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Air power as police power

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Abstract. This paper makes a case for understanding air power through the lens of police. After first rethinking a key period in the history of air power (colonial bombing campaigns) as a police mechanism, the paper then moves to consider the impoverished conception of war and police in contemporary critical theory. The final section turns to perhaps the most pressing issue in current air power debates, namely drones, and suggests that a consideration of air power as police power helps us read drones as a continuation of the police logic inherent in air power since its inception.

Keywords: air power, police power, drones, UAVs, Foucault, colonialism, strategic bombing

Walt Disney's political credentials are well known: using scab labour to produce *Dumbo*, retelling the history of colonialism through the myth of *Pocahontas*, appearing at the House Un-American Activities Committee informing on 'security threats', being the only Hollywood celebrity to receive Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, and being himself received by Mussolini. Less well known amidst this political posturing and ideological work is a cartoon film released by his company in 1943 called *Victory Through Air Power*. Based on a book of the same title written by Major Alexander P De Seversky published a year before and selling in the hundreds of thousands through the Book-of-the-Month Club, the film opens with an old newsreel clip of leading air power theorist Billy Mitchell outlining the doctrine of strategic bombing, which was by then all the rage. Following the dedication of the film to Mitchell, the film then covers the history of aeroplanes, moving quickly to their use in battle and superiority to warships, and to the bombing of the Japanese octopus ("think of Japan as a great octopus", Seversky had suggested in his book). The imperial tentacles of the Japanese octopus throttle various parts of the globe, but the film ends with Japan being bombed into ruins ("we have no alternative but to attack the tentacles one by one", Seversky had added) and climaxes with the bombers transforming into one of the symbols of sovereignty and American state power, the eagle, which then claws the Japanese octopus to death. At the climax of the battle 'America the Beautiful' can be heard and the film ends with 'Victory Though Air Power' running across the screen in large letters. The meaning of the film was abundantly clear: air power means that "the job of annihilation … can be carried out more efficiently", for "when the skies over a nation are captured, everything below lies at the mercy of the enemy's air weapons" (1942, pages 104; 335; 352).

Disney's film was unavailable for decades, yet in 2004 it was repackaged as part of a two-set edition of propaganda films made by the company, of which *Victory Through Air Power* constituted the whole of the second disc along with some bonus material. It was a remarkably timely year to issue a sixty-year-old propaganda film on air power, because by 2004 Iraq had become the centre of attention in what was a decidedly air-centric war on terror. When the 'war on terror' was officially started on 7 October 2001, it quickly became clear that this was to be a bombing war. During the first week alone B1 and B52 bombers dropped on

Afghanistan some five hundred GPS-guided bombs, a thousand Mk-82 'dumb bombs' (that is, unguided bombs), and fifty 'combined effects munitions' (CEMs, or 'cluster bombs', weapons which release hundreds of submunitions over a wide area). Over a thousand more cluster bombs were used by the end of 2001, by which point fuel-air explosives (FAEs: 'thermobaric' bombs producing an overpressure of 427 pounds per square inch and a temperature of 2500 to 3000 °C, generating an impact that has been compared to the effect of a tactical nuclear weapon, but without the radiation) were also being used along with 15 000-lb BLU-82 slurry bombs, known as 'daisy cutters', roughly the size of a small car, and dropped from the back of a cargo plane from high altitude carrying over 12 000 pounds of a chemical 'slurry' formed of ammonium nitrate, aluminium powder, and polystyrene. In Iraq, in the first month alone some 1500 cluster bombs were dropped on the country, and over the following three months a further 10 000 were dropped by the US and just over 2000 by the UK.[1] This air war continued in Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere, and anyone who reads the newspapers will also be aware of the proliferation of the use of drones, an issue to which I will return. The war on terror is nothing if not a war from the air.

We live in a world made by air power (Swift, 2010). Looking back over just the last half century we see the use of aircraft in Vietnam by the US and by the French before them, the bombing used by the British in Malaya, Aden, and Oman, by Portugal in Angola and Mozambique during the 1960s, by the French in Algeria, by white Rhodesia against Black resistance in the 1970s, by South Africa against the South West African Peoples Organization in the 1970s, across Latin America, by the Somoza regime in its attempt to crush the Sandinistas, to say nothing of the Soviets in Afghanistan, or Israel's extensive and systematic use of air power against the Palestinians. We really do live in a world shaped by air power and bombing.

The standard approach to air power in general and bombing in particular is to consider it in terms of a debate that is said to originate in World War 2. Caren Kaplan (2006), for example, links national security discourse after 11 September 2001 to the rise of a 'national security of air power' during World War 2, and John Dower (2010) similarly considers the strategic bombing of the 21st century in terms of terror bombing as a standard procedure of World War 2; Andreas Huyssen (2003) has also noted that opposition to the air war in 2003 looked back to the air war over Europe sixty years previously. But the trouble with going back to World War 2 is that this tends to encourage people to think of air power either in purely military and usually quite conservative terms, such as the impact of air power on military strategy, or in purely ethical and usually quite liberal terms, such as the impact of bombing on 'just war' theory. As Derek Gregory points out (2011a, page 205), "there is a long history of assuming that air war is, by its very nature, virtuous". This is the reason why bombing features heavily in liberal 'just war' theory—bombing, we are often told, is a way of "making it easier to be good" (Thomas, 2001, page 173)—and why the bombing of German and Japanese cities towards the end of World War 2 figures so large in the debates. I want to start by taking the 'lines of descent' of air power (Gregory, 2011b) beyond World War 2 and back to the 1920s.

Why the 1920s? In 2009 the US Air University published a document on air power as a politically viable, legitimising, and flexible option for the United States, adding that in future conflicts as well as in Iraq the strategy should be to appropriate the air methods developed in the colonial context of the 1920s. That is, the document claims that "the British RAF air policing of Iraq in the 1920s was a [counterinsurgency] mission in the truest sense" (Rundquist, 2009, pages 3; 7; 51). This built on previous work, such as a 2006 Department of Defense Report on Iraqi 'tribes' which reminded the Department of the historical example

[1] For ongoing updates see http://www.longwarjournal.org/ and http://www.iraqbodycount.org

of the British success in their use of force in Iraq. "The 1920 Revolt collapsed when British decisiveness in countering it became apparent. The British successfully conveyed that they were the superior force, or the superior tribe, and that they would not be deterred easily." And this success was founded on air power: "enabled largely by air power, the British were able to stay in Iraq—with minimal resources—through its independence in 1932 and beyond" (Todd, 2006, sections 5–23). These are just two of many such documents in which the world's leading military power has recently sought to learn some lessons from colonial practices, especially British colonial practices, of the 1920s.[(2)] So one reason to look back to the 1920s is because this seems to be one place where the leading military power is also looking. My aim, however, is not so much to make a historical point as to help lay down some of the groundwork for thinking of air power as police power (also see Neocleous, 2013a).

'Police' here refers not to crime prevention and law enforcement but to the more general process of administration, security, and order. Such a concept of police harks back to 18th-century cameralism and police science, and picks up on the centrality of the police idea in the work of a variety of thinkers, from Adam Smith to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. As Michel Foucault explains through a series of texts, referring sometimes directly and sometimes allusively to early police thinkers and often as a way of trying to make sense of some of his better-known concepts such as pastoral power and governmentality, 'police' connotes a set of apparatuses and technologies constituting 'the economy' and the order of labour. This is police as the maintenance of the body politic in terms of its health and welfare (hence the rich but overlooked history of 'medical police') and as an overarching principle creating a social body out of individual subject–citizens best captured in the Latin phrase used by Foucault when grappling with the idea of police, *omnes et singulatim*: everyone together and each individually (Foucault, 1973; 1981, page 249). More than anything, however, this is a concept of police "as a bundle of measures that make work possible and necessary to all those who could not live without it" (Foucault, 2006a, page 62). I have elsewhere sought to develop this idea of police as the heart of the fabrication of social order and, more specifically, the fabrication of a social order of wage labour. I have also sought to show that this centrality of police in the fabrication of social order is the very reason why the concept so central to police, namely security, is the fundamental concept of bourgeois society (Neocleous, 2000; 2008). What I want to do here is to try and think through what is generally regarded as a quintessentially 'military' mode of action in terms of the logic of police. This historical analysis of a particular moment in 20th-century air war in the first part of the paper is intended to then open a debate in the rest of the paper about how we might better use the concepts of war and police, or even perhaps a concept of war–police, in our understanding of contemporary power.

Bombed into order

In 1918 the British released two reports on the idea that "in the next war the existence of the British Empire will depend primarily on its air force". "The Royal Air Force is an Imperial service", it was claimed and, as a consequence, what was needed was an imperial air force to "be the first line of defence of the British Empire" (both reports in Sykes, 1942, pages 544; 554; 558). Plans along these lines had already been made when in 1914 Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, commissioned a report on the possible use of air power in Somaliland following the use of aircraft in the campaigns in Arabia and South West and East Africa during World War 1 (Killingray, 1984, page 429). In March 1919 British planes bombed those rebelling against martial law in Egypt, and the RAF was also

[(2)] One report published by the Air Power Research Institute in 1986, and reprinted three times since, notes that the history of the Royal Air Force (RAF) between the wars offers the important lesson "that air power can be shaped in creative ways to achieve political results" (Dean, 1986, page 25).

used to suppress uprisings in Punjab, Yemen, Palestine, and Mesopotamia—in the longest operation, lasting one and a half months from mid-November 1919, in Punjab, somewhere between 2.5 and 7 tons of bombs were dropped on the Mahsud and Wazir tribal groups. In Afghanistan in 1919 air raids were carried out on Kabul, Jalalabad, and Dakka, and in Somaliland in 1920. But the real shift occurs in Iraq, a land rich in untapped resources and a geopolitical space offering a secure route to India if brought under control. A major revolt through the summer of 1920 and running into early 1921 led to Churchill assembling over forty military and civilian experts at a conference in Cairo to determine the policy for the region. Troop numbers were to be reduced and replaced by subsidies paid to indigenous rulers, and the apparently contradictory aim of maintaining order while removing troops was to be resolved through the development and application of air power. A paper from the Air Staff proposed that "the efficacy of the Royal Air Force as an independent arm should be put to proof by the transference to it of primary responsibility for the maintenance of order in some area of the Middle East, preferably Mesopotamia" (cited in Omissi, 1990, page 25). As a number of historians have pointed out, it is no exaggeration to say that the main institution in both the creation of Iraq and in the subsequent exercise of state power in the region was the air force (Dodge, 2003; Omissi, 1990; Townshend, 2010). It was in Iraq "that the British would rigorously practice, if never perfect, the technology of bombardment as a permanent method of colonial administration and surveillance and that there they would fully theorize the value of air power as an independent arm of the military" (Satia, 2008, page 240). Yet this was far from being a practice peculiar to the British in Iraq, for it was understood and applied by every state with colonies, to the extent that every major power that sought to secure its colonies found aeroplanes to be indispensable. Aircraft were used in the 1920s by the British in Afghanistan, Egypt, Punjab, Yemen, Palestine, Somaliland, and South Africa, by Italy in Libya, by France in Morocco and Syria (they even referred to 'colonial bombing', for which they developed a fighter-bomber called *Type Coloniale* for the same purpose), and by the US in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. Air power and strategic bombing were, in effect, developed as the colonial state's main weapon of pacification between the two world wars. Notwithstanding some important differences between the practices in the various sites of colonial domination, the varying degrees of violence involved, and varying levels of resistance encountered, it is nonetheless safe to say that air power and colonial rule went hand in hand. Whatever the differences involved, colonization from the end of World War 1 was without doubt an "aerially enforced" process (Weizman, 2007, page 239).

This imperial exercise of air power and aerial exercise of imperial power has tended to be treated as a marginal note to the history of strategic bombing. It is a 'small wars' affair, mere counterinsurgency, if one reads the military histories. But we need to be clear about what air power was doing. For what it was doing then might tell us something about air power now, and thus might in a roundabout way also tell us something about 'counterinsurgency' now. For air power in fact turns out to consist not just of bombing the enemy as a military strategy, but as a key mechanism of order-building. Far from being understood in terms of *military* strategy, air power and strategic bombing were considered by the liberal democracies of the time as a form of government, a mechanism of good order: a 'swift agent of government', in the words of Sir John Maffey when Governor-General of the Sudan (Killingray, 1984). "If we use our Air Force wisely and humanely, such outcry as there is will cease and air action will be regarded as a normal and suitable weapon for enforcing the just demands of government", commented the Commanding Air Officer in India in 1923 (cited in Omissi, 1990, page 150). One can see this in the various concepts which came and went to capture what was being done through air power: 'air substitution'; 'control without occupation'; 'police bombing'. These eventually morph into the term which gets used much more widely and which then

has a history of its own: air police. Thus when Air Commodore Lionel Charlton arrived in Baghdad in February 1923 as a senior air officer and his tour of inspection in southern Iraq took him to a hospital there, he "experienced something of a shock" at the sight of injuries from the bombings and was "aghast to learn on further inquiry that an air bomb in Iraq was, more or less, the equivalent of a police truncheon at home" (Charlton, 1931, page 271). And it is precisely this concept of 'air police' that is rarely acknowledged in the main work on air power and strategic bombing, which tends to treat it as either a footnote to domestic police politics or as a prelude to the major air battles of 1939 to 1945, when in fact air police and 'police bombing' was a universal feature of colonial domination (Omissi, 1990, pages ix–x and 208).

More or less from its very inception air power has been structured around the police concept. Its content suggests that the issue is not the use of bombing as a reactive process but, rather, needs to be understood in terms of classical police doctrine: 'preventive police', 'security', 'civilization', and 'order'. That is, the purpose of air power was not merely to "stifle disorder at its birth" (J H H [pseudonym], 1933, page 463) but to construct a new order. So the concept that had been at the heart of the fabrication of bourgeois order—police—was being employed in the colonial context and achieved through air power. We might flesh this out by pointing to several dimensions of air power as police power.

The first, most obvious, is that the central practice involved, bombing, was explicitly meant to crush any rebellion against colonial rule and cut off the possibility of resistance. There is little reason to say much about this. Not only is it a fairly obvious feature of air power, it also relies heavily on a concept of police as purely 'reactive' to disorder where in fact the argument here seeks to work with a police concept that sees police power as creative and productive.

The second dimension concerns the use of air power in the process of what Marx calls 'primitive accumulation'—that is, to deny tribesmen subsistence outside of the political economy being imposed within the colonial order. As David Omissi (1990, pages 155–156) puts it:

> "Persistent bombing could deny tribesmen access to their villages and force them to live in uncomfortable caves where they sometimes suffered from a shortage of water if remote from springs. Aircraft could disperse flocks, which meant a scarcity of animal products and the loss of valuable beasts to wolves. Patrolling bombers could prevent tribesmen entering their fields, and thus interrupt agriculture and irrigation. Delayed action bombs and night attacks lit by parachute flares could obstruct vital work."

A report from Air Vice-Marshal Sir John Salmond, following a 1922 mission to India to spread the gospel of air control following its application to Iraq, noted that:

> "the real weight of air action lies in the daily interruption of normal life which it can inflict .... It can knock the roofs of huts about and prevent their repair, a considerable inconvenience in winter time. It can seriously interfere with ploughing or harvesting—a vital matter; or burn up the stores of fuel laboriously piled up and garnered for the winter; by attack on livestock, which is the main form of capital and source of wealth to the less settled tribes, it can impose in effect a considerable fine, or seriously interfere with the actual food source of the tribe—and in the end the tribesman finds it is much the best to obey" (cited in Longoria, 1992, page 32).

Salmond's view repeated the instructions of a 'Confidential Document 22', a RAF manual titled 'Operations' (dated 1922 and known as 'CD 22'): "the force in the field must first be attacked and destroyed. This should then be followed up by continuous bombing of his capital and subsequently the surrounding villages, crops and live stock." The manual went on to refer to factories and railway junctions as legitimate targets (Parton, 2009, page 34).

This idea found its way into official doctrine and semiofficial professional journals such as *Royal Air Force Quarterly*:

> "air operations are not planned to spread death and suffering, but to wear down the tribesman's morale [and] dislocate his normal life. … If desirable, small practice bombs are first dropped to give a final opportunity of escape to safety. Bombing is then regulated according to requirements to keep the villages empty and the tribesmen from attending to their crops, cattle and daily wants. … The tribesman, driven from his village which contains all his needs, finds the burden of his existence increasing daily; he is deprived of his normal shelter; stripped of his usual amenities; and interrupted in his sleep; his flocks are scattered. … Shelters or stores of grain and fuel may be bombed; crops may be destroyed" (Kingston-McCloughry, 1937, pages 202–204).

In other words, air power was used specifically to destroy modes of subsistence that might have enabled indigenous peoples to survive outside the new regime of accumulation. This is bombing as primitive accumulation.

Third, though intimately connected, 'air control' was also a form of tax collection, with bombing used in order to ensure that tribes either paid their taxes or as punishment for failing to do so (Dodge, 2003, page 133). The broader picture here requires a reminder of the centrality of taxation as a technique of power and, in the colonial context, as a mechanism for proletarianisation and commercialisation. One of the key figures in the British colonisation of Africa, Sir Harry Johnston, laid down the principles of colonial taxation in 1896:

> "Given abundance of cheap native labour, the financial security of the Protectorate is established. … All that needs to be done is for the Administration to act as friends of both sides, and to introduce the Native labourer to the European capitalist. A gentle insistence that the Native should contribute his fair share to the revenue of the country by paying his tax is all that is necessary on our part to ensure his taking a share in life's labour which no human being should avoid" (cited in Davies, 1966, page 35).

This view that wage-labour could be increasingly introduced through a new tax regime came to permeate the colonial mind. As Sir Percy Girouard put it in 1913, speaking of his own long experience in exercising colonial power:

> "We consider that the only natural and automatic method of securing a constant labour supply is to ensure that there will be competition among labourers for hire and not among employers for labourers; such competition can be brought about only by a rise in the cost of living for the native, and this can be produced only by an increase in the tax" (cited in Manners, 1962, page 497).

Conversely, not paying taxes could be regarded as a form of 'passive resistance'. Thus from early 1919 tribes such as the Abu Salih in the Suq district were bombed for their refusal to pay taxes, while the Jarib tribe of the Middle Euphrates had been bombed for refusing to have its crops inspected for revenue purposes. Writing in the *Daily Mail* in 1922, Sir Percival Phillips suggested that "whatever the government may say to the contrary, rule by bomb in Mesopotamia has as one of its underlying motives the collection of taxes from turbulent Arabs" (cited in Cox, 1985, page 172). Such punitive air strikes were often used only after air power had been used to convince the colonial subjects to pay their taxes by dropping leaflets from the air, or further leaflets which had warned them to flee their villages in advance of a bombing attack.

A fourth dimension is air power's use as a means of surveillance. Lord Thompson, Air Secretary in 1924, spoke of the bomber's 'all-seeing power' (cited in Satia, 2008, page 245), and other reports spoke in the same terms: "from the ground every inhabitant of a village is under the impression that the occupant of an aeroplane is actually looking at *him* … establishing the impression that all their movements are being watched and reported"

(Air Staff Memorandum, 1920). From the very birth of air power it was clear that the aircraft could and would be a crucial instrument of surveillance, allowing a vantage point whilst simultaneously denying that position to others (Weizman, 2002; 2012).

As a consequence, and thus fifth, air power became central to the development of censuses and land surveys. That is, "a dominant use for the aeroplane has been a mode of knowledge capture" (Adey, 2010, page 86). In the case of the UK, for example, an Air Survey Committee was established in 1920 to help realise what was seen as a key potential of air power, and air power was used as the foundation for new practices of surveying and surveillance, as photography and data-gathering from the air helped finesse the cartographic and knowledge enterprise (Gavish, 2005). On the one hand, this concerned accumulation: aerial surveys could overcome "the most serious obstacles which had hitherto delayed the development of many of the natural resources of the Dominions and Colonies" (Holland, 1928, page 162). One lecture to the Royal Society of Arts in 1928 noted air power's central importance in "bringing into production those tracts of land which now lay idle" and the ensuing discussion centred on the role of air photography in the "economic development" of the colonies (Crosthwait, 1928, page 163). On the other hand, this was also pure counterinsurgency, as aerial surveys showed the houses, the streets, and the alleys of villages and towns, thereby enabling them to be better managed and policed (Adey, 2010, page 91). If the state is a knowledge machine, then air power was crucial to this process.

In carrying out these functions air power was intended to transform the political subjectivity of the colonised. A sixth point, then, is that air power was a mechanism for bringing about "a change of heart" in the colonial subject, as it was put by Air Commodore C F A Portal in a 1937 lecture on "policing the empire". He went on: "the object of all coercive police action is to bring about a change in the temper or intention of the person or body of persons who are disturbing the peace" (Portal, 1959, page 357). Thus air power was to have an impact on the political conduct of the colonised, consolidating their acquiescence to the new order. One report on forest management from 1926 claimed that identifying by air which tracts of land would be suitable for clearance and restoration would "go far to leaving the land in the most productive condition to which it can be brought", thereby encouraging the indigenous people to "gradually learn more settled habits" (cited in Adey, 2010, page 92).

Central to the promotion of air power was its definition as an explicitly moral instrument of control, and it was often argued by air force apologists that air policing achieved its results *not* by inflicting heavy casualties but through the "moral effect" it could have on the population (Dodge, 2003, page 146; Omissi, 1990, page 152). The idea of the 'moral' effect slipped into the more military sounding concept of 'morale'. That the meaning of this nebulous notion may have shifted according to what was seen as operationally possible or politically expedient is one thing, as Omissi notes, but we might also note that 'moral effect' almost always returns to the disruption of human life caused by bombing. One Air Staff Memorandum from 1922 argued that "air action must rely for its effect less on material damage than on the effect on the tribal morale of constant liability to attack and the consequent continuing dislocation of daily life" (cited in Biddle, 2002, pages 82–83). This idea points us back to the conjunction of violence and moral force characteristic of police power as a civilising process. This 'civilising process' logic is captured in that classic concept of police power: prevention. As Sir Hugh Trenchard put it in a letter to *The Times* in 1925, "air methods are, in short, the reverse of the old punitive column. Our policy is one of prevention" (cited in Smith, 1984, page 30). Such prevention works only when the subjects have accepted the 'peace' imposed upon them and become 'civilised'—that is, show a general acceptance of the order being created.

Taken together, these dimensions point to something fundamental about air power: its use not to attack enemy states or to defend the state from enemy attacks but, rather, to the

fabrication of colonial order as part of a new geopolitical system being developed between the wars. It suggests that to properly understand the geopolitical role of air power, we need to grasp it conceptually as police power.

Art of war, art of police

To think of air power as police power throws us up against an issue which permeates both contemporary military thought and critical theory, namely: what has happened to the concept of war? In a book on the modern 'art of war' called *The Utility of Force*, published in 2005, read by the military but also published as a cheap paperback in order to reach a wider audience, British General Sir Rupert Smith begins with a stark statement: "War no longer exists" (Smith, 2001, page 1). It seems counterintuitive, surprising even, and might be dismissed as mere provocation, until one realises that it is now a commonplace idea. A 2003 report for the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies claims that "it may be that one of the lessons of modern war is that war can no longer be called war" (Cordesman, 2003, page 59). But if it is not 'war', then what is it? The answer to this provided by a wealth of sources across the political spectrum is: police. We are constantly told that "warfighting and policing are dynamically linked" and that the "roles of the police and military forces … blur" (US Army and Marine Corps, 2006, sections 6–95 and 7–26). This idea has been repeated time and again and is implicit in the various concepts now commonly used by academics and journalists, such as 'world policeman', 'sheriff', 'global gendarme', 'globocop', 'soldiers as cops', 'the blue in the green', and 'blue geopolitics'.

On the critical left, one finds this idea being articulated by figures such as Alain Badiou (2003, pages 153–155), who writes of governments opposing terrorism within the symbolic register of 'policing', and Giorgio Agamben (1993, page 61), who writes of war now being presented 'as a seemingly modest 'police operation'". But the most influential work has been that of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. In *Empire* Hardt and Negri suggest that "war is reduced to the status of police action", with the US acting as the "international police power". "Today the enemy, just like war itself, comes to be banalized", and by 'banalized' they mean "reduced to the status of routine police repression" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, pages 12–13; 39; 180; 181). Lest we be unclear about their meaning, they repeat the point four years later in *Multitude*, where they tell us again that war is "reduced to police action" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, page 19). This claim has taken on a life of its own since its first articulation by Hardt and Negri, to the extent that I cannot cite all the times their claim has been cited approvingly, since the references now number in the hundreds. Yet what is this 'reduction' exactly? We are told neither why the process needs to be understood as 'reduction' nor what 'reduction' means, in any real sense. The extent of the problem might best be explored via a consideration of its roots in Foucault's work, since these texts have Foucault as a touchstone.

As noted above, Foucault is undoubtedly the thinker who had done most to put 'police' back in the centre of political thinking. The series of engagements with the police idea noted above, through *Folie et Déraison*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and other texts, are developed most fully in the two series lectures of Foucault gave between 1977 and 1979, now published as *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. At the same time, Foucault more than anyone also sought to think about social relations using the model of war. This has become clear from the publication of various lecture series through the 1970s prior to *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. For example, the great confinement which in *Folie et Déraison* had been a *police* matter gets treated in the 1973–74 lectures on psychiatric power as a *battlefield* (2006b, page 7). In further lectures Foucault develops this focus, such as the series translated as *'Society Must Be Defended'* (2003) where he famously inverts Clausewitz and insists that we must see politics as the continuation of war by other means, that what is going on beneath power relations is war, that we must

analyse the battlefront running through the whole of society, that peace is waging a secret war, and so on. This approach to thinking politically about war and thinking politics as war is reinforced in Foucault's more substantive works such as *The History of Sexuality*, but most notably in *Discipline and Punish* where he takes as his model a perpetual battle rather than contract and which uses the *military* (and not the prison, despite the book's familiar motifs) for understanding power.

One can therefore read Foucault as sometimes thinking about power through the lens of police, and sometimes through the lens of war. Yet there is something fundamentally strange about Foucault's work in this regard, in that these really do seem to be two different lenses. In other words, he never really does very much to connect his concepts of police and war, such as by offering an exploration of how these two apparatuses might be considered together, within each other, alongside each other, or implicated in one another. In *'Society Must Be Defended'*, for example, he talks at some length about war, yet gives just a couple of passing and somewhat superfluous references to police. In the lectures two years later, published as *Security, Territory, Population*, he talks about both police and war, and yet for the most part discusses them separately. He speaks of "two great assemblages": "a military–diplomatic apparatus, on the one hand, and the apparatus of police … on the other". And although he suggests that there is a relation between police and "European equilibrium" maintained by the military–diplomatic assemblage and that these two apparatuses had to "maintain a relation of forces, and then the growth of these forces" in a way which links them under the sign of "security", he for the most part keeps them apart, even going so far at one point as to characterise the Italian state as a state of military diplomacy but not police (Foucault, 2007, pages 110; 296; 311–312; 314; 317). Likewise, Foucault describes the "great *police* sorting out process" which began with "the hunting down of vagrants, beggars, the idle" (1996, page 83, emphasis added; also see 2006a, pages 62–64) but ignores the fact that the history of the hunt is the history of war.[(3)]

It is this somewhat disconnected relationship between police power and war power in Foucault's work that I think explains a number of features of contemporary thought concerning war and police. On the one hand, it explains why the substantial body of work stemming from Foucault's arguments about police rarely touches on the *international* dimension of police powers in a way which might force those scholars to consider the question of war [two exceptions being Dean (2006) and Walters (2002)]. On the other hand, it is also why those who have laboured to make Foucault more relevant to geopolitical and international theory have more or less completely ignored the concept of police. Of this latter scholarship, let me give two broad examples taking in some fifteen published articles. In 2010 the journal *International Political Sociology* published an issue (volume 4, issue 2) with a special section stemming from a roundtable discussion exploring the relationship between Foucault and international relations at the 2009 International Studies Association conference. Yet not one of the seven contributions raises the possibility of connecting the current question of war/police with the huge body of work on police inspired by Foucault's insights into this concept. In 2011 the journal *Geopolitics* published a special issue (volume 16, issue 2) on "War beyond the Battlefield", with the title designed to signify an approach to war outside of mainstream military and strategic studies. As explained by David Grondin in his opening paper, the authors seek to explore "through a Foucauldian understanding" the spaces "where the boundaries of war and politics collide" (2011, page 254). This time there are eight contributions yet, again, not one of them raises the possibility of connecting using Foucault's concept of police to grasp geopolitical issues of the war on terror. 'Police' appears in some of the articles, but it is most

[(3)] I have explored this at greater length in "The police dream of pacification: accumulation, class war, and the hunt" (2013b).

definitely *the* police—the body that arrests people, brings charges, regulates demonstrations, and so on. In other words, what appears is a decidedly liberal and non-Foucauldian concept of police. The same point can be made of various other works. Despite their attempts to shake up international relations and geopolitics, and despite delivering some interesting pieces of work in the process, these contributions remain firmly on the terrain established within geopolitics and international relations; despite employing Foucault, they have thus more or less completely forgone any attempt to use the concept of police. But as I am suggesting, this radical disconnection would seem to have its roots in Foucault's own work. And what the disconnection most explains, I think, is why Hardt and Negri, and countless others citing them, fall back on what is ultimately a rather mainstream and fundamentally liberal concept of police, when they talk about war being *reduced* to police.

I have argued elsewhere (Neocleous, 2011) that from a critical perspective the war–police distinction is irrelevant, pandering as it does to a key liberal myth. Not just this particular liberal myth, but the more general liberal mythology replicated in the whole sociological tradition, namely the simplifying of the complexity of state power into distinct dichotomies: law/administration, constitutional/exceptional, normal/emergency, court/tribunal, legislative/executive, state/civil society, and, of course, military/police. The growing body of Foucauldian political sociology, international relations, and political geography wants to somehow retain, albeit for different political purposes, police and war as distinct practices; hence the argument that war is in the process of somehow *becoming* police (and becoming *reduced* to police at that). All that is meant by such a claim is that soldiers are now performing more of the tasks that we might have expected to see police officers perform. But this invokes a remarkably impoverished concept of police; then again, it also invokes a remarkably impoverished concept of war. All of the critical potential in exploring the war–police nexus is lost in what amounts to a dismissal of what might be grasped under the idea of police. I am arguing that the 'war is becoming police' approach does little to genuinely bring 'war' and 'police' together and sheds little light on either; more or less replicating the liberal conception of police, it comes closer to mystifying rather than explaining. A fair amount of recent work has explored the relationship between war and law ('lawfare', 'warlaw'), but the implication of my argument is that we need to think more broadly than even war and/as law, and to consider instead war and/as police; that is, we need an argument that works on and with the nexus of war power and police power. To put that another way: we need to develop a critical theory of state power that assumes that war and police are *always already* together; war and police as predicative on one another; war and police not as distinct institutions ('the military' and 'the police', which then raises rather pointless questions about how these institutions relate to each other, how they overlap, how they ape each other, how they are becoming blurred) but as *processes* working in conjunction as state power.

Thus, to turn back to my argument concerning air power, what we find is that a form of technology which has been understood too readily and too easily in 'military' terms is better understood through the lens of police power. This is not 'war becoming police' and neither is it the idea that war is being *reduced* to police (as though war is somehow something bigger, better, more substantial than police). Neither is it a 'small wars' affair. My argument is that, understood in terms of the fabrication of order, this particular technology has always needed to be understood through a war–police nexus. In what remains of this paper I would like to try and strengthen this argument by using it to try and make sense of perhaps the fundamental issue in contemporary air power: drones. Conversely, I would like to use the contemporary development of drone technology to help restate my argument.

Victory through air power

As is well known, the air power used in the war on terror has increasingly been operated through drone technology. The US Department of Defense's UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) inventory grew from 167 in 2002 to 7000 in 2010 (Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2011, pages 2 and 75). Between 2001 and 2008 the hours of surveillance coverage for US Central Command encompassing Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen rose by 1431% as a result of the developing drone technology; in 2010 the US Air Force projected that the combined flight hours of all its drones would exceed 250 000 hours, exceeding in one year the total number of hours from 1995 to 2007 (Turse and Engelhardt, 2012, page 37), while in the UK the Reaper UAV reached a landmark figure of 20 000 flying hours in 2011 (Ministry of Defence, 2011). At the same time, news about drones is now constant, as more and more states (now around fifty) operate them. Drones also occupy a key space in debates about the new virtuous war—"at the heart of virtuous war is the technical capability and ethical imperative to threaten and, if necessary, actualize violence from a distance … *with no or minimal casualties*" (Der Derian, 2001, page xv, emphasis in the original)—and, as a consequence, so too does anger about them among activists and critical thinkers.

One feature of this anger seems to be that the drones are unmanned, and thus a new step in the technology of military 'distancing' or 'risk-transfer warfare'. This claim has been made so frequently that a complete list of references would be pointless, so let Eric Hobsbawm's more general point stand in here: one of the features of the "age of extremes", notes Hobsbawm, is the "new impersonality of warfare, which turned killing and maiming into the remote consequence of pushing a button or moving a lever. Technology made its victims invisible, as people eviscerated by bayonets, or seen through the sights of firearms, could not be." One of Hobsbawm's main examples is, unsurprisingly, air power: "Far below the aerial bombers were not people about to be burned an eviscerated, but targets … the greatest cruelties of our century have been the impersonal cruelties of remote decision" (1994, page 50). The impersonal cruelty of remote killing and unmanned technology seems to be the essence of one aspect of the criticism of drones: bombings and assassinations by a piece of equipment far removed from any human operator. From a critical perspective, this seems a rather naive thing to be angry about, either in terms of the conflicts of world history or in terms of technological possibility, since maximising lethality while reducing the risk to a state's own combatants is inherent to the logic of all military technological advance.

The other major concern people have about drones is that they now patrol the skies not just in the lands of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan but of the whole planet, and not just in 'war zones' but in 'civilian areas'. Thus one finds that they now fly over cities engaged in *police* operations, from managing emergencies caused by natural disasters to spying on foreign drug cartels, fighting crime, conducting border control operations, and general surveillance (Wall and Monahan, 2011, page 240). In the US, following a 2003 decision by the Federal Aviation Authority to grant license to UAVs to fly over American civilian airspace, more and more American states now work with drones, and a Congressional Research Service report noted in 2010 that "recent UAV modification is part of an ongoing push by some policymakers and CBP [Customs and Border Protection] to both expand CBP's UAV resources and open domestic airspace for UAV operations" (Haddal and Gertler, 2010, page 1). In the UK a number of police forces have trialled the use of drones, over 120 companies have been given 'blanket permission' to fly small drones within the UK for surveillance purposes, and the UK ASTRAEA programme aims to "enable the routine use of UAS [Unmanned Aircraft Systems] in all classes of airspace without the need for restrictive or specialised conditions of operation" (ASTRAEA, 2012; also Cole, 2012, page 26). Hence the criticism, which runs: this is technology designed for war and it is being used to police civilians; it is another

step in the 'militarisation' of policing. My argument, however, is that air power has *always been police power*. On this basis we need to read the drone not as a new form of military technology that is somehow being allowed to sneak into civilian spaces but, rather, as a continuation of the police logic inherent in air power since its inception.

Despite the publicity surrounding them the vast majority of drones are *not* sophisticated bombing or killing machines but are in fact small and unarmed models used primarily for battlefield surveillance. Of the 10 499 missions flown by Predator and Reaper drones over Iraq and Afghanistan during 2007 and 2008, missiles were fired on only 244 missions (Turse and Engelhardt, 2012, page 149; Wall and Monahan, 2011, page 242). Their key feature is that they are disposable, a feature highlighted by the smaller and smaller UAVs, dropped from aircraft, fired into the air by hand, catapult, or slingshot (Blackmore, 2005, pages 130–131; Singer, 2009, pages 116–120). This disposability is a reflection of their main function which is not to bomb or assassinate but to gather—that is, to construct—knowledge. This explains the surveillance-oriented names for almost all the different drones—Global Hawk, Dragon Eye, Desert Hawk, Gorgon Stare (after the creature in Greek mythology whose main power resided in the eye), Watchkeeper—and goes some way to also explaining why they are spoken of by the state less as killing machines and more in terms of a range of other abilities, such as recognising and categorising humans and human-made objects, identifying movements, interpreting footprints, and distinguishing different kinds of tracks on the earth's surface.

Moreover, and more pressingly, we need to understand that from the wider historical perspective of air power there are no civilian areas and there are no civilians; the only logic is a police logic. As soon as air power was created the issue was: what does this do to civilian space? And, essentially, the answer has been: 'it destroys it'. Air power thus likewise destroys the concept of the civilian. This was the major theme of the air power literature of the 1920s, found in the work of Mitchell, Seversky, Fuller, and all the others, but the analysis provided in *The Command of the Air* by Giulio Douhet, first published in 1921, expanded in 1927, and perhaps the first definitive account of the influence of air power on world history, is representative: the art of aerial warfare, notes Douhet, is the art of destroying cities, of attacking civilians, of terrorising the population. In the future, war "will be waged essentially against the unarmed populations of the cities and great industrial centres". There are no longer soldiers and citizens, or combatants and noncombatants: "war is no longer a clash between armies, but is a clash between nations, between whole populations." Aerial bombing means war is now "total war" (Douhet, 2003, pages 11; 158; 223). The major powers fought against accepting this for some time. (Or at least, fought against accepting it in their classic doctrine of war as a battle between militarily industrialised nation-states; the police bombing of colonies was entirely acceptable to them, as we have seen). But eventually, in the course of World War 2 they conceded, and by July 1945 a US Army assessment of strategic air power could openly state that "there are no civilians in Japan" (cited in Sherry, 1987, page 311). This view has been maintained ever since: "There are no innocent civilians", says US General Curtis LeMay (cited in Sherry, 1987, page 287). Recent air power literature on 'the enemy as a system' continues this very line.[4] Hence, and contrary to claims made at

[4] I am thinking here of the influential work of Colonel John Warden III, a member of the US Air Force's Air Staff Plans Directorate and a key figure behind the strategy for the first Gulf War. Warden's book *The Air Campaign* (1988), which quickly became a standard text, outlines an approach based on identifying and then attacking the enemy's centre or centres of gravity, later developed into a 'Five Ring Model', each ring constituting one "centre of gravity" which might be targeted. The implication is that the population, production, and infrastructure might all need to be targeted, on the grounds that "the enemy functions as a system". For all its formulations and permutations, the theory is one which points to neutralising urban centres and smashing industrial production; in other words, to devastating civilian populations (see Warden, 1989; 1995).

both ends of the political spectrum that the recent air attacks in Beirut and Gaza reveal "the increasing meaninglessness of the word 'civilian'" (Dershowitz, 2006) or mean that we might be "witnessing … the death of the idea of the civilian" (Gregory, 2006, page 633), it has to be said that any meaningful concept of 'the civilian' was *destroyed with the very invention of air power* (Hartigan, 1982, page 119).[5]

The point is that seen from the perspective of air power as *police* power, the use of drone technology over what some would still like to call 'civilian spaces' was highly predictable. This allows us to make a far more compelling argument about drones. For like air power technology in general, the drone serves as *both plane and possibility* (Pandya, 2010, page 143). And what becomes possible with the drone is permanent police presence across the territory. "Unmanned aircraft have just revolutionized our ability to provide a constant stare against our enemy", said a senior US military official. "Using the all-seeing eye, you will find out who is important in a network, where they live, where they get their support from, where their friends are" (cited in Barnes, 2009). Much as this might be important geopolitically, with drones being capable of maintaining nonstop surveillance of vast swathes of land and sea for so long as the technology and fuel supplies allow, it is also nothing less than the state's dream of a perpetual police presence across the territory (Neocleous, 2000). And it is a police presence encapsulated by the process of colonisation, captured in the army document "StrikeStar 2025" which speaks of the permanent presence of UAVs in the sky as a form of "air occupation" (Carmichael et al, 1996, page viii).

Drones have been described as the perfect technology for democratic warfare, combining as they do a certain utilitarian character with an appealing 'risk-transfer' (Sauer and Schoring, 2012), but perhaps we need to think of them equally as the perfect technology of liberal police. When in 1943 Disney sought to popularise the idea of 'victory through air power', the company probably had little idea just quite what this victory might mean, beyond the defeat of Japan. But if there is a victory through air power to be had on the part of the state it is surely not merely the defeat of a military enemy but the victory of perpetual police.

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[5] Of course, states like to claim that air power allows them to better distinguish between civilians and noncivilians, but my argument here helps reveal this to be propaganda of the purest kind: a lie, full stop.

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