'Terrorism Studies: What we have forgotten and what we now know.'[1]

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Noel O'Sullivan (ed.) *Ideology, Terrorism and the State*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986; Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State*: Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1977; Richard English, *Does Terrorism Work? A History* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016; Scott Shane, *Objective Troy: A Terrorist, A President, And the Rise of the Drone*. Tim Duggan Books: New York, 2015.

After the events of 9/11, the academic field of terrorism studies proliferated and hundreds of articles and books were quickly produced to explain the assaults on the United States. A country which had been relatively isolated from the anti-colonial terrorist 'surge' of the 1970s had become the target for spectacular acts of violence inspiring considerable questioning of why America?[2] Indeed, those already ensconced within terrorism studies complained that suddenly everyone seemed to be an instant expert, not only on the sources of terrorism but on al-Qaeda and radical Islam.[3] In the post 9/11 era, the study of terror – once rather a niche area – became *the* key topic in International Relations. This was certainly understandable as 9/11, rather like the collapse of the USSR, had taken everyone by surprise.[4]

So as European states such as France and the United Kingdom confront multiple acts of terrorism from firebombs on trains, men in white vans crashing into pedestrians outside mosques, through attacks on police at Westminster, the murder of a Catholic priest, the ramming of crowds in Nice, to a bomber detonating a suicide vest at a pop concert, it is worth asking what we know and what we understand about contemporary

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[1] The title 'We Now Know' is taken from John Lewis Gaddis, We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) in this work Gaddis compares what we thought we knew during the Cold War to what became apparent after the end of the Cold War. I am grateful to the following colleagues for ideas and comments on this review: Noel O'Sullivan, Affi Ashraf, Tom Waldman, Geoff Roberts and James Rogers.

[2] John Lewis Gaddis, Surprise. Security and the American Experience (Joanna Jackson Goldman Memorial Lectures on American Civilization & Government) (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2005)

[3] See Magnus Ranstrop, 'Mapping Terrorism studies after 9/11: An academic field of old problems and new prospects' in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth and Jeroen Gunning, (edited) Critical Terrorism Studies. (London: Routledge, 2009) pp.13-33.

[4] Mark Kramer, Special Issue: The Collapse of the Soviet Union (Part 1) in Journal of Cold War Studies. Vol.5. Number 1. Winter, 2003.

terrorism and our responses to it. Almost two decades of war in Afghanistan, years of Western intervention around the globe and multiple terrorist atrocities since the al-Qaeda attacks on the US homeland have characterised international politics and reshaped the study of terrorism.

Scholars who had spent years labouring over terrorism found themselves overwhelmed by 'new entrants' to the subject, many of whom had previously been rather 'sniffy' about actually studying the men and women of violence. From this particular allegation we must exclude those scholars who had produced valuable work on Ireland. Indeed, the' troubles' in Northern Ireland had spawned a whole field of useful investigation into nationalist violence.[5] Even there, though, after the Good Friday agreement and the demise of the Provisional IRA, the specific nationalist challenge to the British state seemed over. During the later years of the 1990s, a new era of harmony in international relations seemed set to prevail. Not only was the Irish question resolved, South Africa emerged from apartheid and Communism was vanquished. In the spirit of optimism that accompanied the end of the Cold War, some respected figures claimed that war had gone away or been unlearnt and that soft power would predominate.[6] All this promised a new century which seemed at least for Western states a somewhat optimistic proposition.

The shock of 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq yielded a lengthy period of sombre reflection. Not only did we ponder how men armed with box cutters could attack the remaining superpower but a series of thorny questions arose. How could a war of liberation in Iraq turn into a bloody defeat for Western politics? How could coalition forces fail in Afghanistan and what remedy should be invoked in that particular crisis? How had the chaos of Syria occurred and in turn generated a massive migrant crisis? And had years of Western intervention created Isis? In short, had terrorism 'worked' in the sense of provoking the West into extravagant and hubristic foreign policies?

There was much to preoccupy the academic and policy communities, however 'new' some scholars were to the actual 'meat' of terrorism studies. There were also pressing

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[5] A.Silke, 'The Impact of 9/11 on Research on Terrorism' in M.Ranstrop, Edited, Managing Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction. (London: Routledge, 2006) pp.175-193.
[6] John E Mueller, Retreat from Doomsday. The Obsolescence of Major War (New York: Basic Books, 1989) and Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on the recent Transformation of World Politics (London: Longman, 1997).

issues for those who studied the phenomenon of war: How had wars of pacification and regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan become first counter-insurgencies and then in essence counter-terror campaigns? This conflation of counter-insurgency and counter-terror provided much to query – not the least was the questions of linkage between these wars and the multiple terror attacks on European cities and those much further afield in say Australia and Canada,

What should the response be to the threats from al-Qaeda emboldened and reinforced by, in particular, the debacle in Iraq? How did the fight against terrorism become the justification for the armed drone killing of 'terrorists' such as the UK citizen 'Jihadi John' and the execution by drone strike of the notorious Anwar Awlaki, a US cleric. These executions (along with many others) were welcomed in some quarters (but by no means all) as a proportionate and legitimate response to the threats and dangers posed by these individuals.[7] Thus some commentators became preoccupied not just with the causes of terrorism but with the ethics and legality of killing by a state before a trial or an act of terrorism had even taken place. This particular issue was rendered even more fascinating as a supposedly 'liberal' President such as Obama oversaw the introduction of 'kill lists' and the obfuscation of the truth over the collateral damage to those around the target of a drone attack.

This review – through the prism of four important texts, two old and two new – aims to ask how 'we' arrived at the state of anxiety which arguably characterises contemporary politics. These four books are worth reading (perhaps revisiting in the case of O'Sullivan and Wilkinson) as they provide touchstones for the academy and our own troubled times. O'Sullivan and Wilkinson were writing on this subject in the 1970s and 1980s when terrorism had a very particular shape. English and Shane write in a period when the threat from Islamic State and its adherents seem most dramatic and threatening, overtaking even the notorious al-Qaeda in both numbers and influence. All these authors from O'Sullivan – a political theorist of some note – to the renowned journalist Scott Shane grapple with themes and ideas which are still clearly important to those seeking to understand current threats.

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[7] Michael E. Lewis, 'Drones: Actually the Most Humane Form of Warfare Ever. How better targeting and surveillance can reduce the number of civilian casualties' in The Atlantic. August 21, 2013.

Ideology, Terrorism and the State

Noel O'Sullivan begins this edited collection with a discussion of ideology and the relationship to terrorism. This is important as the term ideology seems to have been replaced by the term extremism. This is something of a problem, at least in my view. The concept of 'ideology' has now largely disappeared because it presupposes that there is such a thing as a 'non-ideological' standpoint. There is not at least according to O'Sullivan. He explains that the age old Western belief in the possibility of a privileged supra-political position utilising the concept of ideology regardless of whether it was a Liberal or Marxist agenda has been overturned. He argues that the absolute nature of 'values' and therefore a claim to a politically privileged position such as in the Cold War period has been replaced by a mode of politics in which all beliefs, values and claims are essentially contestable [8]

O'Sullivan points out that traditionally we have assumed that terrorism was a 'peculiarity' of left or right wing ideologies. We could and did explain terrorism as a function of these beliefs whether it was left wing terrorists or those on the right. On the other hand, he also points out that we for many years saw terrorism as arising from the malign individual figure that encouraged atrocities. Let us return to the first point as O'Sullivan is most interesting and indeed relevant in his claim that terrorism is connected with the modern liberal democratic style and tradition in Europe. O'Sullivan traces the roots of this to the French Revolution and three crucial assumptions which accompanied the politics and ideologies of subsequent periods.[9]

The first assumption led men to believe that it was within their power to remake society from top to bottom. There was the possibility for radical change. Although there had certainly been visions of a utopia before, none had seemed achievable. So O'Sullivan makes the point that without the idea of change and very radical change that accompanied the French Revolution, the more ambitious terrorist visions of confronting and transforming the state would have been impossible.

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[8] See Noel O'Sullivan, 'Difference and the Concept of the Political in Contemporary Political Philosophy' in Political Studies. 1997. See also Noel K.O'Sullivan 'The Concept of the Political in Contemporary Western and Non-Western Political Thought' The Heidelberg Paper in South Asian and Comparative Politics: Working Paper No 73.ISSN:1617-5069. See also William F.Connolly, The Terms of Political Discourse, Princeton Paperbacks. 1974.

[9] Noel O'Sullivan Edited, Terrorism, Ideology & Revolution The Origins of Modern Political Violence (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1986) pp.8-9.

This idea of 'remaking' society was at the heart of the Cold War. Not only was Communism forcibly imposed throughout Central and Eastern Europe but the Marshall Plan was devised and executed to keep Western Europe in a democratic style of politics. We should also note that the national and anti-colonial revolutions after 1945 utilised widespread 'terror' to persuade the equally violent colonial powers to withdraw. The anti-colonial movements incorporated in some instances 'proxy' groups utilised by either the Russians or the Americans to achieve Cold War aims. Hence the Russian sponsorship and backing for certain groups in Angola and the Horn of Africa as well as the US backing of the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan and an array of groups throughout Latin and Central America. One reason for revisiting Wilkinson is because some of those in Critical Terrorism Studies have roundly condemned him for what they see as his defence of US behaviour during the Cold War.[10] Perhaps, but there is also a broader point here. Wilkinson reminds us of the long shadows cast by terrorism and reactions to it during the Cold War on to our own troubled times. The 9/11 attacks were directly related to a series of decisions taken by successive US Governments seeking to defeat Marxist-inspired or backed regimes throughout the Middle East and other regions of the world. As 'we now know', it was US arms and money that aided Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan fostering his belief that having defeated one superpower – the USSR – another could also be 'picked off'.

A second assumption highlighted by O'Sullivan is the belief that man could be made 'good'. Originating with Rousseau, the theme was that of 'evil', not as an essential or intrinsic part of the human condition, but as originating in the actual structure of society. The point here is that the structure could be reworked through appropriate social change and hence man would indeed be made good. So political action was neither about stability nor order but about a transformative mission. Politics became rather simple in this new style. This mentality meant the identification of an 'out' group which could be held responsible for everything that was amiss in society. Hence in the French Revolution the monarchs, the aristocrats and the priests had to be dispensed with. In the Russian Revolution so too did the Capitalists and of course in Fascism, the Jews had to be eradicated.[11] All of these groups utilised 'terror' for ideological ends. In the

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[10] See Jeffrey .A. Sluke, 'The Contribution of Anthropology to Critical Terrorism Studies' in Jackson, Smyth and Gunning (edited) Critical Terrorism Studies, op.cit. Pp.138-155.

[11] Noel O'Sullivan, op.cit.pp.8-9.

case of Fascism, terror became institutionalised by the state, was routinised and carried out in the name of national unity and survival. In the case of nationalist/colonial struggles, terror became a weapon not just of the state but of those opposing the state. In this respect, people like Franz Fanon identified the 'out' group as the imperial powers leading to nationalist and anti-colonial movements demanding decolonization, sovereignty and liberty. [12]

This particular feature of violent politics was also linked to another development in politics which has according to O'Sullivan done more than anything else to facilitate terrorism – that is the idea of 'the people' or, as we would term it, 'popular sovereignty'. So, politics and the exercise of power are only legitimate if it is conferred from below by the 'people'. The problem here is that of course 'the people' can be justified in any way either by a Government or by those seeking to defy a State. Terrorists have quite often used 'the support of the people' to justify their own actions. State leaders too invoked a whole host of repressive measures such as torture, incarceration or more latterly execution by armed drone strike in the name of the people.

In the West, O'Sullivan argues the problem is made much worse by the idea of 'liberty'. Western notions of liberty are intimately connected with ideas of individual autonomy and self-realization. As Paul Wilkinson argued, liberty can be a form of egotism – a kind of action taken for its own sake and a glorification: we need only ponder the van attack on worshippers at Finsbury Mosque or those strapping on fake suicide vests to launch a frenzied attack on innocent people in London. O'Sullivan and Wilkinson both point to the long-standing search for an understanding of these actions in Liberal societies.[13]

Here, though, O'Sullivan, in addition to making the connection between democracy and terrorism, has also pointed to the linkage between trends in the general nature of war and strategy and the related way terrorists have acted. As O'Sullivan commented, the increasingly barbaric conduct of terrorists is in his view related to the elimination of the general distinction between combatant and non-combatant.[14] O'Sullivan examines the growth in assassination as a political technique in the twentieth century

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[12] Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1961 & 1967)
[13] See Wilkinson, Terrorism and the Liberal State (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), xiii.
[14] Noel O'Sullivan, op.cit. p.16.

but also the conduct of World War Two and especially the use of strategic bombing by the Great Powers to break enemy morale. Whatever the original intention for strategic bombing, as the conflict intensified the massacre of civilians was justified in terms of national survival, shortening the war and, in the case of the atomic bombing of Japan, saving lives.[15]

In terms of the history of war we have something quite novel. As George Orwell argued in the public and acrimonious debate over the bombing of German cities by the Allies,[16] area bombing made war more 'democratic'. While young men would perish on the battlefield, at sea or in the air, everyone on the home front was now a potential victim, this included children and the middle aged. Thus, in the name of prevailing, winning or eradicating ideological enemies, such as the fascists in Germany and Japan, there were no innocents or civilians. Therefore we witness throughout the twentieth century an increase in violence carried out by states, but also by sub state groups whatever their ideological agenda. The increased lethality in operations by terrorists has been well described by scholars such as Bruce Hoffman.[17] In particular, attacking civilians seems to be the easy part, not just for terrorists but for groups of every variety. So while non state terrorism has been responsible for between a few hundred to a few thousand victims on an annual basis, states have killed, tortured and oppressed millions of people.

The idea of non-combatant as victim fitted neatly into one of the most influential works produced in the 1990s – the very years during which war had supposedly lost its purpose. Mary Kaldor produced a thesis of both 'new wars' and old wars.[18] This had at its core the proposition that war had become indiscriminate and characterised by savage acts of violence with civilians as the target. In this sense conflict was not conducted in a strategic manner – multiple actors merely pursued short-term financial or political goals, hence confusing those states which tried to intervene and promote resolution. As Kaldor pointed out, many of those involved thrived on conflict,

[15] See Harry S Truman, Memoirs: Years of Decision (Garden City: New York, Doubleday, 1965)
[16] George Orwell quoted from his Tribune piece in A.C. Grayling, Among the Dead Cities: Is the Targeting of Civilians in war ever Justified? (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) pp.203-205.
[17] Bruce Hoffman, Countering the New Terrorism' at www.eand.org/publications/MR/MR989.
[18] Mary Kaldor, New and Old Wars: organised violence in a Global Era. (London: Polity, 1999)

dislocation and perpetual chaos.[19] Kaldor inspired an important debate about who dies in contemporary conflict inspiring some others to disagree about the upward trajectory of civilian as the primary victim of conflict. Here we should note the work of Duffield and Newman on this question.[20]

There is however beyond that particular debate something else lurking. The post-Cold War period suggests the re-emergence of a deeper kind of 'barbarism' than the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, in the form of the Islamic 'demonization' of unbelievers (i.e. the ultimate barbarism is the politicization of the distinction between believers and unbelievers). Carl Schmitt's, in his *Nomos of the Earth*,[21] suggested that this most barbaric (or anti-political) of all cleavages characterized the West itself in the medieval period, but was overcome in the early modern period by the Westphalian era's willingness to replace demonization of the opponent by a political confrontation based on the mutual acknowledgement of the validity of different standpoints and willingness to reconcile them by non-violent methods. Yet the Westphalian era was an exceptional, very sophisticated and essentially fragile achievement which always remained under pressure, especially after the emergence of the ideological divisions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The present day situation seems to be that the last remnants of the Westphalian 'political' settlement have finally collapsed due to the superimposition of religious fundamentalism onto the ideological divisions of the modern West.

For O'Sullivan there was an inevitable slide into the killing of innocents. Liberal states such as Britain and the United States in the main denied their part in this process. After all, even though terrorist groups may have broadened their areas and targets for attack, the state or at least major Western states did try, or so it is argued, to find more proportionate ways of conducting their military affairs.[22] The RMA seemed after the Gulf War of 1991 to hold out the promise of proportionate and precise modes of

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[19] Mary Kaldor, 'Terrorism as regressive globalisation' 25 September, 2003 in Open Democracy free thinking for the world at www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-americanpower/article_1501 jsp

[20] See Edward Newman, 'The "New Wars" Debate: A Historical Perspective is Needed' in Security Dialogue. Vol.35. no.2. (2004), pp.173-189. See also Mark Duffield, Global Governance and the New Wars. (London: Zed Books, 2001)

[21] Carl Schmitt, The Nomos of the Earth: In the International Law of the Jus Publicum Euroepaeum' (trans: G.L.Ulmen) 2005.

[22] Elinor E.Sloan, The Revolution in Military Affairs: More Proportionate Ways of Conducting Military Affairs (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002).

operating. As the Kosovo war of 1998-1999 proved, war could be won 'simply' from the air. The destruction of the Serbian state in a quick air campaign seemed to herald a new era of 'cost free war' at least for the Western States involved. Virtual War, as it was dubbed by the public intellectual Michael Ignatieff,[23] also apparently signalled an unassailable Western dominance in international affairs. Intervention could be made through choice not necessity and innocents protected (apart from those caught by 'mistakes' in failures of intelligence and targeting) in the bloody business of war as centres of power, dictators and warlords were targeted in the name of stability as well as humanity. Tony Blair remarked in his Chicago speech of 1999, 'we cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights in other countries if we still want to be secure.'[24] The RMA offered the magic elixir for just such interventions. The RMA too seemed, at least for Neoconservatives, to provide the means for challenging the sources of authoritarianism in the Middle East and for addressing the roots of global terrorism.

The actual 9/11 wars were meant (however much there was a spirit of vengeance at play) to be conducted in just such a rapid manner to reshape the Middle East. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 in response to the 'plot against America' was at first conducted from the air and with Special Forces. The Taliban which had harboured the architect of the attacks – Osama bin Laden – was summarily removed and there was little initial cost to the attacking forces.[25] Afghanistan, and Iraq too after the invasion of 2003, were proclaimed as successes. Although the ill judged 'Mission Accomplished'[26] speech became emblematic of the over-confidence with which both campaigns were mounted, at the time Western superiority seemed to prevail and to provide some satisfaction against the 9/11 conspirators. The 'mission accomplished' version notably ignored the 'collateral' damage – both human and ecological – inflicted upon the people and fabric of Afghanistan[27] during the opening phases of the campaign as well as the controversy over the number of 'civilians' killed in Iraq. We

[23] Michael Ignatieff, Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond. London: Picador, 2000)
[24] Tony Blair – Chicago Speech. Community [24/4/1999] Number 10.gov.uk
[25] Brian Knowlton and International Herald Tribune, 'The US and UK Bomb Targets in Afghanistan: Bush, 'Battle Joined' in The New York Times, October 8, 2001.
[26] See Mission Accomplished, May 1, 2003 at www.cnn.com/2003/US/05.01
[27] Human Rights Watch, 'Fatally Flawed Cluster Bomb and their use by the United States in Afghanistan. December 2012. pp.15-31. Also Avril McDonald, 'Depleted Uranium Weapons and International Law: A Precautionary Approach. TMC Asser Press, p.19. 2008.

will return to the beguilement of precision and accuracy when discussing armed drone strikes.

9/11 and the subsequent wars are worth reflecting upon in the light of both O'Sullivan and Wilkinson and also the work of Mary Kaldor. Neither of the first two authors writing in the 1970s and 1980s could have foreseen the spectacular nature of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Indeed Wilkinson's book does have a rather old-fashioned air especially in the middle sections when he discusses attacks on embassies, kidnapping of diplomats and sieges. Despite a quaint style, the mounting evidence drawn from both Wilkinson and indeed O'Sullivan was the increasingly important nature of the international politics of terrorism and certainly in Wilkinson the growing threat to liberal states at home and abroad from those who wished to launch assaults on the West. But there is something else here too. The 'countervailing trend' towards the use of technological fixes such as air power was pervaded and underpinned by a 'moralistic' view of global politics and the purposes of military vigour.[28] This intensification of the Western 'moralization' of politics after 9/11 – whilst noticing (as Schmitt does) that this moralizing tendency goes back at least to the First World War, with the US demonization of the Kaiser after 1918 as a prime example – has shaped not only policy and politics but the academy and terrorism scholarship.

Terrorism and the Liberal State

The second book under review here is perhaps one of the earliest and most profound expositions of how liberal societies should respond to the threat and reality of terrorism. The book has had many editions and the cover of my edition is both strikingly old fashioned but horribly relevant. Police officers from the London Met draw guns to encounter a terrorist threat. The visual imagery is from the 1970s but strikingly familiar to 2017 and the attacks on Westminster and then London generally. Paul Wilkinson is in many ways the founder of terrorism studies in the United Kingdom. This book is therefore located both in a time when the scholarly discipline of terrorism studies was

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[28] See, J. M. Grainger's excellent book *Tony Blair and the Ideal Type*, as well as at David Runciman's *The Politics of Good Intentions: History, Fear and Hypocrisy in the New World Order.* More generally, there is Nicholas Rengger's *Just War and International Order: The Uncivil Condition in World Politics. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)* See also J.H.Grainger, *Tony Blair and the Ideal Type.*

on the margins of Political Science. Indeed, despite Wilkinson's distinguished career, right up until the events of 9/11 many remained sceptical about the academic endeavour to find answers not just to the puzzle of malcontents in our midst but to the practical challenge of how to deal with an IRA or an ETA. In this sense Richard English writing some two decades after Wilkinson had the advantage of 'knowing' how the IRA campaign ended and the satisfaction of seeing ETA lay down its arms and mission against the Spanish state. Wilkinson though was quite literally in the 'thick of it' with the attempt on his life in London by the IRA in 1990.

Wilkinson was keenly aware not just of the dangers but the prejudice – widespread – in his own words against terrorism studies (indeed he compared it to the bias against War Studies!). This book begins with a note that: 'There have been encouraging signs over the past few years of a growth in scholarly interest in the phenomenon of political terrorism'.[29] This however has become increasingly contested ground as to what the purpose of the study of terrorism should be. Wilkinson always regarded part of his duty to provide advice and caution to those in power. What he could not have foreseen was how his work would be judged by a newer generation. His critics perceived not a speaking of 'truth to power' but a justification of state power.

Wilkinson therefore became something of a target for some of those labouring in what is now known as Critical Terrorism Studies. He was of an earlier school - 'orthodox' in many respects: hence he was a 'leading figure in orthodox terrorism studies and the pro state terrorism industry'.[30] Note the conflation of orthodox and pro-state terror. Here it is neither my vocation or purpose to rescue Paul Wilkinson from those who depict him in a certain and negative manner. But let us pause for a minute to examine the rather lengthy charge sheet against him. The first accusation is that, in the period when perhaps he was at the height of his powers and influence, the terrorism studies literature he and many others published, overwhelmingly replicated the claims made by the Reagan Administration that much of the contemporary acts of terror were in fact sponsored by Moscow. It is argued that first, that this was at best disingenuous as the US itself was supporting terroristic activities in, to name but a few countries, Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan but second it was also subversive in terms of

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[29] Wilkinson, op.cit. p.iv.
[30] See Jeffrey A.Sluke, in Jackson, Breen and Gunning, Critical Terrorism Studies, op.cit.

knowledge. So, according to some of Wilkinson's critics the actions of the Reagan government during the Second Cold War were accepted, endorsed by Wilkinson and critical voices 'silenced'. This problem of 'silencing' is of course one which is used on a routine and sometimes rather useful basis to discuss and challenge hegemonic discourse and practice.[31]

However, the idea that there was a silence over the multiple acts of violence sponsored by the US is a rather curious claim. Scholars of the Cold War were keenly aware of the superpower competition, the use of proxies and the manner in which resistance movements were taken up and sponsored by states. To blame Paul Wilkinson for endorsing the view of the Soviet Union as a sponsor of terror is hardly useful at this historical juncture – the Cold War was after all fought on any number of fronts which certainly involved proxy forces, advisors, arms and money supplied by Russia, the United States, China and states such as Iran and Libya. This much is now well known.[32] An actual reading of Wilkinson writing in 1977 provides the following:

It will be shown that the Soviet Union has considerable record of involvement in this type of conflict, and this has important consequences for Western internal and external defence policy and strategy. However, the reader should be reassured that the author does not seek to present any general conspiracy theory or Cold War grand simplification to 'explain' contemporary terrorist phenomena…..Terrorism is not the monopoly of any ideology or cause.[33]

That final line is crucial – terrorism is and remains ubiquitous. So, the more essential issue is what legacies this behaviour of states in the Cold War has bequeathed in terms of contemporary terrorism and global instability. Both Wilkinson and Critical Studies theorists are in their very different ways correct – history and an accurate and open reading of it really matters. Hence, 'denial' not silencing is important. So just as it is now broadly accepted that the considerable US support for the Muhjadeen to defeat the Soviet Army in Afghanistan permitted the emergence of al-Qaeda, of which more later, we need to look at other states which sponsored terrorist groups and

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[31] Sophia Dingli, 'We need to talk about silence: Re-examining silence in International Relations Theory' in European Journal of Politics and International Relations. April, 2015. Vol.21.Issue 4. 2015.
[32] See Thomas Carothers, In the Name of Democracy: US Policy Towards Latin America in the Reagan Years. (California: University of California Press, 1991)
[33] Wilkinson, op.cit. p.xi.

actions, such as Iran. In this sense, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* can tell us little of the pivotal and revolutionary year of 1979 in global affairs although Wilkinson does in later work discuss the challenge of Iran and sponsorship of terrorist groups at some length.

The omission though in 1977 is fascinating. Scholars in International Relations do not have crystal balls with which to predict and advise. Wilkinson's book was written before the events of 1979. And here we do need to take the claims of Critical Terrorism scholars seriously.[34] Even though it had been widely accepted that the US Government and its intelligence agencies were taken by surprise by events in Teheran,[35] 'we now know'[36] different. Recent revelations cast doubt on any accepted wisdom pointing rather to the complicity of the Carter Administration in establishing the new and ultimately for Washington, the troublesome regime in Teheran.

Thus, Iran emerged as a revolutionary power, with the rise of a fundamentalist Islamist state in the Middle East bookmarking the modern era. It was Iran and then Syria which provided the political, religious and financial support to terrorist groups like the PLO, Hamas and Hezbollah. This engendered the wave of kidnapping of Western journalists and, after 1979, the beginning of suicide attacks. It also provided for the post Cold War challenges posed by groups disaffected by the new shape of politics and undermined by the loss of their sponsors in Moscow – and antagonised by the actions taken by Western states. Here though is something rather disingenuous in the discussion.

The leader of the UK Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn was roundly condemned for making a link between the conduct of wars abroad and the terror attacks on the United Kingdom.[37] The denial of the linkage between foreign policy and domestic harmony is commonplace. This is odd as the very perpetrators of some terrorist attacks such as Mohammed Sidique Khan the leader of the 7/7 attacks highlight the connection as

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[34] For a thoughtful collection see John Horgan & Michael J.Boyle, 'Symposium: Critical Terrorism Studies: Foundations, Issues, Challenges' in Critical Studies in Terrorism. Vol.1. 2008. Issue 1. See also Richard Jackson, 'The ghosts of state terror: knowledge, politics and terrorism studies' in Critical Studies on Terrorism. Vol.1. 2008. Issue 3. pp.3777-392.

[35] See 'US had extensive contact with Ayatollah Khomeini before Iran Revolution', Friday 10 June, 2016 in the Guardian.

[36] John Lewis Gaddis, We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History (Council on Foreign Relations) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) See also Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

[37] 'Corbyn links terror attacks to foreign wars' in The Financial Times, 25 May, 2017 at https://www.ft.com.content/b249730a-4170

prime motivating factors.[38] Therefore one considerable challenge that we need to address are not just the accuracy of the historical record but the linkages and the 'blowback' from actions taken earlier. [39]

Mary Kaldor has been forceful in her publications and pronouncements about the growing interconnectedness of the world. In a powerful commentary she makes it clear that part at least of the explanation for contemporary acts of violence is the insecurity that individuals encounter through globalisation. It follows therefore that a sense of impotence arises when crucial decisions that affect everyday life are taken at a further and further remove. As she points out, the team of Saudis who committed suicide on 9/11 were all educated in the West but were from migrant families typically moving from countryside to town experiencing cultural and social losses while still not fully integrated into their new lives. As Kaldor usefully phrases it, 'regressive' globalisation creates insecurities. (And as we will see also immense opportunities for the spreading of propaganda by those dissatisfied by poverty, inequality or the denial of liberty by corrupt regimes or occupying powers.)

The typical recruits to these movements are in her words 'restless' young men often educated for jobs that no longer exist because of the decline of the state or the industrial sector and because they lack income unable to marry. Membership of groups whether criminal or terrorist (and there is overlap) provide meaning, a sense of historical relevance and, in some cases, adventure. Perhaps more than anyone else she provides the very notions of interconnectedness to potentially provide an explanation of why a suicide bomber in Iraq is linked to the fate of a young man in a Bradford, a Cardiff or a London.

Does Terrorism Work?

Richard English provides some resolution to the idea of foreign policy as rebounding on domestic politics. His first chapter provides the most satisfactory explanation I have read on the linkages between events during the fag end of the Cold War and contemporary terrorism.

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[38] See Mohammed Sidique Khan Video of 7/7 ringleader blames foreign policy at https://www.theguardian.com 2 September, 2005.
[39] Chalmers Johnson, Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire (London: Little Brown and Company, 2000).

Professor English is a distinguished historian of the Irish troubles and knows more than probably anyone else working in the academy about this particular type of terrorism. As was noted earlier, English has the advantage of having watched not just the low points of the violence in Ireland but having witnessed how it (or most of it) all ended. The chapter in this collection on Ireland reflects upon that lifetime of experience and draws upon interviews with some of the protagonists involved.

The English text is a product of its time. If I use the word 'intimacy' to start this section the reader might find this odd. Bear with me. There is an intimacy which is marked in the accounts provided by English of the ordinariness of the terrorists he has encountered. Perhaps by the time he meets these men (mainly men) they have grown old, tired and reflective. They are however in this account, rational actors – not, for English, in his account irrational psychopaths or sociopaths. These terrorists in his investigation seem focused on objectives which can be achieved and target governments that can be compelled to change direction. In this sense, terrorism 'works' or partially works. Most notable was the case of the Madrid bombing of the train system in 2004. This was in the judgment of English effective, at least tactically – Spain revoked its support for the war in Iraq. This in turn may well have set the example for an ISIS to emerge. (The coercive effects of the bombs may have contributed to a policy shift but the bungling of the response to the attacks by the Spanish Government was also instructive. Originally blaming ETA without proof the opposition party was able to force a policy transformation). State responses to terrorism as English point out may change politics more powerfully than the actual act of terror.

English understandably spends part of this book on his home intellectual turf of Ireland and nationalist terrorism. Much can be said of a campaign that has ended (apart from the occasional IED threat and mutterings and sputtering of a new campaign) in some form of success on all sides. From the low points of the killings of the 1970s at a Guildford or a Birmingham, through the spectacular events of 1979 at Warren point and Mullaghmore, there is a catalogue of ugliness right up until the Good Friday Agreement. The boldness of Tony Blair in bringing about a conclusion to the armed violence and establishing a devolved government seemed effective. Terrorists placed down their weapons, the British State relaxes, at least to a point, and like ETA,

separatists seem old fashioned in a world of the European Union, and a post apartheid South Africa.

Some critics have been rather offended by what they perceive as a failure by English to condemn acts of barbarity out of hand by, say, the IRA.[40] But I wonder if this arises from the very fact that these terrorists have laid down their arms and armaments and settled into a twilight world of both regret and, for others, justification of acts which even now evoke considerable controversy and continual upset. Richard Hofstadter once argued that he knew it was 'risky but I still write history out of my engagement with the present'.[41] To be fair to Professor English, to write from the present is to know that the ambitions of most of the Republican terrorists had been defeated. Even if power sharing and representation in devolved government remain a significant achievement for the nationalist communities these fall far short of the demands for a united island of Ireland. In that sense the terrorists did not achieve their strategic goals.

Here with the sociability of the voices as recounted by English, as in the volume by Shane, we literally hear, even if we wish to reject, these conversations which seek to justify acts of terrorism. Whether it is the sound of the former Provisional IRA man or that of Siddique Khan, the 7/7/suicide bomber, Richard English provides us with the narrations and the language of the 'soldier' or the paramilitary at war. Again scholars have been critical of English for supposed ambivalence in his presentation and his 'exculpation' of the bad guys. Is English too easy going on the villains? Or is this the type of presentation that allows us to see not just the unsavoury and perhaps delusional but the underlying terrorist calculation – that actually democratic governments can and do lose their will in wars, in blood and treasure and tire of the seemingly endless blowback of decisions taken years before by politicians oblivious to or entirely pragmatic over the consequences of partition, repression, inequality and state violence.

English may be criticised of side stepping the issue of whether terrorists have parity or should have equivalence with the state: for giving voice and publicity to those who seek to murder. But his overall point is that sometimes terror works; and this is the caveat, it works sometimes and in some nationalist conflicts. Here he points to the

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[40] Thomas Nagel, 'By Any Means or Non' in The London Review of Books. Vol.38. No.17-18, September 2016,
[41] See Sam Tanenhaus, 'The Education of Richard Hofstadter' August 6, 2006 in The New York Times.

construction of Israel and the bloody establishment of modern Algeria as examples of when terrorism has actually worked. Those brutal conflicts, as English knows only too well have cast long and ghastly shadows into our own time. For those subscribing to neo-colonial explanations as inspiring contemporary terrorism, questions loom large over the recent attacks in France and the trauma of both the French Algerian War and the violence in Algeria during the 1990s.[42] There is more work to be done here.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this book is that its concentration on the question of whether terrorism 'works' risks obscuring the deep crisis of *state legitimacy* in so far as the authority of the state over those who do not acknowledge it is concerned. This crisis is evident, for example, when English gives or seems to provide a moral parity (in some cases at least) to the voices of terrorists and that of the state. In this sense the academic story (certainly through these books) seems to be the disintegration of the concept of terrorism into a debate about the political and the moral. So the debate over English's book is in essence about the past reduction of the political (and the historical) into the moral.

At the beginning, English turns his experienced hand to the current threat from radical Islam. The opening of his book concentrates on 'jihadist' terrorism and the genesis and development of al-Qaeda. As he points out, before the 9/11 attacks little research had been carried out on this group or its leader, Osama bin Laden. Much of what English goes on to describe though is now common knowledge. The organisation was established in Peshawar in Pakistan in the summer of 1988. The aim was to continue violent jihad beyond the anti-Soviet campaign which was dragging to an end. As noted earlier, bin Laden had been outraged by the invasion of Afghanistan and the campaign against Moscow had become a mission. Backed by the CIA and through the Pakistani ISI, bin Laden became somewhat famous in the Middle East for his opposition to Communism. Although essentially a money man securing funding for the insurgents he had also fought alongside the Mujahedeen in at least two bloody encounters with Soviet forces.

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[42] See 'The attacks in France and the French Algerian War. France's unresolved Algerian war sheds light on the Paris attack' in The Independent. 16 November, 2015 and 'The attacks in France show that its colonial past endures' in The Guardian, 22 July, 2016.

Once that war was essentially over, al-Qaeda (meaning 'the base' in Arabic) was established and drawn from the ranks of the foreign fighters who had been engaged in the Afghan War. Their target was no longer the Communist superpower but its rival the United States. Some seasoned commentators argue that bin Laden, believing that he had contributed to the destruction of one great power, could just as readily defeat the other.[43] So fighters inspired by bin Laden (and those with their own concerns) took on US forces in Yemen in 1992, supported the anti-American missions in Somalia from 1992 and targeted US assets globally. A number of bloody and audacious attacks characterised the first half of the decade including the bombing of the World Trade Center in early 1993. In 1996, bin Laden issued the fatwa declaring 'war' on the United States. A second fatwa followed in 1998 (signed by a number of people including bin Laden) in which it was proclaimed that it was the duty of all Muslims to kill both the citizens of America and its allies. Attacks proliferated against the United States from the August 1998 suicide bombings against US embassies in Nairobi and in Dar es Salaam. Most dramatically the USS Cole was attacked whilst in harbour in Aden. This trend culminated with the attacks of 9/11 on the US homeland.

However, for our current purpose, what English adeptly does is to highlight the relationship between bin Laden and the political shape of the immediate post Cold War environment. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 it was the Saudi fighter who offered to assemble an army of Muslims to defend the kingdom against Iraqi attack and invasion. In his view, the Mujahideen brothers were more than capable of removing Saddam's forces from Kuwait, having removed the far more formidable Soviet Army from Afghanistan. Bin Laden's dissatisfaction with the Saudi regime and its rejection of his offer was deepened by the US military presence deployed as part of Operation Desert Shield. The defence of Osama's homeland was accomplished much to his chagrin by the Americans.[44] Two and a half years later after the defeat of Iraq, US bases were being expanded not dismantled and Saudi Arabia was virtually bankrupt. Not only did Bin Laden wish to see the US presence ejected from the holy lands, he also wanted to restore to Islam not just to the holy lands and the sacred sites

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[43] See M.A.Ashraf, Al Qaeda's ideology through Political Myth and Rhetoric. Submitted for the Degree of PhD in International Relations from the School of International Relations. St Andrew's University , July 2011,
[44] Michael R. Gordon, Bush sends US forces to Saudi Arabia as Kingdom agrees to Confront Iraq'. in The New York Times. August 1, 1990.

but to witness the imposition of sharia law across the region. In short, he sought a theocracy.

The story as relayed is a vivid evocation of the vision of a certain type of Muslim theocracy as the primary form of governance for the Middle East. This was clearly about a vision for politics, economics and society. It was also about the expulsion of the United States from its position of strength (along with Israel) in the Middle East. Much of this was fuelled by the perception that the United States was actively anti-Muslim and indeed anti-Islam. In this sense, those who see 'occupation' of sacred lands as the inspiration for suicide bombers point to a deep well of resentment against the US presence and its actions building up over a number of decades.

What English narrates is a classic tale of resistance to occupation but also the formation of a competing spectacle of social organisation and behaviour. The attacks of 9/11 – born out of frustration, anger and in many respects impotence – prompted the US and some of its allies to wage two wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq. These wars were highly damaging for Western powers. Military lives were lost to IEDs, insurgent attack and visceral warfare around cities like Fallujah[45] and the costs in blood and treasure proved painful for the Americans, British and their allies. As English points out, here again we have that intimate connection between foreign policy and fear of retaliation at home.

A number of interesting points pick up the threads of O'Sullivan's themes. Increased lethality is one theme but so too is the thesis of civilian as victim. Of those 2,976 who died in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania on 9/11, the vast majority were civilians and innocents drawn from a diverse range of countries and religions. A similar mix of ethnicity, gender and nationality marked those who were killed and maimed on 7/7 in London.

English too highlights the centrality of the charismatic (or an O'Sullivan would have it the malign) leader in al-Qaeda and the importance of the messenger as well as the message. Charismatic leadership is a fairly well tracked phenomenon in the study of terrorist groups but here English provides a vivid picture of Osama bin Laden and those close to him. While it may be something of a stretch to actually accept his jaunty

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[45] Jackie Spinner and Karl Vick, 'Battle for Fallujah' in The Washington Post, November 9,2004.

claim that 'Bin Laden was himself clearly the most stellar member of the al-Qaeda band and that 'In Rolling stones terms he and Ayman al-Zawahiri might perhaps be seen as the Jagger and the Richards of the outfit' there is something interesting. Perhaps for many young men (and women) personalities with a powerful message have allure.[46] Terrorist leaders replacing rock stars are perhaps too fanciful and Osama bin laden's last years in hiding and his violent death in Abbottabad Pakistan was anything but glamorous. [47] Yet some of the terrorists do have reach and influence upon the young (and the not so young). Most recently in the United Kingdom we have the example of young British born Muslim girls fleeing the country to marry ISIS fighters who at least on the internet have 'rock star' status.

The killing of Osama bin Laden was a highpoint for the Obama Presidency. The ghosts of 9/11 were finally put to rest. But such were the escalating costs of the 9/11 campaigns that, with the failure of COIN,[48] alternative modes of waging the wars against terrorism had to be found. The armed drone offered one effective instrument. Obama had come to power clear that the Iraq War was the wrong war and the Afghan war the right war. His Presidency was initially characterised by apparent military successes in the surges in Iraq and Afghanistan but all too soon became mired in the unfolding chaos in Libya and Syria as well as the profound disappointment, misreading and mishandling of the Arab Spring.

A Terrorist, A President, And the Rise of the Drone

Scott Shane has written a dual biography. At the heart is the seeming transformation of President Obama from constitutional lawyer and gifted academic to President with a 'kill list' determined to eradicate through technological means the enemies of the United States. The particular target for assassination as explored in this book is an individual – Awlaki – equally talented, who for a variety of reasons explored here had taken a path from preaching and study to plotting the demise of the United States. As Shane phrases it two men and two stories illustrative of the struggle with terrorism.

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[46] The comparison between ISIS fighters and their allure for young impressionable women has been made in several quarters: see for example Mary Wakefield, 'How do Schoolgirls fall for jihadis? The Sme way they fell for Justin Bieber.' in The Spectator, March 2016.

[47] Seymour Hersch, 'The Killing of Osama bin Laden' in The London Review of Books. Vol. 37. No. 10-21, May 2015. pp. 3-12.

[48] See, David H. Ucko, Critics Gone Wild: Counterinsurgency as the root of all evil' in Small Wars & Insurgencies, 2014. Vol. 25.No.1. pp.161-179.

While the two men would never meet, except virtually, they clashed in the public arena of ideas and ideology

The fabric of both lives is framed by stories of circumstance, chance and choice through which both men come to represent something at the heart of the contemporary struggle between powerful states and those individuals seemingly filled with rage at US actions in the Middle East willing to commit acts of terrorism.

The story may seem somewhat familiar. It is one in which terrorists provoke and transform the international agenda and the state responds – with an array of violence. There is though a twist and more than a couple of turns in this story. Powerful states have always responded to threats with armed violence. But here we confront something fascinating: that is the dilemma of the President. Obama had opposed the war in Iraq and sought a speedy exit from Afghanistan and lamented the huge financial and human losses which had been incurred. Despite this, US military forces were at war for all 8 years of Obama's tenure. He was the first two-term American President with that particular distinction.

He could not, once in office, give up on 'the war on terror', however it was re- labelled, during his Presidency. His opposition to the operations within the Guantanamo Bay prison with all of its grisly dimensions was well known and his disdain for much of the activities of the Bush Administration well documented. Yet, whatever his moral reservations, there could be no turning away from the terrorist threat at home and abroad. Armed drones offered and provided a 'quick fix' allowing Obama to lift 'boots off the ground'[49] but still target and eliminate individuals on a most wanted 'kill' list.

President Bush had authorised drone strikes in a secret order less than a week after the attacks of 9/11. The mission had been to assassinate the most wanted man in the world, Osama bin Laden, at a high level al-Qaeda meeting in Kabul. The slippery Osama had evaded this particular attack but it had killed his military chief – Mohammed Atef.

The point was that assassination offered the hope of killing an individual and perhaps laying to rest the events of 9/11. On 17 September 2001, President Bush had been asked 'do you want bin Laden dead?' His reply evoked images of criminals in the Wild

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[49] Micah Zenko, 'What Obama Really meant by 'no boots on the Ground' in The Atlantic, December 3, 2015.

West beyond the reach of Government: 'There's an old poster out West, as I recall that said, 'wanted dead or alive'.[50] While Osama escaped the efforts of the Bush administration to kill him it was President Obama who not only hunted down Awlaki, but Osama himself. The latter was assassinated by a special Navy SEAL team, shot at close quarters in his 'hide out' in Pakistan and buried at sea. Awlaki was killed by drone strike and became the first American to be executed on the order of the President since the US Civil War.

It is worth noting that both men and their killings brought about a public and scholarly debate about the legal (and ethical) rights of a state to kill individuals as well as the potential consequences: in the early days of the use of drone strikes much was made of the potential for violent 'blowback' from the families and allies of those killed in this manner. That particular preoccupation faded somewhat but the ethical and legal debate over the utilisation of armed drones in considerable numbers has not gone away. The mounting unease about drones and indeed targeted assassination has merely been deepened by the opening months of the Trump presidency. Shane ends his story with the legal challenge raised by Awlaki's father against the US Government for the murder of his son. Part of this fascinating narration is the key question of what states can and will do to eliminate enemies both foreign and domestic. The subtext of the book is that of the technological fix of an armed drone that permits a President to kill with precision: a much vaunted term during the Obama era. Drones are remotely piloted across the sky to vaporise enemies of the West. Of which more later.

The biographical sections track the life journeys of both men. One of many ironies is the fact that the Awlaki story is one of living, experiencing and enjoying the US under the guidance of his distinguished father – an agrarian economist. The pathway is one of education in the United States and some might argue enlightenment, and then a hurried exit as a fugitive and a wanted man to eventually die in the badlands of Yemen. Awlaki is killed by the President of a country that he and his family had settled in and in many respects thrived in. Awlaki had come to occupy a place in the national public narration of religious sentiment and young Muslims in the United States. Here for all students of terrorism is an exploration of a descent in to radicalisation. Yet that term,

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[50] Brian Knowlton and International Herald Tribune 'Terror in America/ 'We're Going to Smoke Them Out: President Airs his Anger' September 19, 2001.

unsatisfactory in so many ways, certainly lacks purchase in the case here. It appears from Shane that sex or rather illicit sex, not religious fervour, transformed this young man and his destiny.

The decline of Awlaki is well documented both here and elsewhere by Shane. It is in a classic sense a 'tragic' tale. Awlaki has become in the wars of 9/11 something of a celebrity. His moderate views of Islam are both well known and well received in the United States. He was articulate, personal and because he had a knack apparently for preaching and publicity quickly becomes the reasonable face of his religion and ethnicity. He is a respected preacher and has a successful business in terms of his preaching DVDs. He can command the resources of the internet and seemingly pour much needed oil on troubled waters of communal division and unease. The power of modern communications is apparent and the ability to spread ideas for good or evil render him somewhat famous.

There is however a weakness in this handsome and articulate young man – a penchant for extra-marital sex. In between his public engagements there are numerous visits to prostitutes. These encounters take place despite his preaching of the moral decay of society and his own publicly 'satisfactory' family life. His behaviour was reckless – in Shane's judgement 'staggeringly reckless'.

As it happens, the FBI, had opened an investigation on the young cleric. Agents had followed every one or at least many of his tawdry liaisons. Alerted to the fact that he may be publicly exposed as at best a hypocrite and liar, Awlaki leaves the United States in a considerable hurry and heads for London and then Yemen. It is at this point that he allegedly turns his talents for preaching into a campaign for jihad against the United States.

The great strength of this book is that it exposes some of the oddities and eccentricities through which terrorists are made. Many national authorities puzzle over how young men (and increasingly women) become radicalised: according to this account, the disclosure of his sexual habits inspired, it would seem, a turn away from the defence of moderate Islam and to leadership of an anti-American campaign. As Shane writes, the process of radicalisation is not down to a few clear cut and inevitable stages but in reality the journey to extremism is a messy human affair – with no predictability. There

is little comfort for the authorities seeking to prevent radicalisation in this particular insight.

Awlaki became increasingly linked with those who sought to commit acts of violence against the citizens and structure of the US. Infamously Awlaki influenced one Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian born 'underwear bomber' who sought to detonate himself and Northwest Airline Flight 253 as it flew into Detroit on 25 December 2009 and Major Nidal Hasson, the US Army psychologist who had massacred 13 people at Fort Hood in Texas in 2009. Awlaki's control and 'guidance' for these and other individuals such as some of the 9/11 hijackers now seem clear. Whilst his fingerprints were not actually on the trigger or the explosives, his words and exhortations certainly were significant in terms of encouraging terrorism amongst a range of individuals. The Tsarnaev brothers who set off the pressure cooker bomb at the Boston Marathon in 2013 were inspired by his preaching as was Shannon Conley aged 19 who converted to Islam, left Colorado and flew to Syria to join Islamic state. Awlaki had become the 'bin Laden of the internet'. Hence, the preacher was also the moving force behind the highly influential 'Inspire' magazine produced by his protégé, Samir Khan, also killed in Yemen.

Shane makes much of the clash of ideas and ideals. There is still something rather unsatisfactory here. Understandably so. Why did Awlaki transform himself? Explanations abound. One that seems ignored is the influence of the technological and political material that comprised al-Qaeda's ideology which was already on the ether. This provided a transformative bridge from his personal weakness for sexual temptation to an 'ideal' state where temptation would be legally satisfied. To achieve these personal private motives he adapted his reasonable approach towards religion to a rational approach to revolutionary violence.[51] This is guesswork of a kind but the ramifications of the personal and particular ideological journey are not in doubt.

The title of the book 'Objective Troy' hints at something mythical and classical –an allusion to the Trojan horse of deception of power. Perhaps fittingly the Troy of this book is something altogether more prosaic. Awalaki, like others placed on a kill list in

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[51] I am grateful to Dr Ashraf for this insight.

Yemen was assigned a code name – a name picked from a map of Ohio. The choice of Ohio was apparently random and Troy itself was a little town of just 25,000 people.

This entire detective like story is placed alongside the deepening tumult within the Obama Administration. A president who had designated Iraq as the 'wrong' war but Afghanistan as the right war was still left with the question of how to counter the terrorists across a vast space in which it had become increasingly painful (and expensive) to counter al-Qaeda and the multiple groups and factions which had been spewed out of the 9/11 wars.

Much has been written on how the armed drone came to be seen as a panacea for the failed conduct of both COIN and counter-terror operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. (Strictly speaking there were two wars working in parallel. The military were tasked with fighting conventional COIN wars and the CIA was fighting the counter-terror Wars. CIA drones were the ones most associated with the counter-terror campaigns), A large proportion of commentaries have highlighted the obfuscation and downright lies of the Obama Administration over collateral damage, civilians and the accuracy of intelligence.[52] Whatever the controversies, Shane places the President and his drones at the heart of a desire to 'fix' the terrorist problem.

Obama's comment that he had become 'really good at killing' is disturbing for a president who had promised much. But context is everything. Obama stands in a long line of American presidents buying into the folklore of killing and 'taking out' the enemies of the state. Much is made of the fact that this was the first presidential 'extra judicial killing' since the US Civil War – itself evocative of bloody confrontations between peoples divided by competing visions of political and economic arrangements.

One codicil to the Shane book is the continuing and in many respects expanding war of President Trump against America's enemies.[53] Not only was Awlaki's son killed by drone strike two weeks after his father but his sister – Nawar – was killed in a special operations raid in Yemen in early 2017 approved by the new President.[54] While no

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[52] Jeremy Scahill, and the staff of The Intercept, The Assassination Complex (Barnes & Noble, 2016).
[53] See Hororo J.Ingram and Craig Whiteside, 'The Yemen Raid and the Ghost of Anwar al-Awlaki, The enduring propaganda value of a martyr' in The Atlantic, February 9, 2017.
[54] 'Anwar al-Awlaki's daughter Nawar killed in Yemen raid approved by Trump ' in The Guardian, Weds, 1 February, 2017.

one believes that she was a direct target of the operation, her death from bullet wounds provided considerable fodder for propaganda. Here Shane is robustly insistent on the legacy of Awlaki. His embrace of radical politics still litters the internet perhaps inspiring or colouring the views of many others still hidden from view. Killing Anwar al-Awlaki made him a better terrorist recruiter, at least according to Shane.

This is more too in this story. When Awlaki was assassinated in 2011 many believed that Al-queda was dying too. This was as we now know overly optimistic and with the emergence and tenacity of ISIS the 'cause' was reignited on an even larger and more formidable scale. Oil revenues, extortion and US weapons (seized from fleeing Iraqi troops) equipped the terrorists. In response Obama committed the US to a long war in the Middle East and a confrontation not just with the rebels but with Russia and a new Cold War.

What we now know

This review finished with the story of a President, a fugitive and an armed drone assassination. Underpinning this triangle was a state leader willing to breach established codes of Presidential behaviour, notions of citizenship and international law. All of these were justified in the name of national interest and national defence. The threat to the US was personified in an individual (or a number of individuals) who was identified and then terminated. The War on Terror started under Bush with wars, intervention, prison camps, black sites and extraordinary rendition and considerable sacrifice of US troops had morphed in to remote killing. As such it was a personal matter for the President who oversaw every decision to eradicate a foe with a drone strike. If as Richard English asked does terrorism work – the fight against terrorists certainly preoccupied much of the Obama Presidency shaping foreign policy and action in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen as well as the ongoing war in Syria.

In turn, the 9/11 wars also shaped much of European politics. Cities such as Madrid, London and Paris have borne the brunt of terrorist attacks raising questions familiar to Paul Wilkinson about how to respond in policing terms and how to strike the balance between intelligence gathering and civil liberties. The even thornier question of the legacies of empire, colonies and the seeming failure of second generation assimilation within democracies are littered throughout current terrorism studies. Questions of historical responsibility and historical 'truth' are emblematic of the division between

orthodox and critical terrorism scholars as to how 'we' got here. The past history of the West permits Western history itself to be rewritten as the history of 'terrorism'. This points to the self-confident, uncritical 'Eurocentric' perspective that originally shaped this concept before the end of the Cold War and with which Wilkinson has been associated. Perhaps this is what is so useful in English's book: a more if not sympathetic then nuanced and historically grounded interpretation of what these groups try to and sometimes do achieve.

Let us return to O'Sullivan and understandings of terrorism. How should we think about terrorism and concepts of terrorism? The first feature is I think to return to a concept of terrorism that is historically grounded in time and place. So the need for deep historical knowledge of the particular societies being studied on the part of any one theorizing the concept of terrorism. Only this can overcome the tendency to forget or misremember the politics of unpalatable episodes or periods in the creation of liberal states.[55]

The second is that current discourses of democracy and liberal states presuppose the existence of a state which is a political community. This is a flaw of the Wilkinson volume. The question of how this political entity is constituted is taken as a given without a more 'realist' type of thinking that does not start from of how ideally people ought to act but from the way in which social, economic, political institutions actually operate in a particular society at a particular time.[56]

Third, we need to recognise that power and conflict is an intrinsic part of the political. In other words the political must be acknowledged as a site of durable dissent and conflict as a structural inevitability. So the idea of an ideal and harmonious type of society underplays or ignores structural dissent.[57] Here to return to Scott Shane's President the idea that 'kill lists' and a growing heap of dead enemies resolves structural opposition is not only naïve but ultimately counter productive. This trend though is continuing under President Trump who announced in the summer of 2017 that the mission in Afghanistan was not nation building but killing terrorists.[58]

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[55] See here Margaret Canovan, Nationhood and Political Theory (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996)
[56] See Raymond Guess, Philosophy and Real Politics (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008)
[57] See M.Freeden, 'What should the ''Political'' in Political Theory Explore?' in The Journal of Political Philosophy. Vol.13. No.2 pp.113-134.
[58]

Finally and fourth, any idea that terrorism can simply be reduced to a morality play means that the concept loses purchase from what 'is' to what 'should be'. As English concludes: 'given the mutually shaping intimacy between non-state terrorists and state politics, we need to think humbly about what states do and do not do (and the frequent casualness that they display about others suffering) if we want to diminish non-state violence in the future.'[59]

[59] Richard English, op.cit. p. 264.