

Postcard from Mumbai: Modern Urban Siege

John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus

According to many television news reports, the Mumbai terrorist attacks were a “siege.” But there were no catapults, cannons, or breaching ladders. Instead, a dozen men with guns paralyzed one of the world’s largest cities, killing 173 with barely concealed glee. Sadly, Mumbai heralds a new chapter in the bloody story of war in cities—the siege of the city from within. The *polis* is fast becoming a war zone where criminals, terrorists, and heavily armed paramilitary forces battle—and all can be targeted.¹ All the while, gardens of steel spring up, constricting popular movement and giving way to an evolving architecture of fear. The “feral city” and the military colony battle each other for dominance in the urban siege.

Defending against the urban siege requires bridging the gap between police and military, building a layered defense, and fighting to preserve the right to the city. Despite the terrifying nature of the threat, the ultimate advantage lies with the vibrant modern city and the police, soldiers, and civilians tasked to defend it. The key to success lies in the construction of resilient physical and moral infrastructure.

Cities, Sieges, and the Engine of War

City sieges are as old as cities themselves. Fortifications took the place of soldiers in the field, as walls required no food or supplies to maintain, offered more defensive power, and allowed light infantry the opportunity to savage attackers with projectiles.² Military theorists from Sun Tzu onwards counseled armies to avoid fights in cities—those who disregarded their advice often suffered bloody defeat, their soldiers riddled with arrows on the parapets or shot down in narrow streets. Yet the contest between the attacking army and the urban defender was by no means static--technology and social change fueled an arms race between attack and defense.

To break through the fortress, attackers developed new and innovative methods of penetration and increased their artillery’s firepower. Castles, once impregnable in the Middle Ages, became death traps with the advent of cannons. The defense, in turn, developed stronger fortifications as well as complex methods of interlocking fire support.

¹ Saskia Sassen, “Cities and New Wars: After Mumbai,” *OpenDemocracy*, November 29, 2008.
<<http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/the-new-wars-and-cities-after-mumbai-0>>

² Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001, p.11.

The fortification revolution of the 16th century, for example, introduced the system of bastioned defense, with broad and low bastions erected in a circular formation to create flanking fire.³

During the urban revolution of the 20th century, blitzkrieg and “deep battle” maneuver operations allowed armies to bypass fortifications and disable and dislocate opposing forces. Commando operations, such as the glider assault on Eben Emael, destroyed fortresses that could have halted the enemy advance. Because traditional fortifications could not halt the enemy, the city itself was turned into a living weapon.⁴ The Soviets shredded German armies wholesale through vicious street fighting in the battles of Stalingrad and Leningrad, the Germans returned the favor in Berlin, and the Chinese achieved one of their few conventional victories over the Japanese in the battle of Tai-erh-chaung, slaying up to 16,000 of the invaders.⁵

The decline of conventional great power war, however, changed the nature of external siege. Nuclear weapons, stronger networks of trade and relations, and the bipolarity of the Cold War lessened interstate war, largely putting a stop to conventional external siege. As a result, external sieges increasingly took the form of conventional occupying armies fighting against networked urban insurgents. Insurgents attacked invading conventional armies through a combination of hybrid conventional/irregular partisan defense and urban guerrilla warfare. One frightening example of this dynamic is the 1994 Chechen defense of Grozny against the Russian armed forces. A Russian force comprising 40,000 men suffered losses of 2,805 killed, 10,319 wounded, 393 missing and 133 captured against a Chechen force of 7,000 at most.⁶

A parallel phenomenon of this period is the classical urban insurgency. Urban insurgency, like external siege, is not a new phenomenon. As Anthony James Joes notes in his study *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, one can find accounts of urban insurgency in Thucydides.⁷ The current wave of urban insurgency originated in the wave of 19th century urban anarchist cells in Russia, Europe, and the United States. The immense expansion of urban sprawl that occurred in the 20th century and the growth of subversive left ideologies provoked a string of ideologically motivated urban guerrillas to follow their example.

Unlike classical guerrillas, who stuck mostly to the countryside and engaged in a strategy of protracted ideological war, urban insurgents attempted to incapacitate the government through strategies of sheer violence. They hoped that by doing so, they could raise the

³ Jones, p. 194.

⁴ John Robb, “The Coming Urban Terror,” *City Journal*, Summer 2007. http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_3_urban_terrorism.html

⁵ William M. Wadell, “Tai-erh chaung, 1938” in Col. John Antal and Maj. Bradley Gericke, *City Fights: Selected Histories of Urban Combat from World War II to Vietnam*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2003, p. 1.

⁶ David P. Dilege and Matthew Van Konynenburg, “A View from the Wolves’ Den: The Chechens and Urban Operations” in Robert J. Bunker (ed), *Non-State Threats and Future Wars*, London: Frank Cass, 2003, p. 172.

⁷ Anthony James Joes, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007, p. 1.

consciousness of the people and seize power. Urban guerrillas tended to be small cells of radicalized students and middle-class intellectuals. Many received training and assistance from Soviet block nations and Arab insurgent groups. This form of urban warfare was mostly prevalent in Latin America, although left urban insurgent strategy could be seen in the United States and Europe with terrorist groups such as the Symbionese Liberation Army and the Red Army Faction.

Urban guerrilla warfare, for the most part, was a remarkable failure. The expected uprising of the masses did not occur, as the guerrillas made little to no effort to propagandize among the proletariat. They preferred spectacular acts of terrorism that attracted media attention, but didn't bother to devise any mechanisms for translating their press success into popular support. The left urban insurgents also alienated the people with their tactics, which were often indistinguishable from common terrorism.⁸ Urban guerrilla movements, usually confined to a small cadre of well-off intellectuals, were almost universally crushed by the state. With the formation of special law enforcement counter-terrorist units in the 1970s, left insurgents also lost the tactical advantage they enjoyed against ordinary beat policemen. If the bloody disaster at the 1972 Munich games was the high point of the urban terrorist, the 1977 GSG-9 hostage rescue of Lufthansa Flight 181 spelled the decline of the left urban insurgency.

The most successful urban insurgencies, such as the 1994 bleeding of the Russians in Grozny, the IRA's long-running urban campaign against the British, and the 1950s urban insurgency against the French in Algiers, were all waged against foreign occupiers. Even so, most of them were tactical failures for the insurgent. The Russians eventually occupied Grozny, though they left in disgrace. The IRA, increasingly bereft of public support and riddled with British informers, elected to make peace with the British. The French eventually crushed the urban insurgency in Algiers through the usage of autonomous commando teams, pseudo-operations, and extensive torture. The 1968 spasm of urban violence in Saigon, which was supposed to "liberate" the city from American and South Vietnamese forces, succeeded only in shattering American public opinion. The vast majority of Vietcong commandos and sappers were slaughtered in the American/Vietnamese response.

Back to the Future in Mumbai

Unfortunately, urban siege is back—and the new networked terrorists and criminal insurgents have changed the nature of the game. They exist in what John Robb calls a "bazaar of violence," collaborating in an emergent manner across geographic and factional boundaries.⁹ Future insurgents are also likely to cloak themselves within a deception array of defensive information operations designed to make themselves

⁸ Joes, p. 6.

⁹ John Robb, "The Bazaar's Open Source Platform," *Global Guerrillas*, September 24, 2004. <http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/09/bazaar_dynamics.html>

formless to defending intelligence agencies.¹⁰ They mass their forces in cyberspace, coalesce, and then unite for devastating strikes on civilian and military targets.

Terrorism and ideological insurgency are by no means the only threat to the state, as criminal insurgents pose a different—but no less terrifying problem—for public security. Criminal insurgents and militias fight for a small piece of the state, utilizing a reverse inkblot method to generate zones of disorder. Protracted criminal wars are going on in Mexico, Guatemala, and Brazil, where police struggle against increasingly sophisticated cartels and street gangs. In Mexico, cartels have assassinated both beat cop and high-level *federale* alike with frightening efficiency. At the same time, criminal insurgents also attach themselves to the superstructure of the state and co-opt its governing and security arms.¹¹ Terrorists and criminal insurgents can also corrupt non-state forces such as non-governmental organizations and private military companies for use as kill vehicles against the state.¹²

There are several methods that terrorists and criminal insurgents use to besiege cities from within—pure terror and systems disruption, although the two are often combined together. Both methods are sustained means of besieging a city with a campaign of protracted urban violence. Pure terror is a form of social systems disruption. It is a spasm of violence intended to demonstrate to the public that the authorities cannot help them, and that they are helpless against the power of the gun. In Brazil, the First Capital Command (*Primeiro Comando da Capital* or PCC) launched a massive attack in 2006 to demonstrate its power, detonating car bombs, gunning down law enforcement, destroying banks, and destabilizing transportation systems. They effectively shut down the city of São Paulo, paralyzing it and terrifying its residents.¹³

In his history of the car bomb, *Buda's Wagon*, urbanist Mike Davis also catalogues a terrifying blitz of sustained city sieges that took place in over 20 cities during the 1990s.¹⁴ Perhaps the most grisly urban siege Davis records was the criminal insurgent Pablo Escobar's one-man war against the Colombian government. From the mid-1980s to the mid-90s, Escobar targeted everyone from Colombian politicians to hapless shoppers with lethal car bombs—turning the cities of Medellín and Bogotá into death traps. His car bombs and assassinations killed hundreds of law enforcement officials and civilians, and Escobar was only stopped after a government-sponsored death squad eliminated his organization and put him to flight.¹⁵

¹⁰ See Adam Elkus, "Simulated Black Swans: National Security, Perception Operations, and the Expansion of the Infosphere," in Michael Tanji (Ed.), *Threats in the Age of Obama*, Ann Arbor: Nimble Books LLC, 2009.

¹¹ See John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, "State of Siege: Mexico's Criminal Insurgency," *Small Wars Journal*, August 19, 2008. <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/08/state-of-siege-mexicos-crimina.php>>

¹² See Graham Hall Turbiville, Jr., "Outlaw Private Security Firms: Criminal and Terrorist Agendas Undermine Private Security Alternatives," in Robert J. Bunker (ed), *Criminal-States and Criminal-Soldiers*, New York: Routledge, 2008.

¹³ Arthur Itassu, "Violence in Brazil: All Are Targets, All Are Guilty," *OpenDemocracy*, May 16, 2008. <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/3555>>

¹⁴ Mike Davis, *Buda's Wagon: A Brief History of the Car Bomb*, Verso: New York, 2007, p. 117

¹⁵ Davis, p. 111.

Certain urban sieges have more instrumental aims. For example, al-Qaeda in Iraq's targeting of the Adhamniya Mosque ignited an internecine conflict between the Sunnis and Shiites. The 2005 occupation of the Beslan school in Russia by Chechen insurgents and the clumsy attempt to re-take it by Russian special forces operatives created widespread horror and underlined the Chechen ability to strike at Russia's children. Few things are more horrifying than the thought of children being slaughtered wholesale by fanatical terrorists, and this brutal fact made the Chechen operation a resounding success.

There are disturbing possibilities for paramilitary terrorist sieges in America. We are fixated on the possibility of weapons of mass destruction terrorism, but ignore the simpler methods of operational swarming and siege in major cities. While the success of the Mumbai terrorists came in large part from the tactical and operational inadequacy of Indian law enforcement response, it is easy to imagine a small group of terrorists creating multiple centers of disorder at the same time within a major American city in same manner. An equally terrifying scenario is a Beslan-type siege in school centers with multiple active shooters. Paramilitary terrorists of this kind would aim for maximum violence, target hardening, and area denial—capabilities that many SWAT units would be hard-pressed to counter.¹⁶

Unlike pure terror, systems disruption eschews instrumental targeting of civilians and instead focuses on disabling vital nodes that sustain the city. While civilians are often the victims of collateral damage of the attacks, the main targets are the machines. Most modern cities are sustained by a series of complex—and vulnerable—networks of commerce, governance, energy, communications, and water that can be targeted by insurgents. These networks are so tightly coupled together that certain failures in one system can have cascading effects in others.

In the early stages of the Iraqi insurgency, insurgents targeted electrical systems, power plants, oil pipelines, and other centers of sustenance. Insurgents also mounted frequent raids aimed at American logistics. Convoys of basic supplies to American expeditionary civilian and soldiers became dangerous assignments carried out by groups of heavily armed contractors. The disruption of public services paralyzed the city and undermined the faith of the population in the government and Coalition forces.

Other examples of systems disruption have occurred in Nigeria and Mexico, where guerrillas and terrorists have targeted energy utilities and supplies. Granted, the apocalyptic predictions of systems disruption attacks aimed at American utilities have not yet occurred, and it's important to point out that industrial societies have a natural resiliency that terrorism theorists often underrate. But given the importance that al-Qaeda (and other) strategists have placed on bleeding the superpower into submission, they are a possibility that we cannot rule out.

¹⁶ Bill Tallen, "Paramilitary Terrorism: A Neglected Threat," *Homeland Security Affairs Journal*, June 2008. <<http://www.hsaj.org/?article=4.2.6>>

While both urban siege methods have different tactics, techniques, and procedures, they rely on similar operational methods—the decentralized urban assault unit. The Mumbai attack utilized highly mobile autonomous groups that overwhelmed the Indian response capability by striking many different targets at once. These capabilities aren't only found in terrorist groups. Cartels utilize heavily armed paramilitary assault teams (comprised of former Mexican and Guatemalan special forces operatives) for complex tactical operations in Mexico (and within US borders). The end result is a protracted urban war in which the city is besieged from within.

It is too soon to make a definitive statement about this method's success—most urban sieges by non-state forces in the past have been failures. The modern urban insurgent's tactical attacks have served their purpose, but it hard to see how they accomplish strategic objectives. But it has the potential to be a highly effective tool of coercion and disrupting everyday life. Government responses to urban terrorism, however well intentioned, have exacerbated the problem through the usage of urban military special operations forces and the construction of militarized space.

Walking Through Walls and Military Urbanism

In Brazil, an urban war is in progress between military police urban warfare units and drug gangs. The paramilitary police launch all out war against the drug gangs. These are not law enforcement actions but military operations designed to annihilate the traffickers themselves. The assaults were launched with police, special operations units, and helicopters. There is little distinction made between residents of the *favela* and drug traffickers.¹⁷ Extensive human rights complaints have accumulated against the police actions, with rights groups alleging that the police and soldiers have deliberately killed innocent people.¹⁸ Their violent actions have amassed popular support among the middle and upper classes, which view the urban poor with disdain and hate the violent and sadistic drug traffickers. This support does nothing, however, in the lower-class *favelas*.

The most elite of the Brazilian urban operations units is BOPE, a special operations unit under the command of the Brazilian military police. In a purely tactical sense, BOPE is a success—the BOPE officers are one of the few law enforcement conventional forces who can utilize the city as a weapon against their opponents. Traffickers fear BOPE more than the corrupt regular police. Their symbol is a grinning skull impaled on a sword.¹⁹ But in a strategic sense they—along with the regular police—alienate the poor residents of the *favela* and put the city into a permanent state of war.

¹⁷ Tom Philips, "Blood on the streets as drug gang and police fight for control of Rio favelas," *The Guardian*, June 19, 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/29/brazil.international>>

¹⁸ "Police Accused Over Rio Killings," BBC, Friday, June 29, 2007. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6254876.stm>>

¹⁹ See "Brazil: Caveirão -- Rio's real "bogyman," Amnesty International, March 13, 2006. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR19/009/2006/en/dom-AMR190092006en.html>

Thankfully, the Brazilians seem to be adopting a more reasonable strategy. According to the *Washington Post*, Brazilian police officers are cribbing from American counterinsurgency tactics in Iraq, setting up permanent outposts within the *favelas*, pounding the pavement in search of usable intelligence, and spending government funds on public works.²⁰ Whether or it succeeds will depend on the overall strategy and the police's support from the government and non-governmental organizations. There are strong reasons to be skeptical, given the immense corruption of the Brazilian civil sector, but the strategy at least represents an evolutionary step from the raiding mentality represented by BOPE.

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF)'s operations against Palestinian urban insurgents also have failed to stamp out urban insurgency. Beginning in early 2000, the Israelis utilized a combination of targeted airstrikes from air and naval platforms combined with Special Forces raids into the interior. Beginning with Operation Defense Shield and Operation Determined Path, the IDF utilized swarming tactics designed at collapsing terrorist infrastructure. Many small units backed up by micro UAVs and helicopters converged from many different directions simultaneously, operating out of contact with the enemy. These tactics avoided the enemy's area of strength, surprising, confusing, and deceiving them.²¹

As Israeli architect Eyal Weizmann noted in an article for *Frieze* magazine, the IDF's thought reconceptualized the city as not just the site but also a *medium* of war. Urban special operations units turned the city into a death trap for insurgents, surprising them by blasting through walls and floors. Such operations use the post-structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concept of the *rhizome*, a decentralized unit of organization. While such operations may be tactically and operationally brilliant, the theoretical insights in them mean little to the scared Palestinian family at the other end of the wall that an IDF trooper blasts through while executing a rhizome maneuver.²²

The most recent Israeli operations have not matched the tactical brilliance exhibited by Shimon Naveh's rhizome maneuvers. The current Gaza operation to put it bluntly, a pure raid, as Israelis made little effort to reach out to those inundated by their artillery fires.²³ As of the writing of this essay, major ground operations have ceased, but Hamas' organization remains intact. Rocket fire continues against Israeli targets and periodic Israeli operations continue against Hamas positions within the ruined urban zone.

While BOPE officers and IDF special operations forces may be masters at manipulating the city as fluid operational space, they have an overly materialist conception of the

²⁰ Joshua Partlow, "To Rid Slums of Drug Gangs, Police Try War Tactics," *Washington Post*, January 6, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/05/AR2009010502741.html>

²¹ See Dr. Sergio Cantignani, "The Israeli Defense Forces and the Al-Aqsa Intifada," in Carter Malkasian and Daniel Marston (eds), *Counterinsurgency and Modern Warfare*, Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007, p. 241.

²² Eyal Weizmann, "The Art of War," *Frieze*, Issue 99, 2007. http://www.frieze.com/feature_single.asp?f=1165

²³ Steven Erlanger, "A Gaza War Full of Traps and Trickery," *New York Times*, January 10, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/world/middleeast/11hamas.html?_r=1&hp

city—it is not just buildings but also people. They ignore the *social spaces* in their strategies, which center overwhelmingly on manipulating material forces to their advantage. The net effect is to reify the concept of the city as a protracted battleground instead of gaining the support of the population and developing resilient security infrastructure.

Some nations choose to employ militias as primary security forces against non-state urban forces. The murderous government-sponsored “Los Pepes” death squad ground Pablo Escobar’s gang down with a series of brutal operations aimed at his organization and associates.²⁴ The Colombian AUC also was employed as a counter-guerrilla force that extensively targeted leftist organizers and labor unions as well as FARC guerrillas in a variety of environments. While these forces can create enough controlled chaos to counter the insurgents, they also destroy government legitimacy. They lack real public support themselves, only generating respect through fear and violence.

In order to better understand the dynamics of modern urban siege, it is also important to understand two trends in modern politico-urban theory—the feral city and military urbanism.

Failed Communities, Feral Cities, and Military Urbanism

The feral city is an area in which state power is nonexistent, the architecture consists entirely of slums, and power is a complex process negotiated through violence by differing factions. As Richard Norton notes in the *Naval War College Review*, the feral city is wracked with disease, poverty, and pollution, and cannibalized by graft.²⁵ But intercity, national, and even international economic and political processes occur—the city is a strategic actor interacting with the outside world. The feral city is an extreme endpoint of failed communities. Decaying megapolises provide fertile ground for non-state groups to contest control from the state.

After the end of European colonialism, the independent governments that rose from the ashes of the colonial state tried to modernize and consolidate, cracking down on ethnic, regional, and religious movements that contested state control and attempting to provide patronage in the form of employment, health care, and education. Yet this was ultimately unsustainable, as the pressure to cut costs to attract investors led many governments to cut back public services, and much of the developing world simply ran out of resources. Globalization also created huge skews in income, adding to the chaos. In many areas of the developing world, the government is functionally absent.²⁶ And as military historian Martin van Creveld noted, “A community which cannot safeguard the lives of its members...is unlikely to command their loyalty or survive for very long. The opposite is

²⁴ See Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World’s Greatest Outlaw*, Washington: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001.

²⁵ Richard Norton, “Feral Cities,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Autumn 2003, pp. 97-106, available at www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/2003/Autumn/pdfs/art6-a03.pdf.

²⁶ See John Rapley, “The New Middle Ages.” *Foreign Affairs* 85.3 (May/June 2006): 95-105.

also correct: any community able and...willing to exert itself to protect its members will be able to call on those members' loyalty."²⁷ This is where the criminal insurgent comes in.

Generally, transnational organized crime groups benefited from the existence of a stable state order. While traditional criminal enterprises exploited the seams between states, they did not seek to challenge the state; rather they used corruption and political manipulation to further their enterprises. This is changing, as a new species of global gangsters create parallel states to exploit the absence of effective states, endemic corruption, and grey or shadow economies.²⁸

Louise Shelley, director of American University's Transnational Crime and Corruption Center observes that, "the newer crime groups most often linked to terrorism have no interest in a secure state."²⁹ They promote and exploit grievances at local levels and through the globalization of conflict to secure the maneuver room to capture profit. The embedded nature of network crime structures in local communities and the inability of both domestic and international militaries, as well as law enforcement agencies, to control their activities make these new criminal soldiers a growing danger.

These terrorist-insurgent-criminal interactions are particularly virulent in "global cities" and the slums of mega-cities, including sub-national or cross-border enclaves or "lawless zones." Lawless zones and criminal enclaves are areas (ranging from neighborhoods to entire cities—feral cities—to regions, to states, and cross-border zones), where gangs, criminal enterprises, insurgents, or warlords dominate social life and erode the bonds of effective security and the rule of law. The interactions of technology, networks, "global cities," and non-state actors and contested enclaves set the stage for the urban sieges of the future.³⁰

Criminal netwarriors (soldiers) have altered the nature of crime and war, thereby altering the operational space within which the police, security services, and military function. Modern warfare is distinguished by the ability of insurgents to carry out omnidirectional spatial maneuver. Non-state actors have the power to rapidly shift between material, cyber, social, and political spaces. They do not recognize front and rear lines. They have the power to enter forbidden spaces that the state cannot recognize. This is their chief challenge to state power in an era where state power either is declining or in the midst of a painful transformation. This phenomenon finds its mirror in the proliferation of non-state organizations, viral "smart mobs," state-within-states, quasi-feudal criminal empires, and virtual states—all spaces beyond the reach of state power.

²⁷ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York: The Free Press, 1991, p. 198.

²⁸ Louise Shelley, "The Unholy Trinity: Transnational Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 11 (2), 102.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See John P. Sullivan and Keith Weston, "Afterward: Law Enforcement Response Strategies for Criminal-States and Criminal-Soldiers," in Robert J. Bunker (Ed.), *Criminal States and Criminal-Soldiers*, London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 287-300.

What the “feral city” chiefly represents is a giant challenge to state power. It is an emergent process, driven by a hive-mind intelligence that is the sum of a deviant social ecosystem composed of diffuse, bickering, but interacting factions that form a hidden order. Each “feral city” or “failed neighborhood” can serve as a pivot point in a giant network that is fast becoming a postmodern criminal empire that grows like a cancer within the interior space of the state. This is not an empire that has a unified base—it is the sum of a mass of economic, political, legal, and cultural processes that interact to form networks of power distributed within each individual citizen. ³¹ This criminal empire, slowly emerging, is the sum of the political-legal-cultural processes of the illicit economy. It is a global form of neofeudalism linked together by cyberspace, globalization, and a series of concrete ungoverned zones.

This is truly what the anarchist Hakim Bey meant when he analogized the now commonly-cited “Temporary Autonomous Zones” to the medieval Assassins that “founded a ‘State’ which consisted of a network of remote mountain valleys and castles, separated by thousands of miles, strategically invulnerable to invasion, connected by the information flow of secret agents, at war with all governments.” Bey connects the dots when he states “technology—freed from all political control—could make possible an entire world of autonomous zones.” ³²

The state’s response to the feral city is military urbanism. Cities undergoing urban sieges transform into gardens of steel. Concrete bunkers, “steel rings” designed to stop car bombs, checkpoints, blast walls, towers, barbed-wire fences, fortifications, and other military architecture slowly colonize the city. Security cameras, heavily armed guards, gated communities, private soldiers, and protected areas spring up. This constricts civilian movement and psychologically suggests a permanent state of war. As urban threats increase, many modern cities throughout industrial states are at risk of becoming military colonies.

On a tactical and operational level, the military colony attempts to deny spatial movement to the insurgent and terrorist by enclosing the open commons within rings of steel, barbed wire, and blast walls. Often times, military operations in feral cities are a process of strategic terraforming, slowly transforming selected elements of the feral city into a military colony.

In counterterrorism focusing solely on target hardening has a mixed record at best. Unless, in the case of Israel, the city is completely walled off from the source of disorder, the enemy finds a way to seep through cracks in conventional defenses. Granted, many of these responses (such as the blast wall in Baghdad) were responses to desperate circumstances. But the city, the *polis*, is the root of democratic political participation since the days of Athens. Military architecture erodes space for politics and culture, which has never flourished in a state of existential warfare. Perhaps the most important aspect of the current decline in violence in Iraq is the gradual erosion of such architecture in Baghdad. Although some urbanists (chief among them the philosopher Paul Virilio)

³¹ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

³² See Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, New York: Autotopia, 1991.

see the city as designed expressively for and as a result of war, the city as war machine is model that cannot be sustained.³³

Law Enforcement Responses to Urban Siege

Violence on its own can rarely generate lasting power—hence the importance of “clear, hold, and build” in modern counterinsurgency. Global and local defense against urban terror and feralization should be based on three principles—fighting for *social* as well as material space, hybridization of police-military response, and the right to the city. Little of what we are about to recommend is new or particularly novel, but the failure to embrace many of these solutions suggests that we ought to repeat them for effect.

Because the real battles of urban insurgency take place inside in social spaces, military and police forces cannot concede these battlespaces to the opponent. Entering social spaces requires prolonged contact with the population, the maintenance of political legitimacy, and the enlistment of the populace in the defense of the city. Prolonged contact with the populace is a process of establishing neighborhood headquarters, police stations, and other zones where social exchange occurs in tandem with a political counterinsurgency strategy.

In order for such an exchange to be most successful, the conventional force obviously must maintain political legitimacy by avoiding the targeting of civilians and utilizing strategic non-military projects. Communication of shared objectives is extremely important—hence the importance of police officers and soldiers being strong presences in neighborhood meetings and other social spaces.

Building popular defense networks is a process of building psychological as well as physical resilience. A network of human sensors—if properly processed through co-production of intelligence—can be ultimately more successful in the defense of a city than a thousand security cameras. Physical defense is often a matter of pure response, depending on the existence of formed paramilitary units capable of standing up to operational shock. Such standing up may require the formation of more HRT-level SWAT groups capable of rapidly mobilizing to swarm a certain point, as Bill Tallen argues in the *Homeland Security Affairs Journal*.³⁴ But if this attack can be stopped through municipal or regional-level processed intelligence and early warning it is clearly preferable to beating back a criminal or terrorist assault.

Emergency response integration with high civilian participation functioning at a local level also allows civilians to function in smooth integration with police and military

³³ Virilio is a prolific author. The best introduction to his thought is *Speed and Politics*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.

³⁴ Bill Tallen, “Paramilitary Terrorism: A Neglected Threat,” *Homeland Security Affairs Journal*, June 2008. <<http://www.hsaj.org/?article=4.2.6>>

forces. This allows the city to mobilize itself as an adaptive whole to construct a layered defense that can soak up the attack's operational shock. Furthermore, it also blunts the impact of the attack upon the bonds and relationship between the city, its government, and people. Sharing in the defense as a collective bond will make us more psychologically resilient as all share in the defense instead of being helpless and afraid.

Urban operations also demands a new type of policing—the full spectrum police officer. Full spectrum policing requires building specialized hybrid forces capable of operating in a range of environments and missions. They must be able to transition between community policing and investigations to public order and riot control missions to high-intensity operations ranging from gang control to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. These gendarmerie or constabulary units combine the survivability of military forces with the investigative skills and policing skills of metropolitan police officers. Europeans have long relied on these versatile formed police units of this type for internal security and policing. Similarly, Israeli police have developed Joint Operations Forces (JOF) to bridge police and military urban operations requirements.

Crucial to urban policing and full spectrum police operations is the development of operational art doctrines for policing. Police forces across America do not have operational art, only a series of tactics. Without operational art there is no way of aligning ends with means and properly allocating resources. Only with functioning operational art can resources be properly allocated to identify threats, emerging groups, and criminal support networks. Police operational art allows each tactical echelon walking their beats to be integrated into a greater strategy, combining police efforts with greater civilian and government functions. Crucial to the construction of effective police operational art is interlocking concepts of operational swarming and “geosocial” intelligence. Each concept addresses the central idea of police as a mechanism that builds on and reinforces social control.

Operational swarming, first articulated by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, is a process of massing dispersed forces into a large amorphous mass of forces striking a decisive point. Attacks are constant and disorienting. This has been a method of military assault for many centuries.³⁵ Applied to policing, operational swarming is applied in both tactical and operational contexts. Tactical operational swarming involves the convergence of paramilitary forces and formed police units to quickly crush urban assailants before they do real damage. This is especially important in cases of a distributed assault like Mumbai, in which terrorists open multiple fronts. Utilizing interior lines, urban operations forces must quickly respond and smash each individual front.

The enemy will use deception and coordinate with Blackberries and other handheld communication devices. The goal of operational swarming in such a defensive context is

³⁵ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Swarming and the Future of Conflict*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2000, http://www.rand.org/pubs/documented_briefings/DB311/

to quickly restore public order by maximum concentration of public resources on the opponent. Paramilitary terrorists are likely to disperse their forces into small cells and disperse them throughout the city to cause maximum chaos. But if each cell can be isolated and fixed it can be destroyed in place. Stopping their kinetic motion will cause them to lose relative advantage and fall before superior weapons and numbers. This is nothing new—William McRaven records in his book *Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare Theory and Practice* many armed assaults that failed once the attackers lost their kinetic momentum and the relative advantage.³⁶

The longer chaos continues the more difficult it becomes to crush entrenched enemy units, some of whom may have accumulated hostages. Public response also grows panicked and news media begin to substantially interfere with operations and the element of surprise. Formed police units capable of transitioning quickly to high-intensity conflict are important in such a scenario, as are “cloned” Tier-1 counter-terrorist units capable of being the main tactical effort. Many modern terrorist and criminal insurgent groups carrying out paramilitary groups will be heavily trained and heavily armed, and destroying them with a minimum of harm to civilians requires professionals capable of rapid response, dealing with tactical deception, and fighting through Beslan-style entrenchments.

In the case of purely offensive swarming against an entrenched opponent in a feral city, purely operational shock swarming can be used in the Israeli context to establish tactical advantage. But operational shock is only one part of clearing feral cities and feral communities where criminal or terrorist non-state forces have a strong presence within a small urban hub. This kind of scenario also involves swarming, but a predominately non-kinetic sense as forces are concentrated to provide public order, protect the population, and prevent the enemy from freely maneuvering among the people.

Swarming as an operational art involves the deployment of stability police to specific neighborhoods as units in a larger strategy to carry out an inkblot counterinsurgency. Urban guerrillas’ key disadvantage is the lack of strategic depth inherent in the small neighborhood points they occupy, and they overcome this by reinforcing and withdrawing units along both informal and formal lines of transportation. Resources devoted to building up citizen networks in order isolate guerrillas from popular sustenance in conjunction with expanding inkblots will allow the full force of the people and the state to be brought to bear.

In such a conflict there is no separation between kinetic operations and information operations. Kinetic operations *are* information operations, and vice versa. In a defensive scenario maintaining public morale is just as important as coordinating a defensive response. Likewise, utilizing interior lines to quickly and ruthlessly crush enemy emerging fronts in a defensive operation is a process of letting the population (and the news media) know that you have re-established social control over the battlespace. In an

³⁶ See William McRaven, *Spec Ops: Special Operations Warfare in Theory and Practice*, New York: Presidio Press, 1996.

offensive swarming operation designed at re-establishing order over failed communities, the utmost care must be taken to stay within legal and moral norms.

Of course, such a policy must be the main effort of a strong political strategy designed to either organize the city in unified defense or resolve the conditions that give rise to failed communities. It goes without saying that networked, multi-ethnic diasporas are likely to be the primary battlegrounds. Building operational art for navigating these unique arenas requires a special kind of intelligence production for police and internal security forces. The cultural “human terrain team” must be replicated for full-spectrum policing, especially in local conflicts with global implications.

This task requires local-global-local analysis and synthesis, as well as the “co-production” of intelligence among distributed intelligence fusion efforts.³⁷ Such a process was foreseen in the terrorism early warning (TEW) model, where linked TEW groups co-operated to develop a broader understanding. Among the tools required are “geosocial” analysis (analysis of communities and places) and Intelligence Preparation for Operations (IPO), a civil analog of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB) adapted for civil public safety missions.³⁸ Red teaming is also a valuable tool for developing understanding of the interactions between threat actors and local conditions.³⁹

Most important is the concept of the right to the city. The ultimate strategic goal of both urban siege defense and operations in feral cities and failed cities is the building and sustenance of free and public spaces for political and cultural expression. Every act of force should be evaluated against this goal and checked to see how it can contribute to the building of these spaces. This is not something that military or police forces can do on their own--it requires working with civilians and building the security necessary to help them realize their dreams. This is the ultimate form of resilient security infrastructure, as it draws its strength not from masses of barbed wire or bunkers but the energy and creativity of the people.

Much of recent writing about cities either is gloom and doom narratives of decaying slums or terror-infested “feral cities.” This does describe a rather frightening reality of urban decay and disorder. But modern cities are also hives of innovative creative activity, cultural expression, and thriving political and commercial life. The modern *agora* is a zone of exchange worth defending with all our reason, endurance, and power.

³⁷ John P. Sullivan, “Terrorism Early Warning and Co-Production of Counterterrorism Intelligence,” unpublished paper presented to Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies, *CASIS 20th Anniversary Conference*, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 21 October 2005, available at http://www.projectwhitehorse.com/pdfs/6.%20CASIS_Sullivan_paper1.pdf.

³⁸ See John P. Sullivan and Alain Bauer (Eds.), *Terrorism Early Warning: 10 Years of Achievement in Fighting Terrorism and Crime*, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, 2008, available at <http://www.lasd.org/tew/TEW2009.pdf> for a comprehensive history and doctrinal template of the LA TEW.

³⁹ See John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, “Red Teaming Criminal Insurgency,” *Red Team Journal*, January 30, 2009.

John P. Sullivan is a career police officer. He currently serves as a lieutenant with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department where he is assigned to the Emergency Operations Bureau. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies on Terrorism (CAST). His research focuses on counterinsurgency, intelligence, terrorism, and urban operations. He is co-editor of *Countering Terrorism and WMD: Creating a Global Counter-Terrorism Network* (Routledge, 2006).

Adam Elkus is an analyst specializing in foreign policy and security. His articles have been published in *Red Team Journal*, *Small Wars Journal* and other publications. He has contributed chapters to *The John Boyd Roundtable: Debating Science, Strategy, and War* (Ann Arbor: Nimble LLC, 2008) and the compilation *Threats in the Age of Obama*, now on sale from Nimble LLC. Elkus blogs at *Rethinking Security*, *Dreaming 5GW*, and the *Huffington Post*. He is currently a contributor to the Center for Threat Awareness' ThreatsWatch project.

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