Automatic Warfare

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Introduction

Nine days after the attacks on the World Trade Center, George W. Bush announced that America had begun a "War on Terror." He described the enemy – the terror organisation Al Qaeda – as a "radical network of terrorists", and stated that the war would "not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion." (Bush, 2001) Bush's speech placed subtle emphasis on the asymmetric politics at the core of the conflict, communicating to the American people that this war would perhaps take on an unfamiliar form. The War on Terror's cultural impact is vast. It can certainly be considered as a linguistically productive war, with a lexicon of new terms now firmly implanted in early 21st century popular culture. It is also likely that the ambiguities of the conflict's definition acted as a catalyst in the formulation of a surveillance state. The War on Terror produced a new enemy who was both 'other' *and* familiar – a dichotomy that pushed forward the strong political arguments for the creep of complex technologies of control into the psychogeography of the urban landscape. While the emergence of the post-war information-based economies appeared to be leading the west toward this conclusion, the attacks on the WTC on September 11, 2001 rapidly sped up the socio-political evolution that Gilles Deleuze calls the 'societies of control'. (1992) To look outside of the civil mindset and examine the altered systems of the military, we can begin to critically engage with the supposed new paradigms of control triggered by the War on Terror.

This paper begins by discussing the historical argument for the centralisation of power in the military institution, with reference to Niccolo Machiavelli's writing in *The Art of War.* At a time when there was a divergence in the professional and civil militaries, Machiavelli argued for the latter, stressing the importance of the authoritarian sovereign role in encoding obedient behaviour. These ideas are analysed through the frame of 20th century systems theory, in particular Norbert Wiener's development of cybernetics and his engagement with human-machine behaviour in informational terms. While Wiener ultimately saw cybernetics' ideal applications to be humanist, its roots lie in military strategy, and it is a useful framework for exploring how power functions within a regimented social system such as a military institution. The second section of the text, titled *Material Power: Protocols for Capital Punishment* introduces a pamphlet titled *Procedure for Military Executions*, dated from 1944 and published by the US Department of the Army. As its title suggests, the pamphlet describes with clinical precision the legal and ethical protocols for a military execution – specifically an *Execution by Musketry*, and an *Execution by Hanging*, both methods deemed to fulfill an ethical and legal requirement at the time but which have no legal basis in the present US Army. I have chosen to analyse this document as an execution is, I will argue, the most confrontational of institutionalised violence in the military, especially as it is generally committed against a soldier from one's own army. Consequently, it is important to place this document in its rightful context: the US Army began to halt its use of capital punishment in the decade or so following the publication of this pamphlet, and so it can be surmised that these protocols were in operation during a transitionary period where their internal ethics were brought into question. Finally, the text introduces the concept of *Automatic Warfare* – that is, the increasing role of technology as an operator of military technologies, and the resulting reduction of the role of the human to that of an *observer of a process* – exemplified in the targeting of suspected terrorists with drones in the WANA (West Asia North Africa) region. But despite its use of the most advanced technologies, does the War on Terror truly introduce any new parameters into the apparatus of the military institution?

Producing Obedient Subjects

Why is it necessary for behaviour to be regulated so intensely in a military institution? Protocols, laws, penal codes, and various other procedural/judicial systems have seeming always formed the basis for military institutions. One of the most influential scholars that dealt with the topic was Niccolo Machiavelli. His text *The Art of War*, published at the height of the Renaissance and with a lasting influence still felt today, is comprised of a series of fictionalised debates in which the protagonists argue over the fine points of their contemporary Florentine military strategists. In particular, Machiavelli argues for the importance of a citizen army and the formation of a strict republican hierarchy, contrary to the popular alternative of a professional mercenary force. Power is centralised in the sovereign, reflective of the "societies of the sovereign" where the role of authority was "to tax rather than to organize production, to rule on death rather than to administer life." (Deleuze, 1992) In Christopher Lynch's introduction to his translation of *The Art of War*, he summarises Machiavelli's belief that the strategies of recruitment are key to a successful army. The military unit should be populated by soldiers who go to war for patriotic reasons, and who remain obedient to the upper strata of the military hierarchy out of fear. The system of control is implemented from the very beginning of the conscription process. The soldiers are selected by the *prince* – prince in this instance meaning a royalist or republican figure of authority – rather than the army being formed out of volunteers or a blanket conscription policy. Lynch writes: "Machiavelli is entirely averse to any form of military professionalism, for professionals, like mercenaries, are presumed to be motivated by the desire for personal profit." (2005: xxi) Writing in his book *The Machiavellian Moment*, J.G.A. Pocock takes this idea further, elaborating on how the professional mercenary can become a dangerous disruption to an established hierarchy: "Because the citizen has his own place in the body politic, he will understand that the war is being fought to preserve it; a mercenary with no home but the camp may become the instrument of tyranny over the city he was hired to defend." (1975: 200-201) Thus, Machiavelli's selected conscription system breed obedience to a political authority rather than an economic authority, throught the establishment of the citizen-soldier as a subordinate of the prince. The citizen's consent should neither be overtly forced, nor entirely willing, but in any case given out of fear and respect for the prince's authority.

To return to the question of necessity of behavioral regulation I introduced at the beginning of this section, we can say that to fight a war is to somehow challenge an instinctual and fundamental human desire for self-preservation. While this idea is disrupted today through the new networked technologies of warfare which will be described in detail later in the text, the historical fact of the matter was that a soldier had to fight in the physical space of combat – i.e. the 'theatre' of war. Christopher Lynch writes: "At the basis of a soldier's military service is an ambivalence of will that is brought about by, on the one hand, his aversion to present pain, and, on the other hand, his fear of a prince's disdain." (2005: 203) In a conscription system such as the type Machivelli advocated, many civil-soldiers fought a war reluctanctly, and so some apparatus must be in operation in order to maintain a state of obedience in the army. For Machiavelli, this power was manifested in fear of punishment by the sovereign.

Fear of punishment alone may not be enough to hold a vast army in a state of obedience. The typical brute-force view of military conflict follows that a larger army has a greater chance of overthrowing a smaller-scale opponent, and so military population becomes an important tactical consideration. It is not so simple as to just obtain more conscripts though – an increase of military population also increases its potential state of disorder, and so an organisational system must be put in place to maintain homeostasis. To explore this notion of the military as a system with an entropic potential, it is helpful to briefly explore the research of Norbert Wiener during the Second World War. While stationed at MIT in the early 1940s, Norbert Wiener began to work on an anti-aircraft gun he called the AA Predictor. The novel feature of the gun design was its precognitive capacity: it would assist the accuracy of its human operator by 'learning' the characteristics of the pilot of the target aircraft, so it could guess the position of interception between the firing of the artillery shell and the target's flight trajectory. To do this, Wiener worked with the concept of feedback: that is, by using the output of the system to modulte its own input. He describes this implementation of feedback in his book *Cybernetics: Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*.

> When we desire a motion to follow a given pattern the difference between this pattern and the actually performed motion is used as a new input to cause the part regulated to move in such a way as to bring its motion close to that given by the pattern. (1965: 6-7)

As Wiener further expanded his research of these feedback loops into a science he called cybernetics, the AA Predictor experiment grew to have more profound philosophical implications about human behaviour. He re-conceptualised his view of the human: the complexity of desire and action became information, governed by measurable feedback loops and statistical probability, and thus readily controllable and even predictable. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was precisely these qualities that made cybernetics a valuable tactical science for the US Cold War strategists. Cybernetics permeated into a diverse range of applications often in competition with each other, from the countercultural revolution to corporate business theory, and of course the development of computers and network technologies as part of the US national defense budget.

To return to cybernetics' capability to measure human behaviour as information, we can situate the military-institutional structure within a cybernetic context: an army becomes an assembly comprised of agents that act as *generators* and *receivers* of information. A message – a miltary order, for example – must be directed and communicated to its recipients in a functional manner, so that its containing information retains its state of organisation as it is broadcast through the military ranks. Such a concrete hierarchical structure contributes to maintaining an army's obedience in an equilibrium state. In *The Human Use of Human Beings*, Wiener states: "Indeed, it is possible to treat sets of messages as having an entropy like sets of states of the external world. Just as entropy is a measure of disorganisation, the information carried by a set of messages is a measure of its organisation." (1989: 21) We can then posit that the organisation of information is maintained through its medium of transmission: the hierarchy of military ranks. Obedience is encoded in the structure of a message's transmission. A message might be sent from an 'authority', through the ranking system of subordinate authorities, eventually arriving at the lowest rank of soldiers. It is imperative that this message maintains its resolution with each broadcast to the subsequent lower rank, otherwise the entropy will increase. So, when thinking of the transmission structure of the military hierarchy, where each rank defers power to those above and holds power over those directly below, it is apt to think of Marshall McLuhan's aphorism "the medium is the message". In a military, the medium is the hierarchy, the message is an order – both communicated through and comprised of the institutional apparatus of power

relations. This hierarchical structure is so embedded in the military that it exists not only in the transmission of information but also in the very language used to communicate this information. This language, what I will refer to as a military vernacular, is clearly apparent in military documents, one of which will be examined in detail in the following section.

Material Power: Protocols for Capital Punishment

It was the effect, in the rites of punishment, of a certain mechanism of power: of a power that not only did not hesitate to exert itself directly on bodies, but was exalted and strengthened by its visible manifestations; of a power that asserted itself as an armed power whose functions of maintaining order were not entirely unconnected with the functions of war; of a power that presented rules and obligations as personal bonds, a breach of which constituted an offense and called for vengeance; of a power for which disobedience was an act of hostility, the first sign of rebellion, which is not in principle different from civil war; of a power that had to demonstrate not why it enforced its laws, but who were its enemies, and what unleashing of force threatened them; of a power which, in the absence of continual supervision, sought a renewal of its effects of its individual manifestations; of a power that was recharged in the ritual display of its reality as 'super-power'. (Foucault, 1995, 57)

In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault introduces the idea of the disciplinary society – an emergent form of social organisation made up of multiple identifiable spaces of enclosure which the citizen passes through over the course of their life. Beginning with the family, then the school, then the workhouse, and so on, each enclosure informs civil behaviour through the application of its own social codes. One of the disciplinary society's defining characteristics is the method of producing civil obedience through visual displays of power, often acted out as violent reminders that the locus of control resides with the sovereign and channeled through a hierarchy of representatives – guards, judges, etc. In a disciplinary society, Foucault explains, punishment is a public spectacle and a warning to its spectators: an act of power that performs the hierarchical structure of authority. These systems of violence make up what Foucault refers to as a *dispositif*: an 'apparatus' that enforces a particular distribution of power through a collective assembly of ideas and mechanisms of control. The various ways in which the apparatus of power makes itself tangible provides a revealing insight into the ideology of the authority. Foucault's descriptions of 18th and 19th century torture are visceral and grotesque – it is almost impossible to imagine how such violent corporeal power could make up part of a contemporary state-sanctioned discipinary system. While atrocities perpetrated by the western nations considered to have a stable political status are invariably reported from time to time, these instances are often deliberately disguised from public view and do not reflect the sovereign forces of social control described by Foucault. For example, the leaking of imagery that sparked the Abu Ghraib prison scandal was not a conscientious parade of US military force, but rather a political crisis that resulted in an international humanitarian outcry. Over the course of the 20th century, the policies that facilitated the commission of disciplinary acts of violence were brought into question in many states that considered themselves to have an advanced juridicial and political system. Yet, this distancing of the sovereign from the act of violence was already apparent in the disciplinary society, where the sovereign was manifested in the act of punishment through symbols, ceremonies, and rituals – a "material and awesome force" executed through proxies. (Foucault, 1995: 50)

In the military institution, obedience is regularly encoded through similar systems of ritualised *biopower* – that is, the "set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species [becomes] the object of a political strategy." (Foucault, 1978: 16) In the US military of the 20th century, biopower materialised overtly through capital punishment, but also through a more subtle yet omnipresent strategy of control – the establishment of an order of language, or a military vernacular. This vernacular, apparent in procedural pamphlets and field documents, encodes a degree of obedience through its selective vocabulary and emphasis on ceremonial tradition as a justification for certain actions. To emphasise the idea introduced in the previous section, the simple act of communication is intertwined with the institutional apparatus, and thus the soldier suffers a loss of control over the act of speaking – what is in the United States a most fundamental constitutional right, encapsulated in the right to freedom of speech. Furthermore, the application of language reinforces uni-directional hierarchies: the word 'message' might be replaced by a more authoritarian synonym, such as an 'order', a 'directive', or a 'duty', bundled with the assumption of consent. Giorgio Agamben provides the following with respect to the conscious authoritarian choice of language: "If, as has been suggested, terminology is the properly poetic moment of thought, then terminological choices can never be neutral."(2005: 4) And so, it becomes increasingly clear that the control of speech becomes a vital instrument of the institutional apparatus. Such terminological choices in the military vernacular deconstructs possibilities for dissent and subsequently contributes to an automation of behaviour – orders will be duly carried out as anticipated, as this expectation is encoded in the very definition of the 'order'. While the vernacular undoubtedly has an intense power, it is so interlaced within the institutional logic of the military that it gains an effective subtlety through its normalisation. That other form of biopower mentioned above – the most direct form where it impinges on the mortal capacity of the body itself – holds a more threatening and less accepted place in the contemporary military dispositif, as illustrated by the fact that the US army's last execution was in 1961. (DPIC, 2013)

Further to its integration within the systems of communication, obedience is also encoded within the traditions and rituals that form the foundation of military service, with capital punishment being an obvious example. Various execution methods have been employed throughout the history of armed conflict, although only a small number – those that we still may consider to be somewhat 'humane' – survive as modern forms of capital punishment. The firing squad, now a mostly antiquated form of execution in the armies of the more 'advanced' militaries around the world, is emblematic of how obedience can be mediated through protocol and an institutional logic of rules and rituals. In the following paragraphs, I will describe a specific case study – a military pamphlet titled *Procedure for Military Executions* (an extract from the pamphlet is included in Appendix A). Before I begin to discuss its contents in detail, it is useful to place this document in its appropriate historical context. The specific edition I will refer to was published just before the end of the Second World War (1944) by the US Department of the Army. By cross-referencing the statistics reported by the US non-profit organisation the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC), the pamphlet would have been frequently referred to in the last year of the war and the immediate post-war years as the US Army dealt with a substantial number of war crimes committed by their soldiers. The pamphlet outlines two methods of execution: *Execution by Musketry* and *Execution by Hanging*, of which the latter appears to have been the most frequently used method during the immediate post-war period. Despite the fact that the last US military execution occurred in 1961, the pamphlet I will be referencing has been superceded many times since, with the specified methods in the 1944 edition having been predictably phased out in favour of the more controllable and clinical lethal injection in the modern army. The pamphlet certainly makes for harrowing reading, but it is important to critically engage with the power of the institutional rituals it describes. The specificity of protocols outlined in the document – detailed references to color, spatial positioning, uniform, and even music – becomes a part of the *machinery*

that automates the act of execution, enabling complicity in a highly confrontational and problematic actualisation of biopower.

The pamphlet wastes little time in providing a strict definition of the hierarchical roles in the procedure, outlining the responsibilities and protocological interactions between the various strata of the chain of command. As the army has its own legal institution separate from the civil juridicial system, the sentence and form of execution is designated by a court-martial. An officer is also designated and charged with either arranging the execution and ensuring the correct protocol is followed, or delegating this responsibility to a subordinate officer. In the case of calls for a stay of execution, for example if the person to be executed – referred to as "the prisoner" throughout the document – is pregnant or deemed insane, the decision to call for an exception is ultimately deferred to the President. Carl Schmitt's definition of the sovereign – "he who decides on the state of exception" (as cited by Agamben, 2005: 1) is reinforced in this pamphlet in its allocation of power to the President, not only decide who should be executed, but also whose execution should be excepted. Additionally, comparing Foucault's analysis of the *spectacle of the scaffold* with the precise duties outlined in the pamphlet highlights some interesting parallels. In both instances, sovereign power is symbolically manifest by proxy of hierarchical structures bound by law and protocol, yet a disparity emerges between the distributions of power and responsibility: power of defining the exception is ultimately centralised in the sovereign and channeled through his/her hierarchy of representatives, whereas the responsibility rooted in the physical act of punishing is distributed amongst the guards. In this way, the hierarchy becomes an automative machine, governed by the top-down delegation of orders, designations, and duties that implicitly presume consent. If we were speaking about an industrial process, we might refer to this as a great division of labour, whereby the specifity and individuation of the process abstracts the product from the assembly line workers. This has been used as a defense by participants in wartime atrocities, the most famous being the Nuremburg Trials, and Hannah Arendt's exploration of the "banality of evil" in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1965). Nevertheless, in the firing squad, this division of responsibility is particularly deliberate: according to the US Army Pamphlet, Section II *Execution by Musketry*, the officer charged with the execution will "cause twelve rifles to be loaded in his presence. Not more than four nor less than one will be loaded with blank ammunition. He will lace the rifles at random in the rack provided for that purpose. " (US Dept Army, 1944: 3) And so, when the execution actually takes place, the riflemen are unsure of the extent of their role in the execution as a result of this protocological abstraction of accountability.

The pamphlet also provides a set of guidelines regarding the presence of military or civilian witnesses to the ceremony. In Foucault's descriptions of *The Spectacle of the Scaffold*, he argues that the audience is the most important actor in the whole performance, the jeers and macabre fascination with the executionary process offering the real moment of judgement: "The main character was the people, whose real and immediate presence was required for the performance. An execution that was known to be taking place, but which did so in secret, would scarcely have had any meaning." (1995: 57-58) Foucault talks of how an execution conducted in secret was seen as a priveleged execution and one that would arouse public suspicion, raising the question of whether or not the execution took place "with all its customary severity." (ibid: 58) But what is at stake in the military execution ceremony, if it is deemed to be a private or secret event? Who is the audience witnessing the awesome force of the sovereign? The protocological aspects of the ceremony would appear on first glance to have more to do with the discipline and obedience of the soldiers ordered to carry out the execution, rather than the prisoner to be executed. Following the ceremony, there would be no enemy witnesses to fear the inevitability of the punishment. The spectacle, then, is largely for the soldiers themselves, from which we can describe two effects. Firstly, we

can understand the ceremonial protocol as being a transposition of the systems described by Foucault, except that the guards themselves occupy the dual role of the audience and the commissioners of the punishment. In short, the soldiers become both the manifestations of the sovereign force *and* the obedient subjects. Secondly, we can posit that the spectacle of the ceremonial tradition might serve a secondary function, that of abstracting motions for moral objection by placing the act of punishment within a great historical narrative – that of military tradition. The specific parade formations during the escort process and the performance of the military band – playing the "dead march" at the beginning of the ceremony and a "lively air" at its conclusion – contributes to this atmosphere of traditionalism, and legitimises the execution. (US Dept Army, 1944: 4)

The reiterate the point made in the preceding paragraphs, the specifity of the protocols assists in the automation of the event. Few decisions are left to be decided by the officers and soldiers, and nothing is left to arbitrary conditions or chance. The officers and soldiers follow the logical step-by-step process so that the confrontation with the legal and moral implications of the act of execution are reduced as much as possible. The protocol in the document lies on a juridicial knifedge – to disregard it, or to improvise at a key point in the process could lead to the committing of a war crime. Mark Osiel, writing in his paper *Obeying Orders*, describes a number of case studies of illegal executions, specifically questioning the legal implications on accountability with respect to the military hierarchy. Where does the responsibility lie if a soldier is ordered to fire by his/her commanding officer?

> Analysis becomes more difficult where the soldier's crime at least arguably involves an act of service. Shooting a person is an act of service because there are certain circumstances in which a soldier may lawfully do so; for example, shooting the enemy. But the particular act of shooting a person might also be described as shooting a noncombatant in the back, one whose hands and legs are shackled and whose eyes are blindfolded. (Osiel, 1998: 1003-1004)

The above quote is an example of what he refers to as a redescription – a method of recontextualising an action through "highlighting certain facts while relegating others to legal irrelevance." (1998: 1000). The first act described in the above quote can certainly be considered as "an act of service", while the second act is "without a doubt manifestly illegal" and would be classified as a war crime. (ibid: 2004) Osiel concedes there is no simple legal answer to this, as much of the basis for the law resides with the ambiguities and philosophies of moral conditioning. What can certainly be surmised though, is that there is fundementally not a major difference between the essence of the act described by Osiel – that of shooting another person – and the act of execution detailed in the *Procedure for Miltary Executions.* What difference there is though, lies in the protocol, and is imperative to the encoding of military obedience and the legal exercise of authoritarian violence.

Automatic Warfare

> "Do you realize our Navy is now smaller than any time since 1917?" *Mitt Romney, third US Presidential Debate, 2012* (Estes, 2012)

In Eugene Thacker and Alexander Galloway's book *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, the authors describe the symmetries of power bound with the narrative of 20th century US military action: "a politics of summetry rooted in

opposed power blocs, a politics of symmetry in which power blocs struggle against insurgent networks, and a a second model of symmetry in which networked powers struggle against other network powers." (2007: 14) The "politics of symmetry" refers to the manner in which power is balanced between the participants in a conflict, and thus in this context we can loosely describe the goal of war to succeed in maintaining a favourable political symmetry against the opponent. Galloway and Thacker's writing on the topic describes a century of major power struggles, and consequently hints at the developments in military strategy employed to combat the new formless enemies – the terrorist networks of the *War on Terror*. Arguably the most drastic transformation over the last 100 years has been the medium through which was is fought. While the first and second world wars were fought through the ground, the sea, and the air in a 'bloc against bloc' symmetry, the medium of conflict had altered dramatically by the height of the Cold War. The Cold War was fought through proxies that penetrated deep into the civil mindset: domestic appliances, architecture, automobiles, and of course the recurrent fantasy of the computer in Hollywood's science-fiction futures. While it may retrospectively seem naïve of Nixon to have attempted to argue for the power of US live television over the might of the Russian space programme in 1959's infamous Kitchen Debate, his argument was of course not as simple as it seemed. In the militaries of both the U.S and the Soviet Union, information became an important weapon of war, carried through space by the iconic satellites and communicated into the homes through the new technologies of the mass media. In the last decades of the Cold War, communication, attack and surveillance systems were sophisticated enough that they could be routed through satellite and computer networks, thus creating a new type of soldier – one that did not have to fight at the site of conflict. Instead, the soldier could be situated in a remote bunker, taking decisive action based on information being fed back to the base by an array of sensors, drones, and other strategic transmissions. This evolution of US Military strategy reflected a *deterritorialisation* of warfare in the information age, with its primary concepts being redefined as the new technologies of control became central to managing Cold War conflicts. Naturally, this military evolution was but one part of wider ecology of developments in the role of politics, economics, and authority in wider society – what Gilles Deleuze calls the societies of control, comprised of "the ultra-rapid forms of free-floating control that replaced the old disciplines operating in the time-frame of a closed system." (Deleuze, 1992: 4)Beforehand, I would like to frame this discussion within the changing materiality of US Military power, perfectly surmised in an off-the-cuff comment by Barack Obama during a debate with Mitt Romney in the lead-up to his re-election.

On the 22nd October 2012, the third and final US presidential debate between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney was viewed on television by almost 60 million Americans, with many more all over the world following online and offering their commentary on social media sites. (Nielsen Wire, 2012) The two previous debates had offered moments of political surrealism, with Romney declaring his love for Sesame Street's Big Bird followed by his bizarre turn of phrase "binders full of women" in the second debate. (Shear, 2012) The supposed subject for the third debate was to be foreign policy, although Obama's US military policies were drawn into the spotlight on numerous occasions, eventually giving rise to a minor highlight of what was generally deemed a dull debate. At one point, Romney pressed Obama on planned cuts to the US military budget. Obama replied: "You mention the Navy, for example, and the fact that we have fewer ships than we did in 1916. Well Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets." (Estes, 2012) The noise that followed Obama's wry comment drowned out his intended point that tells us a lot about the future role of technology and warfare, and what we should consider to be an important shift in how the United States presents itself as a superpower. While the previous century saw the military force of the United States communicated through predominantly visual mediums such as print media and television Obama's policies point toward a more calculated and arguably dematerialised effort. To highlight this,

we can refer to Stephen Kinzer's account of the 1907-09 US Navy circumnavigation that came to be known as The Great White Fleet. An expensive and brash undertaking that served no other purpose than being a spectacle of US military power, Theodore Roosevelt had ordered the ambitious celebratory voyage of the US Navy's new fleet as there was no war for them to be sent to: "He was the first president whose conception of American power was truly global, and the Great White Fleet was his way of proclaiming it. " (Kinzer, 2006: 79) The fleet took in an exotic array of capital cities and key ports all over the world, an expensive and dangerous task that had many critics in the American government. What Kinzer describes as "an ingeniously theatrical form of saber rattling " (ibid: 79) would surely have no place in current US military strategy. In January 2012, Obama announced the National Defense Review, stating that he was planning to begin a process of cutting $500bn from the Pentagon's budget over the following ten years. (BBC News, 2012) The Pentagon's "leaner" armed forces will rely on far fewer ground troops, but will use technologies such as drones to make up the shortfall. (Alexander and Wolf, 2012) While the cost-effectiveness of this alternative strategy cannot be understated, there are a number of other reasons for its adoption – particularly the supposed clinical precision of drones when targeting terrorists in civilian regions, and also the ability to fight a war without suffering the casualties and sense of domestic jeopardy.

The use of drones is certainly not new to the War on Terror, but rather is the culmination of decades of experimentation in *automatic warfare* – that is, the reduced active role of the human soldier in a war to 'observer' or 'operator', in favour of an increasing reliance on cybernetic technologies. A notable experiment in automatic warfare is a little-known intelligence operation during the Vietnam war called *Operation Igloo White*. Aware that the Vietcong were transporting arms from the communist North into US-controlled South Vietnam, a research and development department at MIT called the JASONS began to develop experimental strategies for disrupting the supply convoys. The idea was to create a network of sensors along the *Ho Chi Minh Trail*, a transport route of strategic importance that ran through the jungles of Laos and Cambodia known to be used by the Vietcong convoys. A variety of sensors were used in the operation: vibration sensors to detect movement of truck convoys, microphones to pick up the speech of the enemy soldiers, and even sensors that could detect the scent of urine. (Edwards, 1996: 3) The sensors were mostly dispersed by air – like seedlings, designed to embed themselves in the ground and appear like small plants, or get caught in the jungle canopy disguised amongst the trees, quietly emitting data streams via radiowaves. The result was a cybernetic jungle, a natural space invaded by micro-computers broadcasting a symbolic representation of their environment. The network was observed from a US military base (the Infiltration Surveillance Center – ISC) hundreds of kilometers to the North West in Nakhom Phanom, Thailand. By analysing the data collected from multiple sensors close to one another, an enemy movement could be detected along with all its associated metadata – its scale, speed, direction, and the type of vehicles being used. With this information, a soldier at the ISC could order an airstrike of the relevant region:

> The planes' navigation systems and computers automatically guided them to the 'box', or map grid square, to be attacked. The ISC central computers were also able to control the release of bombs: the pilot might do no more than sit and watch as the invisible jungle below suddenly exploded into flames. In most cases, no American ever actually saw the target at all. (Edwards, 1996: 4)

In this remote system, the image of the enemy is replaced by symbols and the behaviour is reduced to flows of numbers – a glowing white light on a computer monitor. The operation consistently reported favourable results, boasting the destruction of 35,000 trucks and 10,000 pounds of supplies. These statistics were later revealed to have been vastly exaggerated in order to justify the $1 billion annual operation costs of the operation – in fact, Igloo White was largely a failure, with the Vietcong managing to "field a major tank and artillery offensive inside South Vietnam in 1972." (ibid: 3-6)

The failure of past ventures such as Igloo White has not detracted from subsequent US military experiments in automatic warfare. The use of drones in the FATA regions of North Pakistan, for example, could indeed be seen as an evolution of the strategies developed for Operation Igloo White. In both wars, there was a similar asymmetry of power that required a telematic medium to fight the war: the guerrilla networks that existed in the jungles of Vietnam pose a similar threat as the insurgents blending into civilian communities in WANA, and indeed Barack Obama draws comparison between the two in a speech at the National Defense University. (Obama, 2013) Like in *Igloo White*, the drone pilots often fight from a distance – while the drone tracks an insurgent in North Waziristan, its team of pilots could be sitting half a world away in Creech Air Force Base, a few kilometers northwest of Las Vegas. Feedback loops facilitate the drone's remote control systems, its sensors transmit informational readings of its environment, and its internal autopiloting systems correct atmospheric fluctuations. Just like Wiener's *AA Predictor*, the drone is engaged with predicting the near-future in both its design and application, estimating the movements of its target through a servomechanical loop between the onboard computer system and the team of human operators. Even the end-use of the technology seems to occupy the treacherous aim of precognition – the drones are used to target insurgents suspected of posing an "imminent" threat to US territory or its citizens. (Brennan, 2012) John O. Brennan, ex-counterterrorism advisor to Barack Obama and current Director of the CIA, had the following to say in his speech at the Wilson Center in April 2012: "as a matter of domestic law, the Constitution empowers the president to protect the nation from any imminent threat of attack." (ibid) The President and his team of advisors do not only possess the power to define what constitutes a threat to United States territories or interests, but they are also constitutionally duty-bound to act on it. It is within this context that Brennan begins to legally justify the use of drones in "targeted strikes", that is, strikes that are actioned on a high-value terrorist known to the CIA: "There is nothing in international law that bans the use of remotely piloted aircraft for this purpose or that prohibits us from using lethal force against our enemies outside of an active battlefield." (ibid) Is there a difference in the *essence* of the targeted strike committed by a drone and the traditional firing squad? To further sharpen this question: can we understand the targeted strike as being a form of execution? In both instances, there is a deliberate targeting and subsequent exertion of force on a specific individual, a force that in both instances echoes back to the sovereign and the state of exception discussed earlier in this paper. Nevertheless, we can find some important divergences between the traditional forms of execution and the drone-enabled targeted strike. Firstly, in the case of the drone strike, the crime of the insurgent being 'punished' is imminent – or *suspected of occurring in the future* – whereas in the institutionalised execution the punishment follows the committing of a crime, as applied via the apparatus of the court-martial. Secondly, there appears to be no specific ceremony with the drone strike. The remnants of the visual ceremonial traditions reside in little more than the military patches and uniforms worn by the drone pilots worn while they work in the shipping containers at Creech Air Force Base – occasionally in photographs released to the media, the patches are removed so that the squadron cannot be identified (See Appendix C). If the *Great White Fleet* and the *Procedure for Military Executions* both typify an era of deliberate visual displays of power, then perhaps the drone and the targeted strike fit in to the modulations and smooth judicial spaces of the societies of control: "Governments in so-called liberal democracies are operating in an increasingly extra-judicial way; the state of exception is now becoming the dominant paradigm of politics today." (Newman, 2009: 112) The fluid nature of extra-judicial exception is further smoothed-out through the systems of classification and declassification in the US government, and consequently we are faced with an apparatus that evades direct accountability. There is no longer a public parade of sovereign power in the 'targeted strike' – modern US power follows the panoptic model of unverifiable and emergent power, employing the tactics of guerrilla warfare against the guerrilla insurgents themselves.

While there may be no visual ceremony involved in the drone strike, the use of language and the emphasis on hierarchy becomes increasingly important. As has been stated at the beginning of this paper, the War on Terror has produced a lexicon of terms that help situate the war in the legal criteria of *jus ad bellum*, literally implying that the war is 'just'. The exact terms of this historical criteria – for example the concepts of proportionality, distinction, and necessity – arise in numerous speeches justifying the use of drones and targeted strikes given by John O. Brennan, Eric Holder, and Barack Obama. (see Brennan, 2012; Holder, 2012; Obama: 2013) Brennan, in the aforementioned speech at the Wilson Center in 2012, dedicates a paragraph to each of the concepts of *jus ad bellum* and how they apply to the targeted strike (see Appendix B for a transcript of his speech). His arguments appear reasonable on the surface. To select two extracts:

Targeted strikes conform to the principle of necessity, the requirement that the target have definite military value.

and:

By targeting an individual terrorist or small numbers of terrorists with ordnance that can be adapted to avoid harming others in the immediate vicinity, it is hard to imagine a tool that can better minimize the risk to civilians than remotely piloted aircraft.

Yet the issues raised become less clear-cut on close reading. Words such as 'militant' and 'terrorist' float freely around a specific concrete definition, instead having a post-hoc context-dependant meaning ascribed to it by the military. The definition of militant, reported frequently to be "any military-aged male in a strike zone" (Greenwald, 2012), has a mutable logic similar to the parameters that initially deemed Operation Igloo White a success. Any commendable efforts on behalf of the US government to become accountable and transparent about the use of drones becomes fundamentally problematic when the precision of language comes into question. If, as Agamben states, terminology is never neutral, then we can consider the free-floating definition 'militant' as being strategic, perhaps an example of what Mark Osiel calls 'redescription'. Consistent reports of 'successful' targeted strikes emphasise their "surgical precision" (Brennan, 2012), an emphasis that consequently helps to reaffirm the weapon as an ethical and efficient technology of war – a reassuring thought for the drone pilots. In his May 2013 speech at the National Defense University, Obama argued that while this "new technology raises profound questions", its use is absolutely necessary when combating an enemy that occupies "some of the most dangerous and unforgiving places on Earth." Like Holder and Brennan in past public speeches, he argued that the targeted strike does not constitute an act of execution or assassination:

America does not take strikes to punish individuals; we act against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the American people, and when there are no other governments capable of effectively addressing the threat. (Obama, 2013)

The radical alternative view, purported by mainstream newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, and The Atlantic among many others, (Robinson, 2013) is that drones are used as a method of execution or assassination, and in specific instances essentially amount to what could be described as potential war crimes – hardly a useful accusation when attempting to encourage more soldiers to train as drone pilots. In the instance of the deliberate targeting of US citizen Anwar Al-Awlaki, killed by a drone strike in Yemen in 2012, comparisons were frequently drawn with the antiquated traditions of capital punishment. Nevertheless, while the specifics are classified, there are procedural protocols that legitimise the drone strike: "When asked about the chain of command, [Colonel William Tart] mentions a 275-page document called 3-09.3. Essentially, it states that drone attacks must be approved, like any other attacks by the Air Force. An officer in the country where the operations take place has to approve them." (Abe, 2012) The Guardian also

reports that President Obama must "personally sign off on targeted drone strikes outside the US." (Roberts, 2013) So, like riflemen in the *Procedure for Military Executions*, the drone pilots work in a team, follow a series of procedures, and obey orders that come through the chain of command. Obama's emphasis in his NDU speech was his desire to focus these protocols into a more regimented system: "For the same human progress that gives us the technology to strike half a world away also demands the discipline to constrain that power -- or risk abusing it. And that's why, over the last four years, my administration has worked vigorously to establish a framework that governs our use of force against terrorists – insisting upon clear guidelines, oversight and accountability that is now codified in Presidential Policy Guidance that I signed yesterday." (Obama, 2013) The unsurprising news then, was that the use of targeted strikes will continue as an important tactic of the War on Terror, but the protocological systems that govern their use will increase in complexity, and thus occupy an increasingly authoritative role in the machinery of the drone strike.

Conclusion:
Controlling-Machines / Controlling Machines

In the preceding sections of this paper, I have attempted to outline some of the integral facets of the military-institutional apparatus – particularly emphasising the powerful biopolitics of the military vernacular, ceremonial tradition, and the chain-of-command hierarchy. My specific curiosity lay in exploring how the use of drone strikes might be emblematic of a wider shift from a disciplinary society to a society of control, and if this shift had introduced any parameters into the apparatus of the military institution that could be considered as being fundamentally novel and disruptive. Predictably, the answer is not as simple as stating that drones have caused a 'paradigm-shift' in military power structures. Rather, it can be seen as a distillation of pre-existing military concepts allowed for by the use of cybernetic computer technologies, and a logical step in the narrative of 20th century US power. In *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992), Gilles Deleuze states: "Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society – not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating and using them." (Deleuze, 1992: 6) While Foucault often metaphorically described the apparatuses of the 18th/19th century disciplinary societies as "machines" that automated behaviour, this notion is becoming increasingly literal. In the context of drone warfare, this has resulted in a clear shift of the labour-role of the soldier from an operator of a technology to an observer of a technological process. The human soldier is by no means entirely removed from the process, but their relationship with the process becomes ambiguous, especially when the issue of accountability is raised in the event of an error. Consequently, if the human feels a disconnection with between their actions and their accountability, won't this just lead to a proliferation of atrocities? Such questions frequently appear in articles on drone strikes that cite the disparities between US government and independent statistics of alleged civilian casualties. Mark Osiel summarises the core of the issue: "The law almost always lags behind, often far behind, the development of new weapons systems. But the results of many modern military conflicts often turn on one side's use of novel technologies, such as smart bombs, information warfare, blinding lasers, and other non-lethal weapons." (Osiel, 1998: 992) And so we have Barack Obama's announcement at the National Defense University outlining new protocols to govern the employment of drones and render their operators more accountable in the event of atrocities.

While there are certain obvious crucial differences between the systems of biopower that operate in capital punishment and those that govern the use of drones, their similarities are perhaps less considered. In both instances, the institutional protocol has an imperative and automative authority over its subjects that shouldn't be underestimated. Automatic warfare does not necessarily rely solely on computer technologies then – perhaps protocols are enough. The reduction in subjective decision-making results in an automation of action – with such degrees of clarity as in the US Army pamphlet, there are scarcely any decisions left to be made by the officers and riflemen, simply a procedure to follow. I would speculate that in a more ambiguous protocological system where the participants must improvise a decision, there is more space for both doubt and dissent to flourish.

What we can say has altered in the interim is the slow removal of these disciplinary protocols from public view – even in the *Procedure for Military Executions* there was a reserved point about public witnesses, who were certainly crucial actors in the spectacular performances of sovereign power Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*. Even so, the *Procedure for Military Executions* illustrates that obedience was still encoded through ceremony the assumed consent of orders and duties, the marshal music, and so on – overt mechanisms of power that, while abstracting somewhat the limits of complicity and obedience, still remained visible through their operation. The modern mechanisms of military-institutional power, as typified in the technologies of the drone war, operate in a different manner – the automation no longer exists solely in these overt actions of biopolitics, but in the modulations of discreet systems too. On first examination, the mechanisms of the modern military-institutional apparatus appear to have vanished out of materiality, hidden behind networks of power and layers of confidentiality. What we can speculate on though, is that these technologies are also self-monitoring, producing vast logs of flight and operational information – likely a revealing source of the 'immaterial' mechanisms of power operating at the core of the War on Terror.

Appendix A

Pages 4-5 of the US Dept. Army Pamphlet *Procedure for Military Executions* (1944). The above pages specify the protocols to be followed during an 'execution by musketry', delineating the spatial requirements, specific language and commands to be used, and other ceremonial considerations.

SECTION II

EXECUTION BY MUSKETRY

12. Officer Charged with Execution

The officer charged with the execution will command the escort and make the necessary arrangements for the conduct of the execution. He will—

a. Instruct the escort and the execution party in their duties.

b. Arrange for the receipt of the prisoner by the prisoner guard.

c. Arrange for an execution party of twelve men and one sergeant.

d. Arrange for a chaplain to accompany the prisoner.

e. Arrange for the presence of a medical officer at the scene of the execution.

f. Cause a post with proper rings placed therein for securing the prisoner in an upright position to be erected at the place of execution.

g. Cause twelve rifles to be loaded in his presence. Not more than four nor less than one will be loaded with blank ammunition. He will place the rifles at random in the rack provided for that purpose.

h. Provide a black hood to cover the head of the prisoner.

i. Provide a 4-inch, round, white target.

j. Cause the prisoner's arms to be secured behind his back, before or immediately after his receipt by the prisoner guard.

k. Arrange for an ambulance or other conveyance with sufficient personnel to be in attendance upon the execution to receive and care for the body. In the event a contract undertaker is used by the quartermaster, his services may be substituted. See AR 30–1820.

13. Assembly of Escort

a. The band will be formed in accordance with section V, FM 28–5, will proceed to the exterior door of the place of imprisonment at which the prisoner is to be received by the prisoner guard, and halt near the door, facing in the direction of the scene of the execution. The presence of the band is optional at executions where the presence of troops is not required.

b. The prisoner guard will consist of twelve men armed with rifles, under the command of a sergeant armed with a pistol. The prisoner guard will form in double ranks and at the proper time will proceed to the place of imprisonment to receive the prisoner.

c. The main guard will consist of one or more platoons and will form in the rear of the band.

d. The execution party will be formed unarmed and proceed to a previously prepared rack of rifles, secure arms, and move to the scene of the execution, halting 15 paces from and facing the position to be taken by the prisoner. At close interval, and at order arms, the party will await the arrival of the prisoner and escort.

e. At the designated time the prisoner, with his arms bound securely behind his back, accompanied by the chaplain, will be received by the prisoner guard and placed between the ranks. The escort will then proceed toward the scene of the execution, the band playing the "Dead March."

f. The escort will approach the scene of the execution on line with the open side of the rectangle formed by the witnessing troops. The band will move past the point at which the prisoner is to be placed, and will take position on the opposite side of the rectangle, facing the scene of the execution. The prisoner guard, prisoner, and chaplain will proceed directly to the prisoner's post, halt, and face the execution party. The main guard will proceed to a point 5 paces behind the execution party and form a line facing the scene of execution.

14. Execution

a. The officer charged with the execution will take position in front of the execution party and face the prisoner. He will then read the charge, finding, sentence, and orders aloud to the prisoner. He will then notify the prisoner and the chaplain

3

that a brief time will be allowed the prisoner for any last statement. After a reasonable time, he will order the sergeant of the execution party to secure the prisoner to the post and to place the hood over his head. Then the medical officer will place the target over the prisoner's heart. The prisoner prepared, the officer charged with the execution will order the prisoner guard to join the main guard; the chaplain and medical officer will retire to the flank taken by the band. The officer charged with the execution will take position 5 paces to the right of and 5 paces to the front of the execution party.

b. Commands for the execution may be given by a combination of manual and oral signals as prescribed.

(1) When the officer charged with the execution raises the right arm vertically overhead, palm forward, fingers extended and joined, the execution party will come to the "Ready" position as prescribed for firing a volley, and will unlock rifles.

(2) When the officer charged with the execution lowers his arm to a horizontal position in front of his body, the execution party will take the position of "Aim."

(3) When the officer charged with the execution drops his arm directly to his side and orally commands: FIRE, the execution party will fire simultaneously.

(4) The officer charged with the execution will then bring the execution party to "Order Arms."

c. When the use of manual signals is not practical, the following oral commands are prescribed:

(1) At the command READY, the execution party will take that position and unlock rifles.

(2) At the command AIM, the execution party will take that position with rifles aimed at target on the prisoner's body.

(3) At the command FIRE, the execution party will fire simultaneously.

d. The officer charged with the execution will join the medical officer who will examine the prisoner and, if necessary, direct that the "coup de grace" be administered. Should the medical officer so decide, the sergeant of the execution party will administer the "coup de grace," with a hand weapon, holding the muzzle just above the ear and one foot from the skull.

e. Under exceptional circumstances, the officer charged with the execution, with the permission of the commanding officer, may detail an extra file of six men to administer the "coup de grace." This file will form the rear rank of the execution party, and if it is necessary to administer the "coup de grace," will move in front of the execution party and fire, at the command of the officer charged with the execution.

f. Upon pronouncement of the death of the prisoner by the medical officer, the execution party will proceed to the racks from which the rifles were originally obtained, and replace the rifles in the racks at random. The execution party will then be dismissed.

g. The escort, with the band playing a lively air, will return to their parade ground and be dismissed.

h. The witnessing troops will parade in column in front of the body and proceed to their respective parade grounds where they will be dismissed.

i. The officer charged with the execution will direct the burial party in the disposal of the body as prescribed by AR 210–500 and 30–1820.

Appendix B

The following is a selected extract from a speech given by John O. Brennan at the Wilson Center while he was Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, in April 2012. At the time it was an important speech that attempted to situate the drone war in the concepts of 'jus ad bellum'. In the extract below, Brennan refers to the criteria, and defends the use of targeted strikes in the context of each concept.

Source: http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-efficacy-and-ethics-us-counterterrorism-strategy

"First, these targeted strikes are legal. Attorney General Holder, Harold Koh, and Jeh Johnson have all addressed this question at length. To briefly recap, as a matter of domestic law, the Constitution empowers the president to protect the nation from any imminent threat of attack. The Authorization for Use of Military Force, the AUMF, passed by Congress after the September 11th attacks authorized the president "to use all necessary and appropriate forces" against those nations, organizations, and individuals responsible for 9/11. There is nothing in the AUMF that restricts the use of military force against al-Qaida to Afghanistan.

"As a matter of international law, the United States is in an armed conflict with al-Qaida, the Taliban, and associated forces, in response to the 9/11 attacks, and we may also use force consistent with our inherent right of national self-defense. There is nothing in international law that bans the use of remotely piloted aircraft for this purpose or that prohibits us from using lethal force against our enemies outside of an active battlefield, at least when the country involved consents or is unable or unwilling to take action against the threat.

"Second, targeted strikes are ethical. Without question, the ability to target a specific individual, from hundreds or thousands of miles away, raises profound questions. Here, I think it's useful to consider such strikes against the basic principles of the law of war that govern the use of force.

"Targeted strikes conform to the principle of necessity, the requirement that the target have definite military value. In this armed conflict, individuals who are part of al-Qaida or its associated forces are legitimate military targets. We have the authority to target them with lethal force just as we target enemy leaders in past conflicts, such as Germans and Japanese commanders during World War II.

"Targeted strikes conform to the principles of distinction, the idea that only military objectives may be intentionally targeted and that civilians are protected from being intentionally targeted. With the unprecedented ability of remotely piloted aircraft to precisely target a military objective while minimizing collateral damage, one could argue that never before has there been a weapon that allows us to distinguish more effectively between an al-Qaida terrorist and innocent civilians.

"Targeted strikes conform to the principle of proportionality, the notion that the anticipated collateral damage of an action cannot be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. By targeting an individual terrorist or small numbers of terrorists with ordnance that can be adapted to avoid harming others in the immediate vicinity, it is hard to imagine a tool that can better minimize the risk to civilians than remotely piloted aircraft.

"For the same reason, targeted strikes conform to the principle of humanity which requires us to use weapons that will not inflict unnecessary suffering. For all these reasons, I suggest to you that these targeted strikes against al-Qaida terrorists are indeed ethical and just.

"Of course, even if a tool is legal and ethical, that doesn't necessarily make it appropriate or advisable in a given circumstance. This brings me to my next point.

"Targeted strikes are wise. Remotely piloted aircraft in particular can be a wise choice because of geography, with their ability to fly hundreds of miles over the most treacherous terrain, strike their targets with astonishing precision, and then return to base. They can be a wise choice because of time, when windows of opportunity can close quickly and there just may be only minutes to act.

"They can be a wise choice because they dramatically reduce the danger to U.S. personnel, even eliminating the danger altogether. Yet they are also a wise choice because they dramatically reduce the danger to innocent civilians, especially considered against massive ordnance that can cause injury and death far beyond their intended target.

"In addition, compared against other options, a pilot operating this aircraft remotely, with the benefit of technology and with the safety of distance, might actually have a clearer picture of the target and its surroundings, including the presence of innocent civilians. It's this surgical precision, the ability, with laser-like focus, to eliminate the cancerous tumor called an al-Qaida terrorist while limiting damage to the tissue around it, that makes this counterterrorism tool so essential.

"There's another reason that targeted strikes can be a wise choice, the strategic consequences that inevitably come with the use of force. As we've seen, deploying large armies abroad won't always be our best offense.

"Countries typically don't want foreign soldiers in their cities and towns. In fact, large, intrusive military deployments risk playing into al-Qaida's strategy of trying to draw us into long, costly wars that drain us financially, inflame anti-American resentment, and inspire the next generation of terrorists. In comparison, there is the precision of targeted strikes."

Appendix C

Drone pilot, allegedly from the RAF, training at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. The military patch on his right shoulder has been removed for the photograph.

Flightglobal (2010) *UK Crown Copyright*

source: http://www.flightglobal.com/blogs/learmount/2010/03/think-there-are-loads-of.html

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