

WAGING WAR AT HOME: ON THE POLICE/MILITARY CONTROL OF POPULAR NEIGHBORHOODS

The revolt in the Villiers-le-Bel suburban neighborhood in November 2007 was put down by police forces using material and techniques belonging specifically to the repertoire of urban warfare, including reconnaissance drones (small unmanned aerial vehicles), helicopters, snipers, and night-vision devices. Over the following few days, the police, aided by antiterrorist squads (the RAID and GIGN), deployed a saturation and cut-off strategy (with a thousand-odd officers combing the streets to prevent all circulation) aimed at organizing tight control of the neighborhood, based on the rules of *urban counterinsurgency* tactics. Fliers calling for anonymous denunciations were circulated within the area as part of psychological action, an integral part of military *pacification* methods.

This type of intervention is part of a long process of incorporation of military techniques in *order-maintenance*. Indeed, the concepts of *new threats* and *grey zones*, borrowed from the *antiterrorism* repertoire were used, in the 1990s, to revisit the control of popular neighborhoods. They brought French *cités* (housing projects) to be construed as local versions of a global phenomenon. The idea is that since the disintegration of the USSR, *no-go areas* have developed throughout the world, containing a mix of all sorts of specific threats such as *offending*, *drug trafficking*, *Islamic fundamentalism*, *communitarianism*,

urban violence, terrorism, and so on. What these spaces have in common is their nonsubmission to the sovereignty of any state. A state that endeavors to *win them back* may then claim to be preserving *international security*, or even to be an actor in the *global war against terrorism*. This is the context in which the use of military means to manage civilians within a national territory where groups of people are struggling against a system of economic, political, and social oppression came to be reconsidered.

FROM WAR IN THE CITIES TO INTERNAL SECURITY

During its experiences with colonial warfare, the French army developed a new conception of the relations between the state and the population as well as of the deployment of the army in cities to fight civilians¹: *counterinsurgency*. The resulting theories depict the population as the main object of control: it is up to the state to protect as well as to control the population, which constitutes an environment in which “threats of subversion” thrive. The army is depicted as the surgeon, treating the national body infected by “subversives.” These theories revolve around three main axes: the blurring of the spheres of civilian and military, of peacetime and war, of internal (national) and external (foreign). During the Indochinese and Algerian wars they afforded a basis for agreement between the army and the political class on the possible legitimacy of waging war on the country’s own population and positioning the army in its own cities, to fight a “gangrened” population susceptible of destabilizing the state.

The scheme that put the finishing touch on the French *counterinsurgency* doctrine, making it famous throughout NATO, was tested during the Battle of Algiers in 1957. The Urban Protection Scheme (DPU in French) propounded by Colonel Roger Trinquier and General Massu was construed to rationalize use of the army in cities so as to subdue the colonized population. The major NATO countries have employed technologies aimed at using military means against civilians in urban areas since the end of the Algerian War. Those countries exchange their “returns on experiences” (RETEX) at innumerable international colloquia, scholarly forums, and seminars studying operations conducted in Ireland, Cameroon, Vietnam, Congo, the Philippines, Argentina, Columbia, Palestine, and so forth. They have extended the scope of strategy to war in urban settings.

In France, the concept of *security* gained credence within the military culture in the 1970s. *Internal security* was conceived with a view to the ongoing surveillance and control of the development of any *internal subversive activity* in the country. The reaction of President Georges Pompidou and his minister of the Interior Raymond Marcellin to the 1968 uprising set the base for the culture of security/safety. The counterinsurgency repertoire was then used to feed the fight against “leftist subversion.” In particular, that was when *offending* was singled out as a *societal problem* in government thinking. Under President Giscard d’Estaing and his Minister of the Interior Michel Poniatowski, some elements of the repertoire were again reused to develop the first schemes for fighting *offending*, *organized crime* and *fear of crime/concern with crime*. Thus, in one and the same ideological move, the government began to

articulate technologies for fighting *insecurity*, *terrorism* and *illegal* aliens (since 1974, a number of laws have restricted immigration), all of which could only work by exciting *fear of crime/concern with crime*. In this context, control of the population and the country has become both a police and a military goal.

This process continued to develop throughout the 1980s, with the help of heavy media coverage of the rodeos in Lyons' Minguettes project in 1981. It subsequently fed on suspicion of Muslims residing in France and their supposed loyalty to Iran (with the "Islamic headscarf" affair in 1989), then to Iraq during the first Gulf War (in 1991). Focus on *non-European immigration*, *offending* and *international Islamic fundamentalism* has led the military culture to view the projects (*cités*) as homeland zones in which a new form of *urban warfare* may develop, fomented by new socio-ethnic *internal enemies*.

FROM COUNTERINSURGENCY TO THE REPRESSION OF URBAN VIOLENCE

At the turn of the 1990s, once the *Soviet global enemy* had disappeared, the army, police, and police security services (*Renseignements Généraux*, or RG) were obliged to rejuvenate their conceptions of *internal security*. New institutions saw the light, and focused on those *new threats* by depicting the revolts in the derelict project of Vaux-en-Velin in 1990 and the first *headscarf affairs* as *symptoms* of a *new kind of subversion*. A new chapter in thinking on *defense* and *internal security* was opened around the study of *urban rioting*. The concept was circulated by the RG in most schools offering studies on *security*.² Theories on *permanent low-intensity warfare* construed work-

ing-class neighborhoods as *grey zones* or *no-go areas* to be covered by National Defense as well as by police forces.

Specialists in security threats, usually applying a parallel with the United States and with how the armed forces—commanded by general Colin Powell—put down the revolts in the Los Angeles ghettos in 1992, and assimilated the revolts in French popular neighborhoods with “degenerated forms of guerilla warfare”³ susceptible of turning into “ethnic civil war”. These specialists were promptly given space and a friendly ear in the media, the police, and the army. Lucienne Bui-Trong, Chief Superintendent of Police and head of the “cities and suburbs” section of the RG, created in 1991, had a “scale for the evaluation of urban violence” bearing her name extensively circulated within the police and the army. The scale is patterned after DPU-inventor Roger Trinquier’s theory of the five phases of *subversive decomposition*. The *Bui-Trong scale* contains a hierarchical list of *symptoms* by which to predict “urban outbursts.” The first level features “offenses committed in groups” and the eighth, “urban guerilla warfare.” Police and army debates around this scale usually focus on the level at which third-category forces (and especially infantry troops) should be sent in.

With the imposition of the problematic of *urban insecurity*, these networks of *specialists* paved the way for a new commercial and political market for the *security* business world and the titans of the arms industry, revolving around the control of those *grey zones*.⁴ The story of Alain Bauer is well known: head of AB Associates and *specialist in security/safety*, he sells *solutions against insecurity* to municipalities. The firm Charles Pellegrini Conseils (CPC) created in 1990 by Charles Pellegrini, former director of the OCRB (Office central de répression du

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banditisme), now appointed to the presidential antiterrorist cell, sells risk analyses to French and international firms. Pellegrini wrote two books, one in 1991, *Demain, la guerre civile ?*, another, *Le FIS en France, mythe ou réalité ?* in 1992, showing how the *suburbs*⁵ and *immigration* represent threats of “civil war.” He also encouraged the government to give private security companies access to the internal control market so as to make repression profitable. This was done during the 1990s, when the government allowed broad networks of interests combining fear-mongers and the big stick industry to develop. In the 90s, designing repressive measures for *urban guerilla warfare* became a major sector on the security market.

This thinking was later fed by the new weapons and tactics for *war in urban settings* tested by the French army in Kosovo (1999) and the Ivory Coast (2002-2004). Colonel Richoufftz, who has dubbed himself the “general of the suburbs,” propounds his analyses on the formation of “peripheral ghettos,” and suggests that the risk of a “suburban intifada” be combated by taking “young deviants” into the army, in the belief that they will make good soldiers and that this will keep them out of trouble and make them invaluable when sending troops in to fight the youths in the projects. A former foreign legion paratrooper, he tested his theories in Sarajevo and Abidjan, and has become the territorial assistant to the military governor of Paris. He depicts himself as a “specialist in psychological action” and describes “modern war” as a fight “to win minds.”⁶

As for General Henri Paris, a veteran of the Algerian War and former adviser to Pierre Joxe and Jean-Pierre Chevènement

when they were Ministers of the Interior, he wrote an article in the journal *Défense Nationale* in April 1998 on the “*terrorist and insurrectional threat*.”⁷ He attempts to assimilate “urban violence” to “incipient terrorism,” which, according to the (antiterrorism) Vigipirate Plan, would require that this violence be handled in the same way as the fight against terrorism. Based on his analysis of the “suburban malaise,” he comes to the conclusion that “the police only goes into derelict suburbs once it has mounted what is tantamount to a military operation.” “Latent urban guerilla warfare in the underprivileged suburbs may spread elsewhere and turn into civil war.” In conclusion he “postulates an outbreak of violence extending gradually to the entire country,” to which we should oppose “political means possibly supported by armed force as a last resort.” Thinking about positioning the army in popular neighborhoods has become widespread in the army and police following the 1995 Paris bombings, believed to have been perpetrated by the Algerian GIA (Groupe islamique armé). Since the army was already stationed in train stations and public places in the framework of the Vigipirate program, the question arose of whether they could be posted in those *cités* depicted by *specialists* as *settings in which fundamentalist Islamist terrorism proliferates*. The interministerial order aimed at regulating the “participation of the armed forces in order-maintenance” was published in this context, under the authority of Edouard Balladur and Charles Pasqua.⁸ In 1997 a “Notice on the preparation of the armed forces for order-maintenance operations” was adjoined.⁹ These redefined the use of territorial forces in crowd control abroad and at home, which is to say, the redeployment of technologies tested for foreign interventions in view of their use in the context of widespread *urban violence*.

In a special dossier on “urban violence” in the journal *Défense*, Aimé Touitou, in charge of “urban violence and safety in problem neighborhoods” within the Ministry of the Interior, explains that “police training in military crowd control methods is progressing.”¹⁰ In the same dossier, Colonel Marc Wattin-Augouard suggests that use of the gendarmerie¹¹ in cases of “suburban violence” be redefined. This is one of the main arguments advanced in the Carraz-Hyest Report and Committee in 1998, calling for the renovation of the doctrine on use of the gendarmerie so as to reposition it in *suburban areas*.¹² In November 1996 a “gendarmerie in suburban areas” committee had delivered its report, and although many professionals opposed the “financial rationalization” of the deployment of the gendarmerie, by the end of the 1990s the question of the eventual use of military forces to control popular neighborhoods no longer met much resistance. Similarly, the number of military people and police officers who publicly express their rejection of the use of the army in the cités has dropped considerably.

Legally speaking, Military Terrestrial Defense (Défense Militaire Terrestre, or DMT in French), renamed “Defense on the Territory” in 2000, covers all measures implemented on land by the armed forces to contribute to *internal security*. DMT defines the terms of militarization of *internal security* on the basis of the theory of *new threats*. This consists of importing military control technology for use in domestic *grey areas*, and applying them, finally, to the entire country in the form of “constant monitoring.” The main innovation resides in a scale with levels of restriction, so that military control can be set up in case of crisis and its existence go unnoticed the rest of the

time. In 2000, a “Doctrine for the control of urban areas” (DCZU) was promulgated. Cognizant of the international dynamic aimed at revisiting *war in urban settings* and of recent testing in Grozny, the capital of Chechenya, it asserts that military doctrine must view urban settings as full-fledged theaters of operation and make preparations, so as not to experience “its own Grozny”.¹³

“SEND THE ARMY INTO THE PROJECTS ?” FANTASIZING AND REALITY OF THE MILITARIZATION OF INTERNAL SECURITY

The September 11, 2001 attack gave new impetus to the mechanisms set up in the early 1990s. That year, a new All Armed Forces Text (TTA 950) was published, with a definition of the use of terrestrial forces in crowd control.¹⁴ This text emphasizes the need not to confuse the aim of “crowd control” abroad and of “order-maintenance” at home, while calling for the deployment of the gendarmerie, a military police force, on both territories, with the same personnel, availing itself of the same techniques and practices. In April 2001 a new “concept of the use of nonlethal weapons” surfaced.¹⁵ In 2002 the Minister of the Interior decided to generalize the use of *flash-balls*, already tested extensively by the infantry, by the police. Private security guards and municipal police forces are now equipped with this weapon, first used by the Israeli army in Gaza and the British army in Ulster.

Repression of the autumn 2005 revolts afforded another opportunity to test *domestic war*. The state of emergency, a measure designed in the colonial war context to free the army of peacetime legal restraints in the repression of civilians and

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nationals, was proclaimed again on November 8, 2005 for the *pacification* of French popular neighborhoods. It was completed, on the same day, by a ruling on its enforcement in some parts of the territory¹⁶ and has since been inserted in the Code of Internal Security. This legal tool makes military intervention against the population constitutionally feasible. On October 29, 2005, Action Police CFTC, a police officers' union, was cited in the press as having written to the Minister of the Interior to request that he send army back-up into the suburbs and that the areas be placed under curfew at night.¹⁷ During an interview at the Military School during the revolts, a major who preferred to remain anonymous told us that he and his battalion had been brought home from the Ivory Coast along with an equivalent battalion in Kosovo because they were specialized in "crowd control" and "order-maintenance in urban settings." He gave us his opinion: "if it were up to me, I would have sent the army in long ago." Not everyone in the army agrees with that, however. He then described the way he would position his battalion around a few buildings, sealing the sector off completely, emptying the houses of their inhabitants who would be interrogated to uncover the leaders, and searching every apartment, with intensive media coverage of the whole operation for heightened psychological effect, on the basis of methods he had just tested in the Ivory Coast. Sealing off was used in putting down the revolts in Villiers-le-Bel in particular. The repression of popular revolts shows how *counterinsurgency* schemes are tested in the national context in which the mass media, however strongly influenced by military culture and policing logics, may hinder operations.

Jean-Marc Tanguy, a journalist who writes regularly for the armées.com army website, wrote in the daily *France Soir* newspaper on November 4, 2005: “Sending in the army, an informal plan already exists... to cope with an uprising coming out of or nourished by the suburbs. The army now has less lethal weapons: almost the same *flash-balls* as the police, the same hand grenades as the gendarmerie riot squads (gendarmes mobiles).”¹⁸ Repression of the autumn 2005 revolts not only enabled real-life testing of territorial control schemes derived from those imported from external situations, they also pointed up the faults in the *internal security* plans and tested the population’s reactions to use of *internal warfare* as a model for controlling popular neighborhoods.

This process, by which military techniques from abroad are imported for control purposes at home, opened new markets for the arms and security industry. The army provided the police forces with their first “remote control drone-like plane” on July 14, 2006, in the framework of the surveillance of *urban violence* in the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*.¹⁹ Since January 2008, the CRS (state security police) riot police are equipped with real drones, the ELSA model, now produced industrially. Taser France, the firm that also equips gendarmerie riot squads and police officers with electric guns, produces drones called Quadri France and Tri France, designed for the surveillance of *urban violence*, among other things. The increasingly technical nature of *war on the population* also takes the form of the development of France’s capacity to wage *anti-guerilla warfare*. On June 28, 2006, A French training center for action in urban areas (CENZUB) was inaugurated at the Sissonne army camp, and began to receive troops. Urban shooting ranges and fake

shantytowns became operational in 2006.²⁰ Early in 2008 the town of Jeoffrecourt saw the light, simulating a town of 5,000 inhabitants with high-rises, shopping centers, parking lots, and so on, looking much like some French urban areas. Plans are for the CENZUB to be completely operational in 2015, so as to receive armed forces units from other countries.

Between February 25 and 28, 2008, a “premiere” in the “fight against urban violence” was held at the National training center for gendarmerie forces (CNEFG) in Saint-Astier, established just after 1968 for the development and testing of new order-maintenance doctrines. A joint “gendarmerie-police-firefighters” drill tested several order-maintenance operations, including one at night, the “main goal being to facilitate joint operations in extremely deteriorated situations” for a gendarmerie riot squad and a CRS squad in a “context of violence of an urban type.”²¹ The theme of the drills was “intervention in a contentious suburban setting and escorting firemen; controlling a mass demonstration with serious violence and thefts committed collectively by groups of rioters; operations in a contentious suburban area involving attacks using firearms”, as well as use of gendarmerie sharpshooters as back-up for the CRS and of armored cars for positioning the gendarmerie riot squads “in the very hub of the *cité*”. The Saint-Astier center is the largest of its kind in Europe, and plays an “international role” by hosting units from many European countries, especially those in the Association of the European and Mediterranean Police Forces and Gendarmeries with Military Status, (commonly known as FIEP for France-Italia-España-Portugal, the first four members), created in 1994. The founding members are now joined by order-maintenance military forces from

Turkey, the Netherlands, Morocco, Rumania, and since 2005, Argentina and Chile, the goal being to “promote innovative, active thinking about forms of police cooperation”.²²

The new French “antiriot” model taking shape since 2008 consists of developing “penetration of the milieu” while making surveillance visible. Helicopters and drones are standard equipment henceforth, whereas infiltration and informing are developed by increasing the number of plainclothes officers—usually members of the Anti-Crime Brigade (BAC)—to 30%. Repression combines use of the CRS, gendarmerie riot squads and the new *compagnies de sécurisation de la sécurité publique* (companies securing public security). The latter, created in 2003 and launched again in late 2008, are composed of volunteer police officers specially trained in urban violence and equipped with flash-balls and Tasers as well as with miniature cameras for collecting evidence, and may be either undercover or in uniform. The intention is for them to work with a new kind of neighborhood police force, the *Unités territoriales de quartier* (UTEQ) (neighborhood territorial units).

The fight against *urban violence* has become the locus where a series of security networks with a shared technical heritage derived from *counterinsurgency* and the colonial wars converge. These networks have replaced specialists in the Soviet threat and have become influential in many state and industrial sectors since the end of the Cold War. Although some call for complete military control of popular neighborhoods, the prevailing doctrine makes a distinction between the aims of internal and external operations. But it is in the means used that militarization is gradually progressing. A relative but unquestionable hybridization of police and military practices, equip-

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ment, personnel, ideas and fields of action is occurring. By resuscitating images of *the internal enemy* and the *global threat* security institutions have legitimated themselves and produced a product, a line of wares, and a market in which to restructure and develop profitably. It is for these reasons, among others, that the control and repression of the popular classes reactivates many elements of the repertoire of colonial wars. In some respects, then, the popular neighborhoods are serving as testing grounds for bringing military technology into the field of internal population control.

NOTES

- 1 M. Rigouste, *L'ennemi intérieur. Généalogie coloniale et militaire du nouvel ordre sécuritaire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009) at press.
- 2 L. Mucchielli, "L'expertise policière de la 'violence urbaine'. Sa construction intellectuelle et ses usages dans le débat public français", *Déviance et Société*, 4 (2000), 351-375; L. Bonelli, "Les Renseignements généraux et les violences urbaines", *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 136-137 (2001), 95-103.
- 3 *Actes du colloque Les nouvelles menaces et l'Europe : Les guérillas dégénérées*, organized by the IHEDN (L'Institut des hautes études de défense nationale), the IHESI (l'Institut des hautes études de la sécurité intérieure), and the Paris II Institute of Criminology (Paris: IHEDN, 25.10.1995).
- 4 L. Mucchielli, *Violences et insécurité. Fantômes et réalités dans le débat français* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), 26 ff.
- 5 [As opposed to the United States, for instance, where the poor and delict are usually confined to inner-city neighborhoods, in France they are mostly to be found in some suburbs, and especially in the *cités*, or suburban housing projects. – Trans.]
- 6 E. de Richoufftz, *Encore une guerre de retard. Enfin un officier d'active ose parler* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992) and *Pour qui meurt-on ?* (Paris: Association de Développement et de Diffusion de l'Information Militaire, 1998).
- 7 H. Paris, "La menace terroriste et insurrectionnelle", *Défense Nationale* (April 1998), 45-56.
- 8 Instruction interministérielle n°500/SGDN/MTS/OTP du 9 mai 1995 relative à la participation des forces armées au maintien de l'ordre.
- 9 Notice relative à la préparation des armées aux opérations de maintien de l'ordre n°487/DEF/EMA/EMP.3/DR du 28 octobre 1997.
- 10 "Dossier : La violence urbaine", *Défense*, 80 (June 1998), 78.
- 11 [The gendarmerie is officially a military force whose mission is policing outside of large cities and on the highways. – Trans.]

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- 12 1998 report to the Prime Minister, titled “Une meilleure répartition des effectifs de la police et de la gendarmerie pour une sécurité publique” (“Improved distribution of police and gendarmerie forces, for public safety purposes”).
- 13 F. Ribère, “Nouvelle doctrine de contrôle des zones urbanisées”, *Défense nationale* (November 2000), 24.
- 14 TTA 950, *Manuel provisoire d’emploi des forces terrestres dans le contrôle des foules*, approved by letter n°0866/DEF/EMAT/BCSF/CB dated August 8, 2001.
- 15 Concept d’emploi des armes non létales N°98/EDF/EMAT/BCSF/CBT-D dated April 26, 2001.
- 16 Ruling n°2005-1387 dated November 8, 2005 on the enforcement of law n°55-385 dated April 3, 1955.
- 17 *Reuters*, 29.10.2005.
- 18 J.-M. Tanguy, “Intervention de l’armée, un plan informel xistee...”, *France Soir* (04.11.2005), 2.
- 19 According to an official from the Synergy police union speaking on LCI, a TV news channel, on September 21, 2006.
- 20 “Le combat en zone urbaine. Une préparation exigeante”, *Terre Information Magazine*, 177 (September 2006), 31.
- 21 *IntérieurMag* 12 (Spring 2008), cover and p. 12.
- 22 Website of the FIEP association.