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Crying Wolf: Media Disinformation and Death Squads in Occupied Iraq

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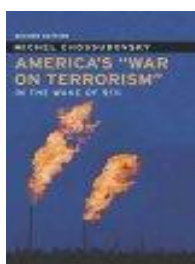
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Abstract

The phenomenon of death squads operating in Iraq has become more prominent over recent months. However, in its treatment of the issue, the media has zealously followed a line of attributing extrajudicial killings to Shia militias who have risen to prominence with the electoral victory of the Shia-led government in January. The following article examines both the accuracy of the information that has been widely presented and whether that information is based on an actual basis in fact. Concluding that the attribution to Shia militias is not, the article considers who the intellectual authors of these crimes are and what purpose they serve in the context of the ongoing occupation.

Shortly before dawn on 14 September 2005, just hours before a high school graduation in Baghdad killing 88 labourers, around 50 men in army uniforms and a truck of Taji 16km north of Baghdad in military vehicles, bearing military equipment, searching the village, they seized 17 local men, described by one witness as vegetable sellers, ice sellers and taxi drivers. Handcuffed and blindfolded, they were taken to their homes before being shot in the head in the main square (New York Times, Juan Cole).

Such killings represent a pattern of violence as frightening as well as as systematic as the steady wave of bombings targeting civilians. Whilst the pattern of death-squad-style executions is broadly recognized, it is badly understood and, in its representation, deeply distorted.

The appearance of death squads was first highlighted in May this year. In a 10-day period dozens of bodies were found casually disposed of in vacant areas around Baghdad. All of the victims had been handcuffed and shot in the head and many of them also showed signs of having been tortured. On 5 May 15 bodies were discovered in an industrial area near Baghdad and subsequently identified as belonging to a group of farmers from the Baghdad market. The bodies revealed such torture marks as broken bones, beatings and right eyeballs removed. Witnesses claimed the men

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by members of the security forces ([BBC](#), [Guardian](#)). Less than 10 more bodies were found at two sites ([KUNA](#)). According to the Cha Waqf court, Adnan Muhammad Salman, the victims were Sun arrested at their homes or at mosques ([ArabicNews.com](#)).

The evidence was sufficiently compelling for the Association of Muslim a leading Sunni organisation, to issue public statements in which security forces attached to the Ministry of the Interior as well as the former armed wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution being behind the killings. They also accused the Ministry of the Interior terrorism ([Financial Times](#)).

Since then, a steady stream of the victims of extrajudicial killings the Baghdad morgue. Characteristically, the victims' hands are behind their backs and they have been blindfolded. In most cases have been whipped with a cord, subjected to electric shocks or to object and shot to death, often with single bullets to the head. A journalist for Knight Ridder investigating the bodies, wrote that many of the victims were seized by men wearing commando uniforms Land Cruisers with police markings. ([Knight Ridder](#)). Salihee' published on 27 June, three days after he was fatally shot by a US checkpoint.

It is impossible to know exactly how many people are being killed reported that more than 30 examples occurred in less than a week. A director of Baghdad's central morgue, states that before the occupation the morgue handled 200 to 250 suspicious deaths a month, of which firearm injuries. Now the figure is between 700 and 800, with many wounds (*op. cit.*). The Independent's Robert Fisk adds that there are that human remains are stacked on top of each other and unidentified rapidly disposed of ([Robert Fisk](#)).

The killings have not been confined to Baghdad. For example, on 10 were taken from the village of Hashmiyat 15km west of Baquba in uniform; their decapitated bodies were found soon afterwards a mile away ([Associated Press](#)). More recently, on 8 September, 18 people were taken from the town of Iskandriyah 40km south of the capital by men in National Guard uniforms executed in isolated open land ([Xinhuanet](#)). These few examples represent a rapidly expanding iceberg, with the majority of extrajudicial-style killings under-investigated and underreported.

In response to the accusations of police involvement, drawing on evidence from Iraq's new Ministry of the Interior claims that it is easy to get hold of weapons and that the killings are the work of 'insurgents' masquerading as police in order to create sectarian divisions ([BBC](#)). Such denials are echoed by an advisor to the ministry Steven Casteel, who has stated that, 'The evidence we've investigated we've found to be either rumor or innuendo' (Sa

Despite such denials, few journalists have been able to dismiss the evidence. A foreign editor Peter Beaumont describes the 'extraordinary sense of impunity in which these abductions and killings take place' as mere innuendo. He cites consistent eye-witness accounts of the kidnappers appearing with military equipment issued to the security forces, such as the Toyota Land Cruiser and Glock 9mm pistols, as simply rumour (Salihee, *op. cit.*). The explanation of large, heavily armed groups of resistance fighters in Baghdad and the capital becomes even less plausible when one considers that r

took place following the onset of Operation Lightning/Thunder divisional-size operation saw the deployment of 40,000 Iraqi to Baghdad and installed 675 checkpoints around the city ([Associate](#) of arrests followed as the security forces began to 'hunt down According to the AMS, in one instance, on 13 July, dozens of commandos stormed several houses in northern Baghdad and did before torturing and killing them in a nearby apartment ([Gulf Daily](#)

However, instead of placing the blame squarely on the apparatus of the state, the mainstream media has almost exclusively chosen to look away, resorting to a number of standardised literary devices. The frame of extrajudicial killings in the context of a wider panoply of sectarian violence. For example, Francis Curta of the Associated Press writes that 'A series of tit-for-tat killings has raised sectarian tension to new heights' ([Mail&Guardian Online](#)), Mohamad Bazzi writing for Newsday relates 'retaliatory killings' ([Newsday](#)), and James Hider of the London Times writes 'only certainty is that once [the bodies] are identified, so-called revenge' ([Times Online](#)). The second device is to state or imply that the forces are closely associated with largely unaccountable Shia militia the Badr Brigade. For instance, Patrick Cockburn of the UK Independent writes 'commandos carrying out the attacks appear to belong to the 12,000-strong Badr Brigade', while, in almost the same breath he adds that 'Death squads, perhaps secretly controlled by the Badr Brigade, the leader of which frightens the Sunni' ([Independent](#)); in a similar vein, the BBC reports 'mourners at a funeral for some of those killed said they had died at the hands of police and Shia militiamen' ([BBC](#)).

Most importantly, reports variously stress that the government, the police and the courts are under sectarian Shia control. Hence, Samir Haddad, a columnist for Islam Online, refers to the 'dominant-Shiite newly-formed security forces' ([Islam Online](#)), the Chicago Tribune's Liz Sly states that Sunnis 'accuse the security forces, now controlled by the Shiite-led government' ([Chicago Tribune](#)), writing for the Inquirer, claims that 'Badr members have gained authority' and that the Interior Minister, who controls the national commando forces, is a former Supreme Council official with the Badr' ([Philadelphia Inquirer](#)), the Observer's Beaumont writes that 'the government has also become more opaque since the formation of the new government' (*op. cit.*), the BBC's Richard Galpin states that the 'Sunni particular claims it is being targeted by the Shia-dominated police' (Anthony Loyd for the London Times talks of 'allegations of extrajudicial killings of Sunnis by the Shia-dominated Iraqi security forces' (Sinan Salaheddin of the Associated Press, states 'The grisly finds that people believe that Shiite Muslims who dominate the government and the police are waging a quiet, deadly campaign against them' (eg. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#)

Other devices include mentioning the Interior Ministry's claims of sectarian police or commando uniforms or implying that if the security forces are responsible for torture and murder it is a reflection of the fact that it is composed of members of the former state who know only a culture of violence. This is clearly at odds with those reports that regard the security forces as Shia dominated. Wilder devices talk about security forces' frustration with Zaqawi for attempting to inflame sectarian tensions. Whilst all of these are employed in various combinations, notably absent from every account is an examination of the new Iraqi state or, assiduously avoided, the role of the security powers, leaving the most thoughtful of journalists to wonder with the Iraqi state is 'stumbling towards a policy of institutionalised

human-rights abuses are conducted by 'rogue elements' within the (Salihee's investigation represents the one exception, with the emphasis on the organs of the state, supported by solid primary evidence).

Police Commandos and Disinformation Brigades

An instructive starting point for an examination of the prevailing media consider some of the forces of the Iraqi state most closely associated with serious human rights abuses.

The majority of accusations are general. Journalists refer to the police as the National Guard or to poorly identified police commandos, but the most serious have been made against a unit known as the Wolf Brigade. The Wolf Brigade with cases of abduction, torture and execution in Baghdad on 16 May, when Mothana Harith Al-Dari, a spokesman for the AM, announced mass killings and the crackdown and detention campaigns in northern Iraq over the past two days by members of the Iraqi police or by a special force, known as the Wolf Brigade, are part of a state terror strategy. (See the discoveries of the victims of extrajudicial executions in [Online](#)).

Within days a Knight Ridder journalist, Hannah Allam, had published a new title an article about the Wolf Brigade, highlighting their maverick status and presenting their leader, who goes by the *nom de guerre* of 'Waleed', a devout Shiite, 'complete with a photo of Imam Ali and religious calligraphy on his constantly ringing cell phone.' ([Knight Ridder](#)). Allam informed that Waleed regarded the AMS as infidels and tossed their accusations of terrorism into the bin. Additionally, readers learned that the unit was the brainchild of Waleed in October 2004, saw its first action in Mosul in the next months' training with US forces, and is behind the inhuman torture of *Terrorists in the Grip of Justice*, in which tortured detainees are forced to confess to a lurid array of crimes ([Associated Press](#)). However, whilst being regarded as horrendous human-rights violations as 'the usual complaints' of the reference to the Wolf Brigade being a special forces unit attached to the Interior Ministry.

On 9 June rightwing US think tank the Council for Foreign Relations devoted to Iraqi militias ([CFR](#)), simultaneously repeated in the *Me* series of FAQ-type entries, the report reiterated many of Allam's accusations about the Wolf Brigade, as well as offering some additional tidbits:

What is the Wolf Brigade?

The most feared and effective commando unit in Iraq, established in October by a former three-star Shiite general and SCIRI member, with the *nom de guerre* Abu Walid, the Wolf Brigade is composed of thousands of fighters, mostly young, poor Shiites from Sadr City.

However, the paper went further in emphasising the units' sectarianism, stating that 'One of Badr's recent offshoots is a feared, elite commando unit the Iraqi Interior Ministry called the Wolf Brigade', and spelling out the difference between it and other, Sunni militia-style units.

Are there any Sunni-led commando units?

Yes. At least one counterinsurgency unit is headed by a former member of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. The Special Police Commando Brigade, have a reputation for brutality, but the group is also

Iraq's most effective and well-disciplined counterinsurgency

Those familiar with Peter Maas's article '[The Way of the Commando](#)' in *New York Times Magazine* just six weeks earlier, will recognise that the Brigade bears a striking similarity to the unit he identifies as Commandos. The Police Commandos, too, were formed in autumn of their first major commitments in Mosul in November; like the leader also founded an unspeakably vile television show called *Terrible Justice*.

But there are fundamental distinctions between these units as the Commandos were founded on the initiative of then Interior Minister son of a former Iraqi Chief of Staff, believed by many to have been ([National Review Online](#)), under the command of his uncle, an military intelligence officer and CIA coup-plotter called Adnan The drawn from former members of the special forces and Republican ethnic and religious background ([Washington Post](#)), while its chain to be largely Sunni. Most importantly, the Police Commandos were experienced tutelage and oversight of veteran US counterinsurgency the outset conducted joint-force operations with elite and highly s forces units ([Reuters](#), [National Review Online](#)).

A key figure in the development of the Special Police Commandos is a former US Army special forces operative who cut his teeth in Vietnam to direct the US military mission in El Salvador at the height of war. Steele was responsible for selecting and training the small unit who were boasted to have inflicted 60% of the casualties in the 'counterinsurgency' campaign (Manwaring, *El Salvador at War*). Principally, the tens of thousands of victims were civilians.

Another US contributor was the same Steven Casteel who as an advisor within the Interior Ministry brushed off serious and accusations of appalling human right violations as 'rumor and innuendo'. Casteel gained considerable experience in Latin America, in his case the hunt for the cocaine baron Pablo Escobar in Colombia's Drugs War as well as working alongside local forces in Peru and Bolivia (Maas). Casteel's background is said to be Drug Enforcement Administration. The operation against Escobar was a joint intelligence effort, involving the Special Forces and a top-secret military intelligence surveillance unit known as ([Marihemp](#), [SpecWarNet](#)). The operation had no impact on Colombia, the world's major source of cocaine (which, incidentally or not, owed much to the US as it had become heavily involved in the trade as part of their secret full-time Contra mercenary army; for a detailed account, read the series of articles originally published by the San Jose Mercury News), with the operation ultimately shifting to dozens of micro cartels ([Houston Chronicle](#)). The operation did lead to the formation of a death squad known as Los Pepes, which formed the nucleus for Colombia's present paramilitary death squad organisation, the AUC, responsible for over 80 percent of the country's human-rights abuses ([Colombia Journal](#)). Whilst no official confirmation was admitted, Los Pepes relied on the intelligence data held in the files at the US Embassy in Bogota that served as the operation's nerve center. The death squad's victims rapidly came to mirror those of Escobar's as they were targeted at the embassy headquarters ([Cocaine.org](#), [Cannabis News](#)).

Casteel's background is significant because this kind of intelligence role and the production of death lists are characteristic of

counterinsurgency programs and constitute the underlying thread to be random, disjointed killing sprees. Probably the best-attested operation is Indonesia during the early years of the Suharto dictatorship where officers provided the names of thousands of people, many of the Indonesian Communist Party, to the army, who dutifully slaughtered (Kadane). Similar cases can be made for the CIA supplying and overseeing operations in Vietnam (OC Weekly), Guatemala, which is known to have been compiled but were supposedly never (Consortium), and El Salvador, where former killers have come for sharing desk space with US advisors who collected the 'intelligence interrogation' but were spared details of the subsequent murders (Quarterly). For an extensive list of countries in which the CIA has death squads, see the database compiled by Ralph McGehee (Serendipity).

Such centrally planned genocides are entirely consistent with what is happening in Iraq today under the auspices of crackdowns like Operation Lightning of so-called Rapid Intrusion Brigades to make widespread, well known (Financial Times). It is also consistent with what little we know of the Police Commandos, which was tailored to provide the Interior Ministry with strike capability (US Department of Defense). In keeping with this, the Police Commando headquarters has become the hub of a national control, communications, computer and intelligence operations center (Defend America). Interestingly, supplying a state-of-the-art network to coordinate mass murder was part of the plan in Indonesia (The New Rulers of the World, p 30); it is doubtless common practice elsewhere.

Finally, we know that by 30 January of this year, the Police Commandos were functioning brigades and in early April the *Al-Nimr* (Tiger) Brigade and the *Al-Dhib* (Wolf) Brigade in Mosul (UNAMI). Interestingly, one of the first Brigade commanders was a Shiite, apparently called Rashid al-Halafi, who noted that 'he was regarded warily by other Shiites because he held high posts under Saddam Hussein'.

Untangling the Web

Clearly, the Wolf Brigade, though commonly treated in media as an autonomous entity, is actually one component of the Interior Ministry Police Commandos. Abu Walid, identified occasionally as Brig. Gen. Mohd al-Halafi, the brigade commander, under overall command of Adnan Thabit, who is linked with both the Wolf Brigade and Police Commandos is Ma Flayyih, variously identified as commander of the brigade or the wolf. He can be identified with the brigade commander Rashid al-Halafi identified above. It can be surmised that he has either been promoted or is another Abu Walid.

Incredibly, I have not been able to find a single report where the identification started to be made about the Wolf Brigade's involvement in the bombings. It makes their identification with the Police Commandos clear, with journalists loosely refer to the unit as police commandos, as though there are no other police commando units. Though this might at first seem pedantic, it becomes even more incredible in the case of the 10 bricklayers killed in the bombing of a police van on 10 July (San Diego Union Tribune). To my knowledge, the only case in which members of the security forces have been identified with a survivor who had feigned death able to provide first-hand information is that responsible was the Wolf Brigade, but this information must be taken with reference in one article to the victims being taken to a police station.

Square ([Knight Ridder](#)) and Beaumont's mention that the Wolf Br running an interrogation centre as its Nissor Square headquarters that a nebulous Wolf Brigade linked to Badr, full of vengeful Shiites as a useful foil for allegations of 'state terrorism', but that when sufficiently well-grounded, it is easier to keep it out of the spotlight pattern of gross and systematic violations of human rights might's significance of this lies far beyond merely being able to expose practices, but actually reveals key characteristics of both the US and of the nature of their current occupation of Iraq.

With the finger of responsibility increasingly and inevitably pointing counterinsurgency units operating from the Interior Ministry, it remains before intellectual authorship must be placed at the hands of the powers. Since the election of 30 January and the transfer of official government of Ayad Allawi to the transitional one of Ibrahim al-Jaafari, mainstream media has unanimously chorused that power has fallen to Iraq's Shia majority. Most specifically, it is repeatedly claimed that the Interior Ministry and its security forces have come under the control of the Badr Brigades now wield considerable power within the ministry. The Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, described as a former Badr member of this control lies in the policy of de-Baathification, a process that was implemented by the interim government of Ayad Allawi, but that was considered a key policy of the incoming government. The policy was actively opposed by the US, which feared that experienced personnel (for which, read Washington Post) might be lost, especially within the security forces and intelligence services ([Washington Post](#)).

According to Firas al-Nakib, a legal advisor at the Interior Ministry, many senior members of the Interior Ministry staff were rapidly dismissed and many commanders were replaced with Shiites loyal to the Shiite bloc that has emerged ([Knight Ridder](#)). Yet, after speaking with Jabr, General Flayyih was reassured, with the former Badr member not only promising to continue to lead the Commandos ([Financial Times](#)), but calling for their rapid and continued deployment ([Los Angeles Times](#)). Flayyih's continuing tenure is noteworthy, as, though a Shiite himself, Flayyih was in charge of the Shia uprising in Nasiriya following the first Gulf War, and is, as a result, in any serious Shia-led policy of de-Baathification. Like Flayyih, al-Nakib retained a senior position, commanding all of the Interior Ministry's units ([Multi-National Force - Iraq](#)).

The issue of de-Baathification was recently addressed by Jabr, who stated that the discharge of personnel was handled by a general inspector and that it was not influenced by sect ([Al Mendhar](#)). Backing up his statement, he stated that many senior security posts within the ministry were held by Sunnis. The deputy minister for intelligence affairs (also leader of the Intelligence Service), currently held by General Hussain Kamal.

In fact, the entire intelligence establishment is a creation of the American intelligence services ([Los Angeles Times](#)), which began building at least as early as the start of the occupation ([Detroit Free Press](#)), although it may be suspected that it was conceived long before. The new Iraqi establishment was staffed with former US assets, such as General Mohammad Shahwani, who had been in the US since the late 1980s ([Asia Times Online](#)) and became director of the Intelligence Service (the *Mukhabarat*). Like Thabit and Flayyih, al-Nakib and Shahwani had participated in attempted coups against the government. Further agents (presumably existing intelligence assets for the

recruited from Iraq's main political groups, consisting of SCIRI, the two main Kurdish parties, the Iraqi National Congress and the Iraqi National Congress. These agents became the Collection, Management and Analysis Center (CMAC), whose principal job was to 'turn raw intelligence into targets for operations' ([Detroit Free Press](#), *op. cit.*). Initially, 'operations' were run by a paramilitary unit composed of militia from the five main political groups under the supervision of US commanders, worked with US special forces to hunt down 'insurgents' ([Washington Post](#)). As the new Iraqi state apparatus was split between the ministries of Defence and Interior, with an effort to form the National Intelligence Service ([Detroit Free Press](#), *op. cit.*), all three bodies, the National Intelligence Coordination Committee headed, as National Security Advisor (appointed in April 2004), by this 'leading Shiite moderate' had been a spokesman for the Dawaa when it was a serious terrorist organisation targeting Iraq, before he coordinated the Iraqi opposition from London ([Asia Times Online](#), *op. cit.*). He worked with the Khoei Foundation, a pro-US charitable organisation that distributed money for the CIA and is linked with the National Iraqi Alliance through Prime minister Jaafari's advisor Laith Kuba, and is a major asset ([Village Voice](#)).

These new intelligence agencies supply the data for the Interior Ministry's arrests. A graphic and harrowing account of such arrests on the border is provided by UPI's P. Mitchell Prothero, in what he describes as the 'frontier-style law enforcement'. Prothero described how local residents were 'shocked' as their doors were broken in and 'men were dragged out, dishevelled and screaming' by members of a SWAT team in central Iraq. The arrests had been planned for months by General Kamal's intelligence agency. The Interior Ministry and the names of more than 100 detainees were prepared lists ([Washington Times](#)). Prothero witnessed many of the arrests 'worked over' with metal batons and lengths of hose in the back of the van. The most serious abuse came later, within the Interior Ministry compound. Members of the Oregon National Guard swept into the grounds of the compound and disarmed plain-clothed Iraqi policemen whom they had observed. They searched and blindfolded prisoners ([Oregonian](#)). The US soldiers began to act on the prisoners, who had also been starved of food and water for three days. They were clearly in a very serious condition. Steven Casteel was called to the compound in a situation ([Boston Globe](#)). After hours of negotiations, the soldiers were leaving the victims in the hands of their torturers. Perhaps their names will never be known, but as Casteel commented, 'There's always a cost to freedom and security'.

Like Thabit and Flayyih, Shahwani has retained his position under the new government and continues to report directly to the CIA ([Seattle Times](#)). However, the purpose of stating or implying that unaccountable military operations, extrajudicial executions and/or that sectarian rivalries, especially between the Interior Ministry (which, as Beaumont correctly points out, is the centre of the problem), are to blame, is to distance the US from the almost unthinkable actions against humanity. Comparable disinformation strategies have been used in counterinsurgency conflict with which the US has been involved. In Colombia, where establishing 'plausible deniability'. For example, in Colombia, where the US has been deeply involved for decades, paramilitary death squads are invariably used. The media as a third force in the armed conflict, despite the fact that they are typically civilian opponents of the government, their members are often serving members of the armed forces and they are only able to operate with the complicity of the army ([Human Rights Watch: The "Sixth Division"](#)). The function as part of a shadow state, which exists to implement

remain unaccountable.

More specifically, in the case of Iraq, this disinformation strategy is designed to mask the real intellectual authors of genocidal actions. Increasingly, it appears to be directed towards creating the very sect it hides behind.

Towards Balkanisation

In every country where US-backed counter insurgency operations, with their attendant massacres and death squads, are being used as a dimension in a strategy of neo-colonisation. In Indonesia the communists were exterminated as part of the corporate takeover of the economy, since the globalisation of Asia (Pilger, *op. cit.* p 15-44); in Colombia the paramilitary squad massacres and the assassination of popular leaders exist to extend the investments of foreign multinationals in oil and mining and as an ongoing process of privatisation.

In this respect, Iraq is no different. Over and above the desire to exploit massive oil reserves, the country is being subjected to enforced economic therapy, with wages slashed and the extensive state sector rapidly dismantled. Corresponding with this, is a catastrophic level of unemployment and abandonment of service provision for the majority of the population, returning to typical Third World conditions ([The New Standard](#)). Such a process of devastation is not only unpopular, it is intolerable and there can be no doubt that the people in Iraq will oppose cuts and sell-offs and demand a restoration of services. This is not a sectarian issue. To the extent to which the movement is effective, the leaders and activists of the movement are likely to become targets for the state death squads, whatever guise they take.

It is hard to know exactly who the victims of the present wave of killings. Certainly they have included some trade union leaders ([Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions](#)), while in the period up to March 2004 more than 1000 professionals and intellectuals had already been killed and thousands of others in the country ([Al Jazeera](#)). Many of these people would have been members of the Baath party and their murders are very likely to be part of the process of Baathification, which, insofar as it exists, has not targeted CIA contractors. Undoubtedly have included those seen as potential opponents of the new regime. In passing, it is worth noting that while thousands of former teachers have been killed, thousands more are being recruited from outside Iraq ([Al Jazeera](#)) because they are either cheaper to employ (denied by the Iraqis) or because they are more malleable to the new educational regime, in line with the World Bank and provides lucrative contracts to the American firm Creative Associates Inc ([Education News](#)). Iraq's 30,000 new teachers receive just five days' training and must teach religion and a history that glorifies the occupiers as saviours, rather than the former 'anti-Western propaganda' which have served Iraqis better. Other victims of the death squads may include the Communist Party commentator Juan Cole noting that the Communist Party is so alarmed by the current events that it is considering going underground; though he does not say what events that would force the party into hiding, they are not difficult to guess ([Cole](#)).

A further possibility, however, in addition to defeating a popularly elected government, is that the monstrous intelligence nexus created by the US in Iraq is being used as a strategy of ethnic cleansing as part of an effort to partition a country that otherwise remain a regional pretender. Most of the military assault

substantial civilian displacement (eg [Washington Times](#)), but, more of families uprooting as the result of perceived sectarian violence become common. For example, in July, Mariam Fam of the Associated Press reports that dozens of Shiites abandoned their homes in a poor farming community in Baghdad after receiving threats from Sunni militants that appeared as typewritten flyers scattered on streets and doorsteps; prior to the invasion these people had shared their poverty, labour, food and their Sunni neighbours ([North Country Times](#)). Similarly, Hala Jaber in the *Sunday Times* describes how Sunni families have fled Baghdad's northern neighbourhood after the killings of 22 young Sunni men, taken away in a military uniform who arrived in vehicles bearing police markings (*Times*). The situation is described in Baghdad's Ghalaliya district, where a series of motiveless murders accelerated sharply over the summer, leaving many people, Sunnis and Shiites, dead ([Los Angeles Times](#)). The report notes that families there and elsewhere are selling their homes and moving to other parts of the country. A similar picture is starting to emerge from other parts of the country. Jaber notes that thousands of Shiites have fled the provincial towns of Ramadi, Falluja and Latafiya, while, according to Juan Cole, many are leaving Iraq's deep south and Arabs, presumably of both denominations, are being forced from the Kurdish district of Kirkuk ([Juan Cole](#)).

While many in the mainstream media and Iraq's puppet government blame the insurgents linked to Abu Musab Zarqawi and al-Qaida are behind much of the violence, deliberately hoping to inflame sectarian divisions and incite a civil war, it is interesting to note how closely their dangerous schemes correspond to the avowed aims of one of the most powerful figures in present-day Iraq. Rubaie, the US-installed national security advisor, promotes a vision of 'democratic regionalism', by which Iraq would be dismembered into a system of four to six distinct provinces, with at least two Shiite provinces and Baghdad as a separate district as well as the seat of a federal government nominally responsible for national defence ([Newsweek](#)). Coincidentally, the plan is well catered for by Iraq's new constitution ([NPR](#)), but would lead to the disintegration of the Iraqi state. A *de facto* civil war would undoubtedly be the result of the process.

The parallels with the break up of Yugoslavia are obvious. Edward J. Blum of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars notes that the likelihood of civil war increases if, after attacks targeting a community of the minority population flee, 'in turn persecuting minorities in the areas they fled' ([Los Angeles Times](#), *op. cit.*). However, where he sees the situation in Iraq as comparable to Bosnia, in many ways the pattern is closer to the widespread ethnic cleansing against Serbs that took place under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic as observed by observers after the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces ([World Socialist V](#)

In view of mounting evidence of Anglo-American involvement in Iraq, and the campaigns targeting Iraqi civilians, notably the brief arrest of two men found with a car packed with explosives ([William Bowles](#)), it is very difficult to see little on the implementation of their wider strategy. Discounting Al-Qaeda's actions in Iraq as fabrications designed for easy media consumption ([Center for Globalisation](#)), we are left with a situation in which someone is targeting Shiites through the planting of bombs around mosques and at religious gatherings, while someone is targeting Sunnis, mainly through extrajudicial executions. The situation is being managed by a Brigade in the popular imagination. It is impossible that the Iraqis could account for this pandemic of fratricidal violence, whatever Adnan al-Fayyad's account about insurgents in police uniforms. It is equally impossible that it

Brigade could account for much of it in a milieu dominated by military forces. What is possible is that both sides of the apparent are run as part of a huge CIA-lead intelligence operation designed seams. I tentatively suggest that the intelligence apparatus at the contriving attacks on Sunnis and that British and US special forces the intelligence apparatus at the Iraqi Defence Ministry are fa bombings of Shias. Overseeing the entire operation is the 'cream' direction of top-level US intelligence asset Mowaffak Rubaie experienced at participating in bombing campaigns, undoubtedly glove with the CIA and the National Security Council in the US.

False Flags, Semiotics and Vulgar Marxists

The French theorist Jean Baudrillard famously once stated that th not take place. By this he did not mean that nothing happ presentation in the media consisted of an overwhelming barrage c which bore essentially no relationship to the annihilation of a Third most advanced military power in history. In short it was a simulati perhaps the most extreme example of what Baudrillard referred to 'communication', that in our Information Age, concepts spin at su outlines become lost and their original meanings are replaced with c

Fifteen years later, the same charges can be levelled against the re the country's subsequent occupation. Most importantly, I believe c to that Baudrillard highlighted is being actively employed to sim Iraq. False-flag intelligence operations are aimed at sowing seeds c that was largely non-existent prior to the invasion. Thus, even ma coming to believe that the well-organised death squads run from intelligence hub are actually the Badr Brigade they often claim to b SAS men in Arab disguise plant bombs at Shia religious festival fanatical Wahabi Sunni 'insurgents'.

Whether such tactics succeed in provoking further, autonomou directed against the civilian population is much less significant th are able to exert within the media. This Anglo-American intelligenc a factory churning out the *signs* of Civil War: a 'wave of tit-for-tat and the consequent ethnic cleansing. The signs are produced to b media and spun and spun until nothing is left but a nebulous Civil V logic or structure, with the occupying forces as powerless to interv the Balkans while Iraq splits into Rubiae's desired four to six autc Those few journalists, like Yasser Salihee and Steven Vincent, wh and start to investigate the actual authorship of extrajudicial become victims.

When one former CIA operative candidly claimed that 'Intelligen heart and soul of a new country' ([Washington Post](#))), they expressing a position that Noam Chomsky might call 'vulgar Marxi: actually confessing is that the essence of a state is the organisatio ultimate coercive measure and that the intelligence apparatus fur Little wonder then that the US is so closely involved with intelli world over, or that both *coup d'états* and savage repressions population deemed opposed to US interests have emanated from same services.

To penetrate the media smokescreen of spontaneous, uncontro understand the role of intelligence operations in the creation of a

client state or series of statelets is fundamental to understanding the world today. It is also fundamental to recognizing that the presence of US forces in Iraq does not merely exacerbate the present violence; it creates violence.

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