of the most effective ways to expand it: ‘violence legislates’ or, Reisner puts it, ‘international law progresses through violations’ (Ha’aretz 2009).

This dual-use capacity of law and war has come to be called ‘lawfare’. In 2001 the USAF’s Deputy Judge Advocate General had already identified lawfare as ‘the newest feature of twenty-first century combat’, and by the end of the decade he judged it to have become a ‘decisive element of twenty-first century conflicts’ (Dunlap 2001 2009). Unsurprisingly, however, he initially reserved it for opponents of the United States (and its allies): unsurprising because the Bush administration treated the recourse to international law as a form of asymmetric warfare, and the 2005 National Defense Strategy described it as a ‘strategy of the weak’ against the United States (the other was terrorism). International law was vilified because it had indeed trailed behind the ‘new realities’ of war. The Bush administration insisted that the ‘war on terror’ was a new kind of war so that many of the existing laws to which its opponents – or enemies: the White House had difficulty in distinguishing

between the two – appealed were inapplicable, and used legal instruments to remove both responsibilities from its agents and protections from its enemies.

In the first category, the United States has long negotiated Status of Forces Agreements with other jurisdictions to protect its forward deployed troops against local prosecutions for offences committed in the course of their official duties, but the Bush administration went much further in seeking exemptions for American forces and private contractors. In particular the administration refused to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and negotiated a series of Article 98 Agreements with other governments to ensure that its agents would be immune from extradition. The objective was to oil the wheels of rapid deployment, so that US armed forces could move ‘smoothly into, through and out of’ other jurisdictions (Morrissey 2010). Similarly, until recently private contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq operated outside both local law and the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which created a mobile zone of routinised, roughneck violence. In the second category, the administration acted to remove legal protections from ‘enemy combatants’ and consign them indefinitely to sites in its global war prison. The primary locus was the US Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay, which was turned into a space of exception that was deemed to be simultaneously outside the United States (to deny habeas corpus petitions) and inside the United States (to repulse the International Convention against Torture) (Gregory 2006b; Reid-Henry 2007). In another sense, however, it was not exceptional at all: Guantánamo was a laboratory for Bush’s new war and its practices were transferred to Abu Ghraib, Bagram and elsewhere in a project of ‘network-wide normalization’ that sought to widen ‘the interstitial space between legality and illegality’ (Follis 2007, 650, 656; Gregory 2007). The Obama administration has repudiated much of this, to be sure, and declared its intention to close Guantánamo and the CIA’s black sites, but the fate of other sites is less than clear: and Bagram has been ‘modernised’ and expanded.

Most visual artists have focused on the second category of exceptions. In a series of interventions Trevor Paglen has satirised the process of extraordinary rendition. His ‘Terminal Air’ is a web-based project that tracks the involvement of private contractors and front companies used by the CIA (which he represents as a grotesque travel agency)



Figure 10 Terminal air

Source: Trevor Paglen with the Institute for Applied Autonomy

and uses detailed flight records to map its shifting flight paths ('destinations served') (Figure 10).²⁵ While Paglen's focus is on the networks through which prisoners have been transferred, others have constructed virtual versions of sites within the global war prison. Thus 'Zone*Interdite' by Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud aims to provide a 'lapidary view of a world of military power' that includes overviews and walk-throughs of Guantánamo, Camp Cropper and Bagram.²⁶ Nonny de la Peña and Peggy Weil have taken this one step further by recreating Guantánamo in the online virtual world Second Life (Figure 11). Here the viewer's avatar begins with an enforced first-person Point of View (POV) in which s/he is hooded, shackled and transported to Guantánamo; during this sequence, unlike most first-person videogames, the experience is forcibly passive. The sequence then reverts to the characteristic third-person POV of Second Life and the viewer can explore the cages and cells at Guantánamo, where both Pentagon video clips and testimony from detainees are used to shape the onscreen interactions and to establish their verisimilitude (Weil and de la Peña 2008).²⁷

War and counter-geographies

It is difficult to judge the impact of these interventions but they have several visual strategies in common. They all traffic in the (often digital) technologies of late modern war but seek to displace their effects. They are all different performances of time-space compression that trouble ethical geographies skewed by the differentials of proximity and distance. Most of them are electronic mediations that treat witnessing as a collective, dispersed and hence political project. And they all speak to audiences beyond the academy and work to create counter-publics. I am not starry-eyed about their reach (though I suspect it's wider than most academic journals) and neither am I so naïve to think that their counter-geographies will somehow 'stop war'. But I do think that projects like these bring in to view what is so artfully concealed by the spaces of constructed (in)visibility through which our military violence is now staged – as surgical, sensitive and scrupulous – and that they have an important part to play in ensuring that our future wars are waged with regret and restraint rather than braggadocio and brutality.

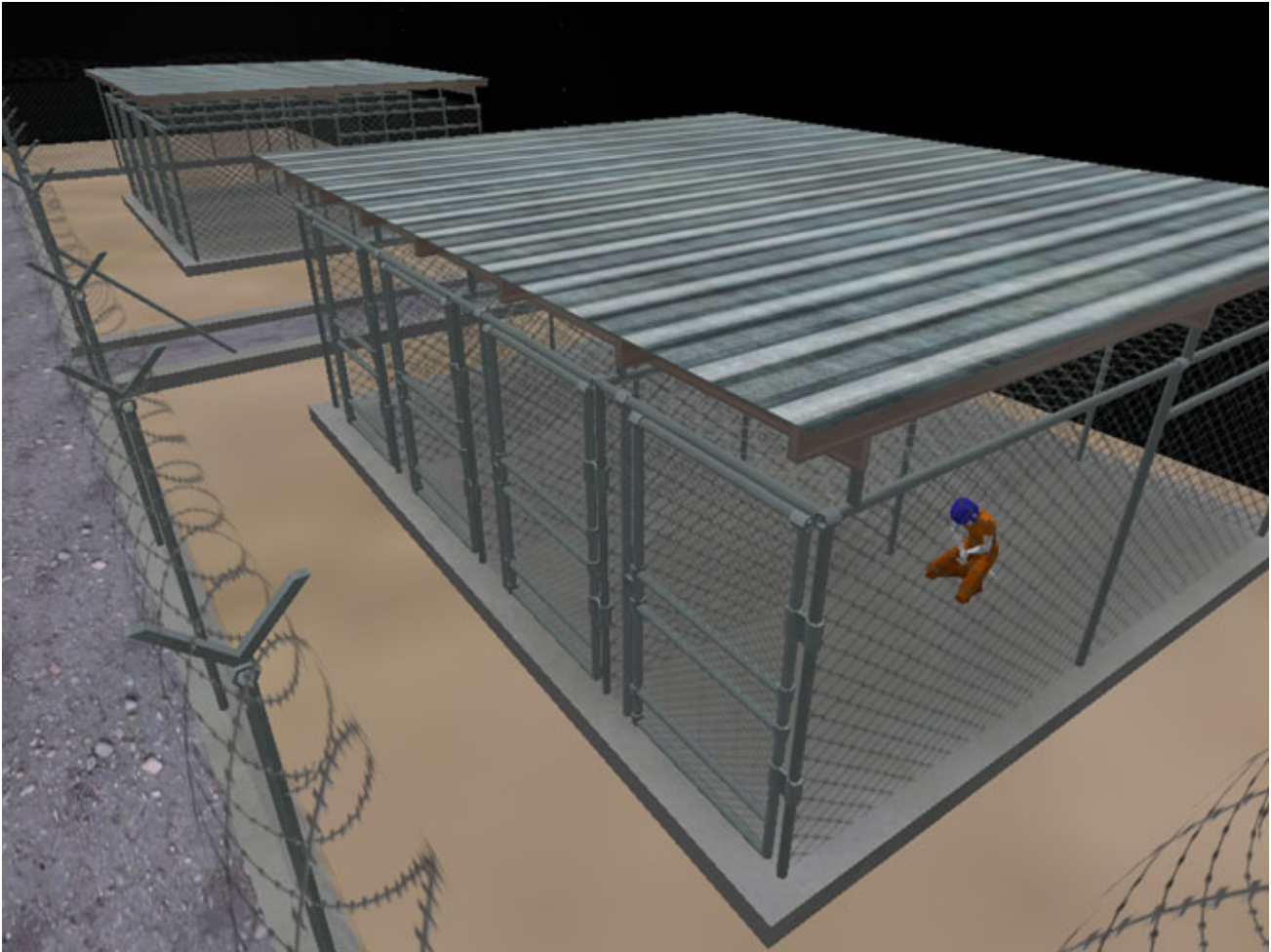


Figure 11 Virtual Guantánamo
Source: Nonny de la Peña and Peggy Weil

As I completed this essay, President Barack Obama was accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. 'War itself is never glorious', he told his audience, 'and we must never trumpet it as such'. And yet, of course, we do, time and time again: as a technical triumph, as a war without bodies, and as the 'Just War' that the President himself praised. But Obama also insisted that we pay close attention not only to 'difficult decisions about going to war' but also to 'how we fight it', which is why I believe these (and other) counter-geographies are so important. Said once remarked that Geography is 'the art of war', but he also thought it could be 'the art of resistance if there is a counter-map and a counter-strategy' (1994, 416). The history of geography has long intersected with the history of war, but until recently these intersections have been seen as concrete rather than conceptual. During the months that preceded the invasion of Iraq, those

who opposed the war often cited the American satirist Ambrose Bierce: 'War is God's way of teaching Americans geography'. Bierce died around 1914, and his jibe continued to hit home throughout the first half of the 20th century. Since then, however, its force has been reversed. Too often, war has become America's way of teaching other people geography. But this project – what Obama's predecessor saw as the dawn of 'the New American Century' – has not only been about re-making human geographies in brutally physical ways: it has also involved a conceptual geo-graphing in all of the ways (and more) that I have described in these pages. When Foucault (1980, 77) declared that 'geography must necessarily lie at the heart of my concerns', we might remember that he traced his spatial preoccupations to a series of martial concepts: region and territory among them. The construction of a human geography that might

become one of the arts of peace requires us to think the two together – concrete and concept – and to act on their conjuncture.

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Notes

- 1 Neocleous notes that during the Cold War 'the national security state sought to legitimize the exercise of war powers during periods of peace by transforming the concept of "peace"' (2008, 116). As the Joint Chiefs of Staff put it in 1950, 'Such a peace as the United States is experiencing is not a peace; it is, in fact, a war.' The reformulation of the 'war on terror' as 'the Long War' (given its official seal in the US Quadrennial Defense Review in 2006) can thus be read as a radicalisation of Gaddis's original prospectus.
- 2 In 1938 the US had 14 military bases outside its continental borders; by 1945 this had multiplied to over 30 000 installations of various kinds and sizes in 100 countries, but by 1948 this had been reduced to 2000. The number of bases rose again during the Korean and Vietnam wars to reach a Cold War peak of 1014 in 1967. The 2004 Global Defense Posture Review proposed to re-orient basing away from the 'old' Cold War locations in Europe, South Korea and Japan and conceptualised bases as smaller, more flexible 'offensive, expeditionary platforms' to be strung across an 'arc of instability' extending from Colombia through North Africa and the Middle East to the Philippines and Indonesia. Little of this has been implemented, however, and for the most part the overseas base network has expanded. Officially, the US currently has over 190 000 troops and 115 000 civilian employees at around 900 military facilities in 46 other states and US territories. As Lutz (2009) warns, however, these numbers 'are entirely misleading' since they exclude all bases in war zones (Iraq and Afghanistan), and a host of secret bases or bases in 'sensitive locations' like Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Kuwait and the Philippines. See also Dufour (2007), Johnson (2004), and for case studies Gillem (2007) and Vine (2009). The map of bases shown here is derived from Vine's work, and I am immensely grateful to him and his publishers for permission to use it; troop densities are from Mechanic (2008).
- 3 Blackmore focuses on veterans but these effects are dramatically multiplied amongst civilians in the combat zones, both directly and through environmental degradation: see, for example, Trien T. Nguyen (2009).
- 4 Other methods inevitably produce other results. So, for example, the Uppsala/PRIOD database suggests an average of 137 000 war deaths each year between 1985 and 1994, while retro-projections from a major WHO household survey suggest a figure of nearly 378 000 each year over the same period, double the estimate of deaths at the height of the Vietnam war. The authors conclude that 'war kills many more people than previously estimated' (Obermeyer *et al.* 2008, 1485).
- 5 Much of the writing about the RMA is as bloodless as the warfare conducted under its sign purports to be. See, for example, Bousquet (2009), which, despite its subtitle ('war on the battlefields'), remains safely in the laboratory.
- 6 Cullather (2003) offers two key exhibits that symbolise the conjunction of techno-war and the corporate model. The first sensor-driven, real-time animated targeting map was installed in 1968 to detect Vietcong movement down the Ho Chi Minh Trail from Laos ('Igloo White'). The introduction of this 'Automated Battlefield' happened under the watchful eye of Robert McNamara, who had been President of the Ford Motor Company before becoming Secretary of Defense, and who continued to take his lead from the Harvard Business School rather than West Point.
- 7 On robotic systems, see Sparrow (2007), Killmister (2008), Singer (2009) and Krishnan (2009a 2009b). On private military contractors, see Singer (2004), Gillard (2006) and de Nevers (2009).
- 8 These figures understate US *deliveries* because they are restricted to the government-to-government Foreign Military Sales programme; there are no systematic data on the licensed commercial export system (see Grimmitt 2008, 20).
- 9 Figures 4 and 5 are derived from the outstanding Worldmapper Project at the University of Sheffield and the University of Michigan; their maps are licensed under a Creative Commons Licence and are reproduced here with permission. © 2006 SASI Group (University of Sheffield) and Mark Newman (University of Michigan).
- 10 Figure 6 is derived from the animated sequence of global arms exports produced by Armsflow from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

- (SIPRI) Arms Transfer Database from 1950 to 2006 (<http://www.armsflow.org>).
- 11 The intimacy of the conjunction has been radicalised by Martin (2007) who traces a series of arabesques between the logic of speculative capital and the conduct of late modern war by the United States and its allies. Cooper (2004, 8 2006) suggests that US defence strategy was transformed from risk aversion (an actuarial model) to risk pre-emption (a speculative model) in which 'the point is precisely to generate the conditions of emergent catastrophe in order to profit from it'. See also Amoores and de Goede (2008).
 - 12 Mbembe is a cardinal exception on both counts. Although he writes from the global South, however, his intellectual resources are European: Agamben, Balibar, Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault among them. But in contrast to many other writers, he does not privilege the (late) modern wars of the global North and is sharply, wonderfully critical of its investment in late modern colonial occupation (Mbembe 2003).
 - 13 See also Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) at <http://www.spiri.org/research/disarmament/salw>; the Small Arms Survey by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva at <http://www.smallarmssurvey>; and the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers at <http://www.prio.no/nisat>.
 - 14 This is perhaps the place to recall Tilly's forceful observation: 'If protection rackets represent organized crime at its smoothest, then war [making] and state making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy – qualify as our largest example of organized crime' (1985, 169). He was, of course, describing the formation of the modern European state.
 - 15 Münkler says much the same: 'In the wars that were fought up to the early part of the twentieth century, roughly 90 per cent of those killed or wounded would have been defined as combatants under international law. In the new wars at the end of the twentieth century, the profile of victims has been almost the exact opposite: some 80 per cent of the killed or wounded were civilian and only 20 per cent were soldiers on active service' (2005, 14).
 - 16 This finding is made more significant by the fact that data for the period before the mid-1980s almost certainly *understate* battle deaths, civilian deaths and civilian displacement (Melander *et al.* 2009, 515).
 - 17 On the targeting of civilians in inter-state wars, see Downes (2008), Slim (2007) and Tanaka and Young (2008). There is an even longer history of state militaries using artillery against towns and villages. Recent examples include the Sudanese Armed Forces in Darfur, the Israeli Defence Forces in southern Lebanon and Gaza, and the Sri Lankan army shelling designated 'safe zones' in the north of the island.
 - 18 Ann Scott Tyson, 'Less peril for civilians, but more for our troops', *Washington Post* 23 September 2009; Ralph Peters, 'The rules murdering our troops', *New York Post*, 24 September 2009.
 - 19 Cf. Kalyvas (2001, 115): '[O]ur understanding of violence is culturally defined. Killings by knife and machete tend to horrify us more than the often incomparably more massive killings by aerial and field artillery and bombings.'
 - 20 The slippage from 'troops' on one side (our side) to 'targets' on the other is part of the same rhetorical gesture. So too is the claim that 'they' kidnap people, hold them hostage and torture them – somehow a world away from extraordinary rendition, secret prisons and water-boarding – whereas 'we' arrest suspects, treat prisoners humanely, and subject them to a legal process (of sorts). To repeat: my objection is not to claims that 'they' do such things, but to the disingenuous implication that 'we' do not.
 - 21 Elsewhere I have counterposed these spatialisations with contextual, contrapuntal and cosmopolitan geographies (Gregory 2005, 186–8).
 - 22 Her 'Shadows from another place' superimposed the bombing of Baghdad over a map of San Francisco, and was linked to geo-caching. It was produced April–May 2004 at the Banff Art Centre and has been included in multiple online shows; see <http://shadowsfromanotherplace.net/> and <http://paulalevine.net/projects/shadows%20from%20another%20place/shadows.html>
 - 23 <http://www.youarenotthere.org>. The project now includes a mash-up of Gaza and Tel Aviv.
 - 24 Baghdad Burning at <http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com>, 1 July 2005. Her blog is also available in book form (Riverbend 2005 2006).
 - 25 <http://www.appliedautonomy.com/terminalair/index.html>. See also Paglen and Thompson (2006) and Paglen (2007).
 - 26 <http://www.zone-interdite.net>; but note the cautionary remarks in Perkins and Dodge (2009).
 - 27 Gone Gitmo, at <http://gonegitmo.blogspot.com>

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