2. Now, in the Petraeus era, some might argue that some social scientists have indeed become "generals of history": General David Petraeus holds a Ph.D. in international relations from Princeton University; Secretary of Defense Robert Gates holds a Ph.D. in history from Georgetown University; Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl holds a Ph.D. in political science from St. Antony's College, Oxford; and Lieutenant Colonel David Kilcullen holds a Ph.D. in politics from the University of New South Wales.

CHAPTER 4 R. BRIAN FERGUSON

FULL SPECTRUM

The Military Invasion of Anthropology

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Counterinsurgency Reborn

Military thinking was manifestly inadequate for the conquest of Iraq (Melillo 2006; West 2009). By mid-2004, that was obvious. According to one commander, "I had perfect situational awareness. What I lacked was cultural awareness. Great technical intelligence . . . wrong enemy" (Scales 2004:1). Major General Robert Scales (2004:3) called for a new form of "culture centric warfare," although his concept of culture was very limited, and his idea about implementation correspondingly undeveloped (2004:9; and see McFarland 2005:66).

Into this vacuum of military need stepped an anthropological entrepreneur, Montgomery McFate, who wrote of anthropologists' past participation in colonial, war-fighting projects as an advertisement for their potential utility today. She and others proposed a wide-ranging engagement of anthropology and military needs (McFate 2005a, 2005b; McFate and Jackson 2005). The proposals found enthusiastic backing from a circle of military intellectuals—"warrior-scholars"—who came out of West Point's Department of Social Sciences, or "Sosh" (Axe 2010:62–63). Number one was David Petraeus. In his vision, the military had to retool for a future of long wars—for population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN). Another major visionary from Sosh

THE CULTURES AND PRACTICE OF VIOLENCE SERIES

SERIES EDITORS:
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The study of violence has often focused on the political and economic conditions under which violence is generated, the suffering of victims, and the psychology of its interpersonal dynamics. Less familiar are the role of perpetrators, their motivations, and the social conditions under which they are able to operate. In the context of postcolonial state building and more latterly the collapse and implosion of society, community violence, state repression, and the phenomena of judicial inquiries in the aftermath of civil conflict, there is a need to better comprehend the role of those who actually do the work of violence—torturers, assassins, and terrorists—as much as the role of those who suffer its consequences.

When atrocity and murder take place, they feed the world of the iconic imagination that transcends reality and its rational articulation; but in doing so imagination can bring further violent realities into being. This series encourages authors who build on traditional disciplines and break out of their constraints and boundaries, incorporating media and performance studies and literary and cultural studies as much as anthropology, sociology, and history.

VIRTUAL WAR AND MAGICAL DEATH

Technologies and Imaginaries for Terror and Killing

NEIL L. WHITEHEAD AND
SVERKER FINNSTRÖM, EDS.

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was John Nagl (Center for a New American Security n.d.), author of a history of counterinsurgencies (Nagl 2005).

Petraeus, Nagl, and those around them reanimated COIN theory, directed at "winning the hearts and minds" of the population in the counterinsurgency area of operations (Kilcullen 2006). To do that, cultural awareness and detailed ethnographic information are needed. As the debacle of Iraq became more glaringly apparent, higher powers in the Bush administration threw their weight behind this vision (Bacevich 2008). The new doctrine went public with FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Department of the Army [DOA] 2006; and see González 2009:8–12; Nagl n.d.).

Within two years of Scales's call for culture-centric warfare, culture-oriented programs were widespread. In September 2006, Mitre Corporation, which manages federally funded research and development centers, conducted a one-day conference called Socio-Cultural Perspectives: A New Intelligence Paradigm at the Center for National Security Programs in McLean, Virginia. Its premise was "that cultural intelligence is important for a wide range of national security endeavors and that this fact is increasingly recognized in many government quarters." Representatives of "more than 50 different government organizations attended the conference" (Friedland et al. 2007:iii, 9).[1]

The field has grown rapidly since that time. The Defense Science Board Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics (DSB 2009) was tasked to compile information about every Department of Defense (DOD) "effort or group" dealing with "human dynamics/human terrain/culture" (2009:98–99). Their final table contains 111 entries, which does not include "the extensive network of expert cultural consultants" maintained by the Army, Air Force, and combat commands (DSB 2009:xiv). Even with this proliferation, the task force calls for "direct increases in the 'cultural bench' by factors of three to five" (2009:xiv–xv). That includes expanding curriculums in military education, improving career paths for human dynamics advisers, providing advanced degree education, and developing innovative processes for recruiting and rewarding outside expertise.

What is "culture" for the DOD? Military authors recognize, with distress, that there is no single definition of culture within anthropology or within culture-oriented sectors of the military. It is ruefully amusing to read that on the question of "what culture is and why it is important . . . at symposia and other technical workshops, once the subject of definitions is broached, whatever the purpose for the meeting, participants often become mired in a turf war" (Alrich 2008:37). Anthropologists are long accustomed to cacophony about culture, but for the DOD, this is a real problem. "Without a shared definition and ontology, the ability to link formal and computational models of culture to the wealth of cultural data collected in the field can be haphazard and some models will not be interoperable." Nevertheless, "it is unlikely that a single definition of culture will emerge, given that there is no common view as to why a single definition is needed." Different elements of the military see different applications of "culture" in their own tasks, so "the DOD may be better served by asking 'what it is about culture that the soldier needs to know to improve performance at the tactical, operational, and/or strategic level?' At each level, different aspects of culture are mission critical" (DSB 2009:70).

This diversity of needs within the DOD stems from the breadth of cultural applications. The military is fond of the phrase "full spectrum." In its application of culture, there are at least three spectrums. One is the spectrum from the raw recruit up through all the higher echelons and all the organizational divisions relating to field operations. All must be culturized. Another is the spectrum of deployments, from stability missions during "Phase 0," before armed conflict begins, through foreign security force assistance, to COIN and full-scale war. A third spectrum is the range of operations, from "kinetic" lethal attacks to nonlethal cooperation aimed at winning hearts and minds. Through all these spectrums, the unwavering objective is to fight smarter to win. The following is a typical statement: "The Army's operations concept is *full spectrum operations*: Army forces combine offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations simultaneously as part of an independent joint force to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative, accepting prudent risk to create opportunities to achieve decisive results. They employ synchronized action—lethal and nonlethal—proportional to the mission and informed by a thorough understanding of all variables of the operational environment" (DOA 2008:3-1).

Applying Culture in Areas of Operations

Most discussion of anthropological engagement focuses on actual war zones, as with human terrain teams. As discussed elsewhere (Ferguson 2011), claims by Human Terrain System (HTS) advocates that their actions support only nonlethal actions are belied by consistent statements by military writers that cultural awareness and ethnographic information

are to be fully integrated into *all* of a commander's options. Information gathered by social scientists may be combined with other information and used in lethal targeting. This usage for killing is one reason anthropologists should not participate.

It is important to study the human terrain issue, in part because the topic is sufficiently discrete to throw stark light on broader ethical concerns. But human terrain teams are just a small piece of culture-oriented efforts in the field. Sociocultural approaches permeate the battle space. One critique of HTS from within military circles is that troops on multiple rotations long ago learned fundamentals of local cultural organization and interactions (Connable 2009:62; Ephron and Spring 2008:2; Sepp 2007:218). A journalist in Afghanistan found soldiers who had hardly heard of the HTS were diligently "mapping the human terrain" themselves and trying to assimilate culturally appropriate ways of interacting with the locals. Within military field operations, civil affairs and provincial reconstruction teams are already known for their special "linguistic and cultural skills," and the DOD is seeking ways to integrate them with HTS teams (QDR 2010:24–25).

To achieve decisive success in future missions, military writers call for two things: "cultural competence and situational awareness" (DOA 2009a:18). This requires turning members of the armed forces into conscious agents capable of intercultural actions. They must internalize the concept of culture and its role in shaping human life, and then use that competence to immerse themselves into and assimilate the particulars of local situations. "Such skills make a better warfighter AND a more dynamic civilian as the soldier moves back into a very competitive and global workforce" (Masellis 2009:14).

A few years ago this was just an idea being put in motion (McFate and Jackson 2005). The army created a new Training and Doctrine Culture Center, seeking ways "to leverage cultural knowledge to enhance military operation . . . from instruction for baseline Soldiers at the lowest level to key military decision makers at the highest" (Hajjar 2006:89). Soon, the need for cultural competence ascended to doctrine (DOA 2009a:1–24).

Culture-specific knowledge comes from compiling thorough knowledge of local society, which is imagined as a table of discrete variables, all of which can be operationally specified (DOA 2009a:1–7). A chart of "typical civil considerations" contains 115 cells, including such entries as ethnicity, social gathering places, security, gangs, parks, power grids, jails,

religion, illicit organizations, visual (graffiti, signs), and religious gatherings (DOA 2009a:1–9). All are to be distilled into easy-to-understand map overlays (DOA 2009a:10) and, of course, PowerPoint slides (see Bumiller 2010).

These overall characteristics are to be made concrete and personal by being combined with network and event analysis of specific individuals, identified by name with notes, as emphasized in *Counterinsurgency* (DOA 2006, appendix B). The *Human Terrain Team Handbook* also details information to be collected for other kinds of mapping, including social networks, association matrixes, and event coordination registers (Finney 2008:36–37).

Being culturally attuned is expected to give U.S. forces almost a sixth sense in dealing with local populations, granting them the power to "anticipate the population actions, and detect subtle changes within the population. Actions inconsistent with the population's behavioral norms could be indicators of guerrilla activity, internal conflict, or the confirmation or denial of intelligence" (DOA 2009a:1–23). Put it all together, and what do you get? "A leader or Soldier has begun to achieve culturally influenced situational awareness when he/she can ask and answer such questions accurately: What is my adversary thinking and why? What are my Host Nation security forces thinking and why? What are groups of people thinking and why? What will my adversaries, groups of people, adjacent units, and coalition partners, and Host Nation security forces do if I take action W, and why? How are cultural factors influencing my operations? How can I make groups of people and Host Nation security forces do what I want them to do?" (DOA 2009a:1–26). As the DSB (2009:5) puts it, "Knowledge of the value system of an actual or potential competitor helps in deterring undesirable behaviors and compelling desirable behaviors."

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Discussion so far has been confined to a fairly delimited use of culture in military operations. But the DOD sees culture as one aspect of much wider knowledge integration, involving other sorts of data, other social science perspectives, higher levels of aggregation, and broader purposes of use. This larger vision is unknown to most anthropologists, even though it may transform the discipline. The following discussions tour these broader applications of culture.

Synthesizing, Sharing, Storing, Centralizing

To begin, cultural competency and ethnographic intelligence are required in organizational layers above soldiers in the field, beginning with commanders of larger units. They are enjoined: "Know the people, the topography, economy, history, religion, and culture. Know every village, road, field, population group, tribal leader, and ancient grievance. Your task is to become the world expert on your district" (DOA 2009a:C-2; Kilcullen 2006).

For strategic assessment and planning, this detailed knowledge must be made available in usable form at levels above individual areas of operations. Major General Michael Flynn, the head of military intelligence in Afghanistan, is behind a big push for theater-level comprehensive knowledge. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul Batchelor (2010) are scathing about the failure of traditional intelligence operations, which focus on covert information leading to killing enemies and the problem of improvised explosive devices. They note that established intelligence operations provide little information that is useful for leveraging the population against the insurgents, and this opacity gets worse the higher up you go: "The tendency to overemphasize detailed information about the enemy at the expense of the political, economic, and cultural environment that support it becomes even more pronounced at the brigade and regional command levels" (Flynn et al. 2010:7–8). "We need to build a process from the sensor all the way to the political decision makers" (2010:4).

Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor (2010:4–15) are not calling for intelligence analysts to become anthropologists. Open-source publications by anthropologists or field observations by human terrain teams are just information sources in the bigger mix. Their model for intelligence gatherers and analysts is an aggressive reporter, extroverted, hungry, who will roam everywhere to extract all relevant information and bring it back to "teams of 'information brokers' at the regional command level who will organize and disseminate proactively and on request—all the reports and data gathered at the grassroots level." It is these go-getters who would debrief the social scientists.

Stability Operations Information Centers are envisioned as functioning much as the current Intelligence and Security Command's Information Dominance Center, which currently integrates multidisciplinary information for U.S. major commands (Altendorf n.d.; FAS 2002), but the new units would make such knowledge much more accessible. Virtually anyone with a reason the military deems legitimate, including local security forces, "should be able to walk in and obtain mission-related information with ease"—comprehensive, succinct, and current (Flynn et al. 2010:19–20).

This accumulated mass of data will not remain in overseas areas of combat. The broader goal is to archive all cultural information from the DOD, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development in permanent, searchable, interoperational data bases. Currently, the Defense Intelligence Agency's Socio-Cultural Dynamics Working Group is the key node for managing work by the "federation of defense intelligence organizations performing socio-cultural dynamics analysis" (DSB 2009:73). In the future, the Distributed Common Ground Station may be given the charge to "organize, store, and distribute 'human terrain information,' provide tools to keep that data current, and continuously provide cultural insights from competent social scientists to analysts and operators alike"—right along with its current task of integrating satellite, aircraft, CIA, and signal intelligence (2009:xix, 44). On top of that, there is a call for a new Center for Global Engagement, "as a collaborative hub for U.S. government innovation in cultural understanding, communication technology, resource identification, and creative program development," directed to "engage experts, thought leaders and creative talent from the private sector and civil society" (2009:30). Supporters of the HTS often claim they do not produce information that can be used in lethal targeting. When local cultural information is processed at these higher levels, it all goes into unified systems, available for any military or intelligence purpose.

Transforming Societies

This operational omniscience will be employed to reach goals beyond combat or stability operations. Its application goes far beyond old-style counterinsurgency. DOD doctrine aims to get to the roots of the problem and eliminate those discontents that fuel insurgencies. The avowed goal is to find out what the local population wants and needs and then make that happen. This is clear in General Stanley McChrystal's preliminary report on Afghanistan (2009:2/12–18). His COIN orientation involves basics such as providing clean water and electricity, collecting garbage, and building roads, but that is only the beginning. New businesses are to be

conceived and started, jobs created, schools built, and crop substitutions guided. Local and transparent systems of civil administration, finance, and criminal justice are to be developed in place or purged of corruption, or both. Local communities will be empowered. In Afghanistan, all of this is to be done in the face of a government that, where it exists at all, is seen as incompetent and venal. In this vision, U.S. boots on the ground would help build new societies from the ground up. Nagl sees the U.S. military as tasked "not just to dominate land operations, but to change entire societies" (quoted in Bacevich 2008:2).

Tactics in Counterinsurgency (DOA 2009a:7-5–7-28) details the required stability tasks to be implemented by U.S. armed forces, many requiring local cultural understanding (presented here as listed headings and subheads):

- *establish civil control*: establish public order and safety, establish interim criminal justice system, support law enforcement and police reform, support judicial reform, support property dispute resolution, support corrections reform, support public outreach and community-rebuilding programs;
- *support governance*: support transitional administrations, support anticorruption initiatives, support elections;
- *restore essential services*: provide essential civil services, tasks related to civilian dislocation, support famine prevention and emergency food relief programs, support public health programs, support education programs; and
- *support economic and infrastructure development*: support economic generation and enterprise creation, support public sector investment programs, support private sector development, protect natural resources and the environment, support agricultural development programs, restore transportation infrastructure, restore telecommunications infrastructure, support general infrastructural reconstruction programs, use money as a weapon.

One important goal in Afghanistan (Batson 2008) and elsewhere around the world (e.g., Mexico—Herlihy et al. 2008; Mychalejko and Ryan 2009; Sedillo 2009) is to effect the transfer of communal landholdings to clear, transferable individual titles—showing, if there was any doubt, that Pentagon world restructuring is neoliberal world restructuring.

This is a controversial vision. One friendly critic applauded McChrystal

but believed that the close circle of advisers around him had turned this doctrine into a "theology," for "armed social engineering" (Corn 2009:11)—though it is fully in line with the doctrine of the warrior-scholars around Petraeus. A more blistering assessment came from DOD analyst Kalev Sepp (2007:222): "Call it militant Wilsonianism, call it expeditionary democracy, call it counterinsurgency, but this is . . . decidedly not stabilizing. It is an overturning of nations. It is, at its core, a revolution. American soldiers are the instruments of this revolution. . . . The army would have to lead revolutions on a scale so vast as to completely eclipse what the USA experienced in breaking from Great Britain's imperial rule, or in reconstructing the defeated slave states of the South following the American Civil War." Or in the restructuring of colonial societies in earlier ages of imperialism.

Besides the overweening ambition and imperial hubris of this vision, one has to consider that this social transformation is to be implemented by the U.S. Army. The only local evaluation I know of U.S. development effort comes from a human terrain team observation in Iraq. A sheik who seemed very friendly to U.S. forces was quite different when addressing other tribal leaders. He loudly complained, "things are never done right, never completed, and how things are never improved." The human terrain experts explained that this was due to intercultural confusion, because local culture could not entertain the idea that invaders actually wanted to help rebuild their society (Schaner 2008:59). A more straightforward interpretation is that U.S. development efforts are seen as incompetent failures, the United States is still seen as an occupying army, and local power brokers manipulate the conquerors by telling them what they want to hear (Ferguson 2011:110–11).

This imagined ability to penetrate "the locals'" hearts and minds and then make their wishes come true may well be self-deluding, but it is the essence of COIN doctrine. We bring them over to "our side," thus isolating the really "bad guys" and setting them up for targeting and defeat. This is a fantasy, but as U.S. armed forces and its fellow travelers carry out actions around the world, the consequences will be very real.

Employing Culture to Build Local Security Forces

Another major category of cultural application in current or prospective battle zones has largely escaped notice by anthropologists: using cultural understanding to enhance communication and cooperation between U.S.

and local security forces. Raising the performance of these agencies is seen as key to all counterinsurgency and stability operations, as detailed in *FM 3-07.1 Security Force Assistance,* invoking the National Defense Strategy from 2008: "Our strategy emphasizes building the capacities of a broad spectrum of partners as the basis for long-term security. . . . By helping others to police themselves and their regions, we will collectively address threats to the broader international system" (DOA 2009b:1-2).

FM 3-07.1 has a chapter on society, culture, and cross-cultural communication and a separate one on "cross-cultural influencing and negotiating." This knowledge and ability is seen as essential for building up forces "including but not limited to military, paramilitary, police and intelligence forces; border police, coast guard, and customs officials; and prison guards and correctional personnel" (DOA 2009b:1-1). Anthropologists might see a problem with that, because that array of forces has often brutalized the people we study.

Culturally attuned security force assistance is cost-effective and has the benefit of bringing our partners' local knowledge into joint operations. Currently, culturally attuned security force assistance is helping "seek out and dismantle terrorist and insurgent networks while providing security to populations" in the Philippines, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Colombia, and elsewhere. "As U.S. forces draw down in Iraq and make progress toward building stability in Afghanistan, more capacity will be available for training, advising, and assisting foreign security forces in other parts of the globe" (QDR 2010:27–28).

An example offered of successful security force assistance is the training and supervision of Salvadoran armed forces in the 1980s. For instance, there is Gabe Acosta, a U.S. military intelligence officer in El Salvador. "During his first tour in 1983–1984 he established a set of friendships and relationships that were very helpful . . . [but] the real pay off came on his second tour in 1990–91. Between tours in El Salvador, as part of his stateside professional military education, Acosta attended the School of the Americas, where he made the acquaintance of thirteen more Salvadoran officers. As a result, those officers were completely comfortable in sharing information with him during his second tour in country" (Renzi 2006a:18). Lesley Gill (2004) should be consulted on the horrible human rights record of the School of the Americas.

Global Reach

Throughout all the discussions on the future of cultural awareness and human terrain intelligence in war, the premise is that this is a *global* necessity. Andy Marshall, the secretive director of the super-secretive Office of Net Assessment—they call him Yoda (McGray 2003)—has called for "anthropology-level knowledge of a wide range of cultures" (quoted in McFate 2005b:46).[2] Today the focus is on Iraq and Afghanistan, but plans are in process for Africa, the Pacific, and Latin America (Axe 2010:68; Hodge 2009).

DOD savants see a need to develop deep cultural knowledge and connections all over the world *now,* to begin gathering cultural information for possible future deployments. This was recognized from the first statements of the DOD's new cultural needs:

> At the heart of a cultural-centric approach to future war would be a cadre of global scouts, well educated, with a penchant for languages and a comfort with strange and distant places. These soldiers should be given time to immerse themselves in a single culture and to establish trust with those willing to trust them. . . . Global scouts must be supported and reinforced with a body of intellectual fellow travelers within the intelligence community who are formally educated in the deductive and inductive skills necessary to understand and interpret intelligently the information and insights provided by scouts in the field. They should attend graduate schools in the disciplines necessary to understand human behavior and cultural anthropology. (Scales 2004:4–5)

This concept was fleshed out in an article in *Military Review,* "Networks: Terra Incognita and the Case for Ethnographic Intelligence" (Renzi 2006b; and see Renzi 2006a):

> The proliferation of empowered networks makes "ethnographic intelligence" (EI) more important to the United States than ever before. . . . Today, we have little insight into which cultures or networks may soon become threats to our national interests. For this reason, America must seek to understand and develop EI on a global scale, *before* it is surprised by another unknown or dimly understood society or network. . . . .

The United States could develop a corps of personnel dedicated to the task and base them out of a more robust military annex to our embassies. . . . A low-key, constant interest in overt ethnographic matters would show that the United States cares and is indeed watching. Perhaps this constant attention would serve to subtly constrict the amount of safe-haven space available for dark networks. The overt information gathered by military ethnographers could complement the covert work done by the CIA (and vice versa). . . . Ethnographic intelligence can empower the daily fight against dark networks, and it can help formulate contingency plans that are based on a truly accurate portrayal of the most essential terrain—the human mind. . . . The Nation must invest in specialized people who can pay "constant attention" to "indigenous forms of association and mobilization," so that we can see and map the human terrain. (Renzi 2006b:16–17, 20–22)[3]

Integrating, Modeling, and Predicting

In the DOD vision of omniscience, ethnographic information and theory will be joined with higher-tech knowledge to enable behavior prediction. The DSB (2009:54–57) describes efforts to integrate a cultural focus with neuroscience and sensors. Among them, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA, the people who gave us the M-16, drone aircraft, and the Internet [Lal 2006:7]), is "exploring the potential of neuroscience research and development and its applications to understanding human dynamics. Advances in using neuroscience to understand the basis for human cognition, including non-invasive sensor technologies, may be applicable for understanding perception, the neurological origins of trust and compliance, and the neuroscience of persuasion—all relevant to the topic addressed in this report. The broad concept is to develop quantitative neuroscience tools and techniques to predict the effects of 'ideas' within diverse populations." Because DARPA is also implanting sensors into drivable insect cyborgs (DARPA 2006), the possibilities seem endless.

Cultural knowledge will be brought into high-tech targeting systems. In 2007, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense John Wilcox (2007) gave a presentation to a meeting of the Precision Strike Winter Roundtable, in which the focus was on futuristic weapons systems to eliminate any target anywhere in the world within sixty minutes (called Prompt Global Strike). His first bullet point was "Need to 'Map the Human Terrain' across the Kill Chain—*Enables* the entire Kill Chain for GWOT"

(global war on terrorism). (The Kill Chain is a linked sequence of operations: plan, find, fix, track, target, engage, assess.) When the engagement critic Roberto González called attention to this, McFate retorted that Wilcox "is in no way connected with HTS" (González 2008:22, 25; McFate 2008:27). That is precisely the point: Cultural information collected by HTS and other DOD cultural programs will be totally integrated within the full spectrum of DOD operations.

In the DOD vision, cultural perspectives will stream into a new, security social science (Jaschik 2008a). Working together over time, diverse disciplinary perspectives are imagined as developing transdisciplinary, *predictive* theory for application to security issues. Hypotheses and data will be run through sophisticated computer models (see González's chapter in this volume). For instance, the *Journal of Defense Modeling and Simulation* recently called for papers for a special issue: "Modeling, simulating and prognosticating the Human Terrain of deployed force's area(s) of operation is recognized as being increasingly important for U.S. and Coalition Forces during counter-insurgency and stability operations. . . . This special issue is therefore interested in contributions that forecast population response to different messaging (e.g. kinetic operations, cordon and search, reconstruction . . .)" (Society for Modeling and Simulation International 2009).

The deputy director of the Information Exploitation Office of DARPA saw this coming years ago (which is typical):

> We believe the way forward is clear. . . . What is needed is a strategy that leads to a greater cultural awareness and thorough social understanding of the threats comprising the new strategic triad [failed states, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism]. . . . The path to understand people, their cultures, motivations, intentions, opinions and perceptions lies in applying interdisciplinary quantitative and computational social science methods from mathematics, statistics, economics, political science, cultural anthropology, sociology, neuroscience, and modeling simulation. . . . These analytical techniques apply to cognition and decision-making. They make forecasts about conflict and cooperation and do so at all levels of data aggregation from the individual to groups, tribes, societies, nation states, and the globe. . . . Victory in the 21st century strategic threat environment no longer belongs to the side that owns the best and most sophisticated ISR [intelligence, sur-

veillance, and reconnaissance] or weapon systems. It belongs to the side that can combine these cutting-edge technological marvels, which emerged from the physical sciences, with methods from the quantitative and computational social sciences. (Popp 2005)

The fighting arm of the United States will know all, everywhere that matters—what makes locals tick, how to make them move. Their projects will integrate everything from social science hypotheses to neuroscience findings to HTS data to signals intelligence into a seamless, constantly updated, computer-modeled, and continually evaluated system of intelligence, prediction, and prescription. The DOD (and associates) will have its thumb on the local pulse wherever U.S. power centers see "U.S. security interests" at stake—monitoring, predicting, channeling, even transforming societies from the ground up to neutralize even potential threats.

INTERMEZZO: VIRTUAL WAR AND MAGICAL DEATH

What I have described thus far is how cultural awareness and ethnographic intelligence are being built into the virtual war simulacrum. The overarching goal of this full-tilt press is to create a computer copy of the real world, the ultimate divination machine. Actual or *potential* areas of operations include much of the planet, but it is mostly directed at peoples of color, in areas where modernism has not extirpated "traditional" identities and loyalties. In theory, wherever imagined "threats to American security" are seen, security practitioners at any echelon would just have to ask the right question. What if *x* happens, or if we do *y*? The answers will roll out: who is involved, what do they want, how do they think, what can they do? What will happen? How can we control events to serve our interests? The all-knowing system of systems will be able to predict the future, and might be dubbed the "crystal ball"—if that name was not already in use by DARPA (2007) (for a battle system that will virtually read commanders' minds from statements and sketches, then produce battle options and probable outcomes).

Some time ago I compared national intelligence agencies to sorcerers, divining the hidden and disrupting our adversaries (Ferguson 1999:428). Current DOD plans take this magical aspiration to whole new levels, beyond the imagination of any warlock. This is not merely a fantasy of omniscience, but one of omnipotence. Through tightening up the Kill Chain, Prompt Global Strike should be capable of destroying any target anywhere

in the world in under an hour. Impressive, but not compared to transforming whole societies, to make them like us and *be* like us. That ambition is positively alchemical. The universal solvent of modernity would gradually dissolve the traditional ties that impede neoliberal integration, be a panacea for the disruptive infections that ail our global ambitions, and metamorphose the enemy into friend, ally, or client.

For all the talk of "war without blood," blood will gush in abundance, and the intensifying grip of the American empire will lead to incalculable violence spread through the lives of those people anthropologists traditionally study, an expectable consequence of building up local security forces of all stripes. Will the dead be killed by magic? Usually, bullets, rockets, and jails do the job. But the thinking behind this global is magical. Many parallels can be drawn. Picking among the classicists, others in this volume discuss E. E. Evans-Pritchard's ideas. But consider Bronislaw Malinowski (1979). Humans often confront situations that "put them in harm's way"—drought, storms at sea, war—in which practical knowledge is no help. Humans want to believe they have control over these existential threats, or they find it difficult to go forward. In giving the illusion of control, magic is practical. It prescribes concrete measures to alleviate the anxiety of plunging into the unknowable and uncontrollable. If it fails, there are always reasons to explain the failure without questioning the premises.

This bears comparison to current security ambitions. The cultural turn of the DOD creates the *illusion* of control. The HTS, as a critical test of concept, does provide useful information to combat commanders, but there is no evidence that it is making any headway toward its announced goal of transforming areas of operations into more secure, friendly spaces (see Ferguson 2011). The simulacrum is a glamour, a false construction that deceives those under its spell. The savants of security, the magicians of DARPA, who envision a world of secure predictability, are captured by a naive faith that is justified neither by advances in social sciences nor those in hard sciences such as molecular biology, where greater knowledge means recognition of expanding dimensions of ignorance.

I research and teach on issues of "human nature." The advent of the genomic era was once foreseen as unlocking the secrets of what we are and why. There was heady talk of genetic interventions and finding specific genes for specific predispositions. What the great research progress of re-

cent years has actually produced is realization of just how rudimentary our understanding is. The developmental, systemic interactions of functional genes, noncoding regulatory DNA, epigenetics, multiplying classes of RNA, and proteomics—all of which are open and influenced by nonpredictable environmental factors—are far beyond our ability to comprehend. "It's all in the genes," it was once thought, and genomics would show us how. Now we have to recognize that cellular systems may be irreducibly complex and in important ways nondeterministic. We should expect nothing less from whole human beings.

The prophets of intelligence seem incapable of drawing the conclusion that the ability to know and predict the world is inherently limited, despite such glaring "intelligence failures" as the fall of the Soviet Union and the democratic uprisings across the Middle East. The lesson always drawn is that more and better intelligence is needed. The first half of this chapter has described how the DOD is pushing relentlessly to develop an all-encompassing virtual world of threat detection and neutralization. There is no call here for an "anthropological perspective"—that could be critical of U.S. military expansion around the world. But an essential ingredient is anthropological *product*—what anthropologists know about culture that can be absorbed and used for more effective military control. And the DOD is doing everything it can to get it.

It is impossible to imagine how this boundless program will penetrate and affect the lives and cultures of peoples around the world. Certainly there are many precedents in previous efforts of "insurgency prophylaxis"—as Project Camelot was called—yet never before has such money, technology, and intense focus of the U.S. military been directed at monitoring and controlling "indigenous networks." It brings empire up to a whole new level, and without question the impact will be great. But the permanent war has and will transform life not only in foreign lands but also right here at home. The second part of this chapter takes on one small part of the ongoing militarization of U.S. society, what the Pentagon's quest for culture means for anthropology, social science, and U.S. universities.

MILITARIZING ANTHROPOLOGY

How will the security demand for culture be manifested for the discipline of anthropology? To borrow a phrase, the impact will be *full spectrum*, changing conditions in education, employment, and research.

Military Education

A very large impact is expectable in education—in teaching possibilities within the DOD, in a militarization of campuses in general, and strains on anthropology programs specifically. Inside the military, a vast archipelago of educational programs demand cultural perspectives. That means a lot of anthropology teachers and instructional products.

The Institute for Defense Analysis was charged with surveying in-house military cultural education programs. It was surprised by how much already existed. "In addition to the vastness of the landscape with respect to the programs and initiatives, the variety of emphases and missions cannot be overstated" (Alrich 2008:2). Instruction comes in many forms. There are one-off lectures for predeployment forces and short courses on military bases, such as an introduction to anthropology or Islam (Capuzzo 2007). A major growth area is online training and education resources, beginning with a Warfighter Cultural Awareness curriculum, and including specialized instructions about particular areas for soldiers in the field (Masellis 2009:14).

There are higher level collegiate and postgraduate venues for anthropological instruction within the military, beginning with the service academies of West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy, and extending through command and staff colleges, most of which have military think-tanks or research groups (Roxborough 2008:2–3). Across levels, however staffed or structured, a great surge in military education in foreign languages and cultures is assuredly on the way. The Quadrennial Defense Review in 2010 sees this expansion as one of the DOD's most important investments (QDR 2010:25–26).

Militarizing Campuses

Moving outside the Camo Tower to consider our universities, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, former president of Texas A&M, called ringingly for greatly increased cooperation between the DOD and research universities. Campuses as a whole are targeted for a major increase in military/security engagement: opening them for more Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs, "actively promoting the military as a career option, or giving full support to military recruiters on campus . . . [and] wide-ranging initiatives to recognize veterans for the knowledge they have." Online courses should be offered for military personnel that are "immedi-

ately relevant—the history of the Middle East, anthropology classes on tribal culture, and so on." To encourage participation, universities could offer degree credit for these courses—"the Department could offer logistical advice" (Gates 2008:3). Beyond individual universities, Gates envisions "a consortia of universities that will promote research in specific areas" (2008:2), encouraged by Minerva Initiative funding. After a closed-door meeting with Gates, presidents of major universities were reportedly enthusiastic, even "extraordinarily excited" by the proposal of greater collaboration between the Pentagon and U.S. universities (Jaschik 2008a:2).

The intelligence community (IC) is already farther along than that. Two current programs bring intelligence agencies onto campuses. The Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program (PRISP) was the first manifestation of security engagement to attract attention within anthropology (see Price 2005a). PRISP is a scholarship program for individual students, who receive substantial funding to study languages and topics, cultural and otherwise, that are of direct interest to the CIA and other intelligence agencies. Applicants go through a security investigation, polygraph, and drug screening. Recipients must have an internship with an approved agency. After graduation, they are required to spend one and a half the duration of their funded studies in the employ of an intelligence agency, or pay back the scholarship at punitive rates of interest (DIA n.d.; Price 2005b). Faculty members have no way of knowing whether one of these intelligence trainees is in their class.

Only recently coming to broad attention (Price 2010c) is the IC Centers of Academic Excellence (CAE) Program. Presently offered are renewable grants for adjusting universities to long-term intelligence needs. CAE will "create a new diverse talent pool from which the intelligence community can recruit" (CAE n.d.). All participating universities are required to enhance curricula needed by the IC, hold colloquia with other consortia universities on IC issues and careers, send IC scholars abroad for education and immersion, and reach out to local high schools about intelligence careers. By 2010, twenty-two universities had signed up, including the University of Maryland, College Park; the Universities of New Mexico and Nebraska; Pennsylvania State; and Virginia Polytechnic (CAE n.d.). Of course, a major intelligence presence on U.S. campuses is hardly something new (Price 2004, 2008a).

Anthropology Programs

My guess is that most who teach in colleges and universities already have servicemen and -women in their classrooms. At Rutgers University, Newark, I get many, and they and their interests are welcome. I also get the standard office hours question, "What can you do with an anthropology degree, even a bachelor's?" I include the military and intelligence possibilities, and we talk about it. At graduate levels, a professor should be prepared for a surge of enrollments in anthropology master's degree and certificate programs. For anyone charting a military career today, or someone from another social science wanting to retool in an ethnographic direction, a master's or certificate would be a solid investment, especially if tuition is somehow subsidized by the DOD. University administrations love master's degree and certificate programs.

Then there are doctorates, military persons who obtain the highest degree from research universities. It is frequently emphasized that training senior officers "should extend to the world's best graduate schools" (Joint Forces Command 2008:49). This is a challenge facing diverse disciplines, and it is especially pointed for anthropology programs. If they enroll a military person for a Ph.D. in anthropology, will they do fieldwork under departmental auspices, like any other fledgling anthropologist? How would institutional review boards handle this dual orientation? How would a department even categorize someone as a military person? Many would come in after leaving active duty, intending to use their anthropological training in future security contexts. If graduate anthropology departments have not considered this, they should.

> As more *military anthropologists* achieve higher degrees, they will expand the possibility of the "grow our own" alternative, in which higher-level anthropology training takes place within military post-graduate institutes, thus bypassing AAA professional concerns. (Connable 2009:64)

> Regrettably, the anthropological community in academia has tremendous reservations about working with the military. . . . A specialized group of ethnographers is urgently needed. The solution is for the Department of Defense to grow its own cultural experts—hybrids between soldier and anthropologists, who may not have to be uniformed,

but do have to look at cultural matters from a security standpoint. (Renzi 2006a:12–13)

According to John Allison, a cultural anthropologist who joined and then resigned in protest from the HTS program, this is happening already. "The military is beginning to do an end run by producing its own anthropologist/social scientist PhDs at West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy and other cooperating institutions; thus marginalizing the criticism" (quoted in Price 2010d:4).

Funded and Promoted Research

Another broad front of the military invasion will be in anthropological research. In April 2008, Secretary Gates announced the Minerva Initiative (Asher 2008; Gates 2008; Jaschick 2008a, 2008b). Building on a series of private meetings with leaders of the Association of American Universities, Minerva aims to engage disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, and evolutionary psychology on topics of "strategic importance to U.S. National Policy." Between the directly administered grants and a parallel program outsourced to the National Science Foundation (NSF), upward of $74 million over five years is dedicated to new research.

In the first twenty-four grants announced for both programs, the largest number (six) concern terrorism or insurgency, with additional clusters on group behavioral psychology and dynamics (four), environmental security (two), conflict in weak or authoritarian states (three), postconflict recovery (two), plus several that cannot be lumped with others (Minerva Initiative n.d.a). One cannot tell the value of a proposal from its title, but by the titles, most of these seem like worthwhile projects. Notably absent is any title that hints at a critical perspective on U.S. military or other security projects. The Social Science Research Council posted a panel of thoughtful commentaries on the Minerva Initiative and its prospective effect on social sciences. Hugh Gusterson (2008) and Catherine Lutz (2008) notably worry that expanded engagement through Minerva/NSF funding will bend the priorities and practices of anthropology into the military orbit. Researchers may gravitate toward studying what the DOD wants studied. No doubt additional sources of security-related funding will come.

Both research funding programs are explicitly intended to cross disciplines, to build a new community of security science researchers, "to

foster a new generation of engaged scholarship in the social sciences" (Minerva Initiative n.d.b). Besides creating a network of civilian security researchers, the DOD also intends to connect multidisciplinary scholars directly to the military establishment. The HTS calls for development of a network of area specialists to call on as needed (Kipp et al. 2007:14). The DSB Task Force (DSB 2009: xiv) notes that "both the Army and Air Force reported that each maintained an extensive network of expert cultural consultants. The combatant commands also have their own 'rolodex files' . . . [but the DOD as a whole lacks] procedures, funding lines, and automated expert finder/locator for effectively engaging and leveraging expertise in industry and academia"—and needs to develop them. "Recognizing the importance of such cross-disciplinary interactions, Secretary Gates is actively working to reassure those who may be reluctant to collaborate with the Department of Defense." As anthropologists and other social scientists are drawn into security studies, regular interaction with security professionals will become normal.

Security Appropriation of Normal Anthropological Research

Perhaps the broadest connection of the military and anthropology is already at hand, not through funding new work but through the diligent mining and absorption of normal, published research and dissertations. The most important fount of anthropological data will not be from HTS social scientists but from what security people call "open sources." The head of military intelligence in Afghanistan concludes open-source information makes up 90 percent of the intelligence future, clandestine work merely being more dramatic (Flynn et al. 2010:23). The standard operating procedure now for human terrain teams is to pose a problem for the Reachback cells Stateside to investigate through open-source materials. As the anthropologist John Allison wrote to David Price (2010d:3), before he quit the HTS: "One interesting fact that was revealed today is that *the time that an anthropologist or social scientist has to finish an interview before the probability of a sniper attack becomes drastically high, is about 7 minutes.* How deep an understanding, rapport or trust develops in 7 minutes? It seems that the 'data' sought is very limited to operationally tactically useful stuff. For anything deeper, they 'reach back' to the research centers for work from anthropologists that they will use without permission and without attribution" (emphasis in original). A similar evaluation was made by another HTS team member in the field: "Without

the ability to truly immerse yourself in the population, existing knowledge of the culture . . . is critical. Lacking that, we were basically an open-source research cell" (Ephron and Spring 2008:2).

HTS Reachback specialists, and "deskbound analysts" in other programs and institutions, constitute another major source of employment for anyone with any anthropology degree (see Kipp et al. 2007). These analysts will be part of the process of streaming together anthropological data with other sources of intelligence. For instance, BAE Systems, the former contractor of the HTS (see Feinstein 2011), advertised for a "Senior Human Terrain Analyst" to use new toolkits to "address specific, often time sensitive topics that normally include the fusion of SIGINT data, tribal/cultural patterns, message traffic, imagery, open source and advanced geospatial technologies" (BAE 2009).

Given the overarching emphasis on standardizing information and integrating it within interoperational data sets, it can safely be assumed that these textual sources are being analyzed and coded for recovery and modeling. High aspirations are plain in a DARPA (2008) call for proposals for a Universal Reading Machine, capable of reading everything, categorizing information, processing it through programs for analyzing behavior, and passing it along to whomever or whatever can use it. This proposed system would apply to academic publications, print media, and Web postings, going beyond what may be accomplished by human reader/processors. "Manually encoding such knowledge can become prohibitively expensive . . . the goal of the MRP [Machine Reading Program] is to create an automated Reading System that serves as a bridge between knowledge contained in natural texts and the formal reasoning systems that need such knowledge" (2008:6). All anthropologists working in any area of potential interest to U.S. security agencies—and that is much of the world—should understand that any ethnographic information they publish, any sort of explanation of why those people do what they do, will be assimilated into the great network of security data bases and modeling systems, and through them made available to military, intelligence, and other security practitioners.

Price (2008a) describes how U.S. military needs around World War II contributed to the development of basic anthropological research projects and tools, such as area handbooks and the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). Thus he notes the irony in that the leaked *Human Terrain Team Handbook* calls for contributing human terrain data to the HRAF database: "This practice will also allow us to tie into the HRAF database and compare the existence of one social practice, symbolic system, or historical process in our area of operations with others elsewhere in the world. Such cross-cultural analysis enables us to get closer to explaining causation and make weak assertions of what will likely happen in the population in the near future" (Finney 2008, quoted in Price 2008b:3). Given the plans for data integration and modeling described in this chapter, the new DOD efforts will make HRAF correlational studies seem like the horse and buggy. Given high level pledges of research openness (Gates 2008), anthropologists probably will be invited to use these tools—or some of them anyway—although these tools may have a built-in bias toward topics of security interest. The scholarly possibilities will be bedazzling.

CONCLUSION

The DOD cultural revolution will have a profound impact on anthropology and its intellectual environment. People with degrees from bachelor's to doctorate will find work with the military as teachers and analysts. (What may be distasteful for a tenured professor may seem quite different for a young person trying to set up a job, life, and family.) Campuses and social sciences will reorient to security needs. Militarily oriented culture seekers will filter into anthropology teaching programs. Militarily useful anthropology will be trained into soldier-anthropologist hybrids, who then can reproduce their own. Academic research will be funded and otherwise channeled into security-relevant topics. All "open-source" work with possible security relevance will be assimilated into the great security networks and nodes of synthesis, analysis, and prediction.

Of course, all this assumes that the DOD emphasis on culture will continue in the years to come. Although details and outcomes are debated, can anyone claim that the DOD's turn to culture has turned the tide in Afghanistan? Some in power have questioned the new counterinsurgency, Vice President Joe Biden among them. Yet it is very unlikely that a lack of success will lead to a turn away from culture-centric counterinsurgency. As with the CORDS/Phoenix counterinsurgency program in Vietnam, blame can go elsewhere—the program got started too late, it was misunderstood, the American public had lost the will to fight, and so on (Andrade and Willbanks 2006). The emphasis on global COIN and counterterrorism (CT)—often put in harness with stability operations (SO)—will not go away. The DOD cultural revolution has gone too far to

turn back, permeating its power centers, while a new generation of COIN combat officers is rising within the Pentagon.

COIN/CT will not go away because too much is riding on it. These spotlighted global challenges give the Pentagon something it desperately needs—an unending rationale for massive military spending. As the Quadrennial Defense Review (2010:20) puts it: "Stability operations, large-scale counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism operations are not niche challenges or the responsibility of a single Military Department, but rather require a portfolio of capabilities as well as sufficient capacity from across America's Armed Forces and other departments and agencies. Nor are these types of operations a transitory or anomalous phenomenon in the security landscape. On the contrary, we must expect that for the indefinite future, violent extremist groups, with or without state sponsorship, will continue to foment instability and challenge U.S. and allied interests."

Even if many of the DOD's high-budget items are of little relevance to COIN/CT/SO, terrorist-linked insurgents provide the critical fear factor that supports massive security spending and bleeds the federal government dry for domestic spending. "It's a dangerous world out there," the militarist mantra goes. "We are locked in a life-and-death struggle with deadly fanatics who thrive on disorder. We must spend whatever it takes to give our brave soldiers whatever it takes to prevail, and to protect America."

This volume raises the question "when is war?" For the DOD, war is always, everywhere. Even when there is no realistic threat to U.S. security interests, the potential exists. The envisioned global surveillance system will be vigilant against a threat's emergence, peering into the shadows, sweeping out the corners, turning over rocks. That is how to get ahead of the curve. Actually fighting and winning a war is just one aspect of this project, a cleanup when prior forms of surveillance and control have not done their jobs.

This premise of existential threat underlies political discourse in the United States. Take away terrorism and insurgency, and where is the visceral danger for U.S. voters? (North Korea and Iran work, too, but China?) Why should the federal government channel about *half* of its entire discretionary spending into the military? Why should the United States maintain some 600 to 700 overseas military bases? (It is a telling fact that no one has been able to ascertain the number of bases more precisely than that; Turse 2011.) Say the magic words: "to safeguard American security." Yet look at the man pulling the levers behind the curtain. What is really thriving on perceptions of global "instability and challenge [to] U.S. and allied interests" is the U.S. military-corporate-political complex.

Anthropologists working in war zones (Lubkemann 2008; Richards 1996) have come to understand that war may not be a defined period, separate from ongoing projects of everyday life, but a chronic state of existence, the context for ongoing life projects. So it is for the United States. Catherine Lutz (2002a), other anthropologists (Gusterson and Besteman 2009), and earlier pioneers such as Seymour Melman (1974, 1984) document the myriad ways that U.S. society and culture have been thoroughly reoriented to a permanent war footing. This is always the way of militaristic societies and empires (Ferguson 1999). Questioning military projection is ruled out of bounds within "legitimate" political discourse. Language is bent to the cause. U.S. forces are "put in harm's way," rather than sent to do harm—which is what any army is about.[4] Anthropology is now being pulled into this total war complex.

The DOD is only the biggest dog in the room. The Department of State, think-tanks, and private corporations will all be looking to put culture to use. Civilian surges (Binnendijk and Cronin 2008; DeYoung 2009; Jelinek 2009), stability operations, and the rapidly expanding Department of State Civilian Response Corps (U.S. Department of State n.d.) will all offer increasing opportunities for social scientists to work not for but with the military, complicating choices about individual engagement. But they, too, will bring anthropology closer to the security world.

To be clear, *I am not against all manner of security engagement*. Opportunities should be considered situation by situation. But all those situations are being created by powerful agencies with lots of money, and they are manipulating incentives to increase cooperation. The sum total of individual situations and choices may result in a profound shift for anthropology as a whole.

Any anthropologist considering closer work with the DOD and other security agencies should make themselves aware of the record of past engagements (see Price 2004, 2008a). They should also be thinking about our future. The military invasion of anthropology must be recognized in its scope and ambition. What will it mean for anthropology if our research, expertise, and practitioners are assimilated into the imperial apparatus? One response to this global challenge would be to reorient

scholarly efforts in countervailing directions—studying, publishing, and teaching more on U.S. militarism and its consequences, at home and abroad, as this book does.

Resistance is not futile.

NOTES

1. I recently met an engineer from Mitre Corporation, who works with StratCom, the current incarnation of the Strategic Air Command. He told me that anthropological input was essential for their intelligence work. Anthropologists—he told me twice—fill the same function today as Indian Scouts did in the days of the old West.
2. A proposal by the anthropologists Anna Simons and David Tucker, "Improving Human Intelligence in the War on Terrorism: The Need for an Ethnographic Capability," was submitted to the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Net Assessment in 2004. It has not been made public (Renzi 2006b:22).
3. Renzi references the proposal to Net Assessment by Simons and Tucker, and he studied under Simons, so it is not unreasonable to expect this position reflects ideas in that proposal.
4. I recall Johnny Carson commenting on the Reagan administration's renaming a new nuclear missile "the Peacekeeper—which sounds a lot better than World Ender."

CHAPTER 5 SVERKER FINNSTRÖM

TODAY HE IS NO MORE

Magic, Intervention, and Global War in Uganda

The point of my sermon is simply this. However incomprehensible the acts of the terrorists may seem to be, our judges, our policemen, and our politicians must never be allowed to forget that terrorism is an activity of fellow human beings and *not* of dog-headed cannibals.

—Sir Edmund Leach, ***Custom, Law, and Terrorist Violence*** (1977)

In what follows, I revisit a few months of intensive fieldwork conducted in late 2005. This fieldwork spell was part of a much longer engagement with war-torn Acholiland in northern Uganda starting in 1997 and still ongoing. But back in 2005, I could follow closely the unfolding of local news as the International Criminal Court (ICC) unsealed its arrest warrants for the leaders of the globally infamous Lord's Resistance Army/Movement (LRA).

From this horizon, I discuss the intersection of media reporting, international interventions, and violent insurgency/counterinsurgency warfare in Uganda and beyond. In sketching an ethnography that trails violent death, I will not just focus on any instrumental goal of violent acts but more on what such acts *do*. I thus sketch how perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of violence alike "are directed toward the ever-shifting horizons of their existence" (Kapferer 1997:4), and also how such existential horizons may implode in *vital conjunctures* that are not only highly violent but also magical. I build on David Riches's (1986)