

Preparing for the Zombie Apocalypse and other Neocolonial Monsters During the Endless Global War on Terrorism

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Fears of monstrous “others” have always been a part of ghostly colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial representations of spaces and places. For example, after the famous Haitian Revolution in 1804—where hundreds of thousands of former slaves fought off French and other European imperial armies--writers on several continents worried about how to control their own slaves and maintain prosperous slave trades. Over time apocalyptic genres appeared in books, films, and other outlets. Many former colonial powers had audiences who conveniently forgot that the “horror-movie” zombie tropes owed their heritage in part to the efforts of living former slaves, who “imagined being imprisoned in their bodies forever” (Mariani 1). Those who hunted, worked for colonial police, or were defended by imperial military forces demanded that their publics accept the idea that horrific and ungodly weapons should not be prohibited when used in colonies to control unruly people of color.

With the passage of time layers of sedimented figurations were crafted by those who wanted to comment on hordes, swarms, or other existential dangers, and the persistent circulation of global imaginary productions allowed generations to see parallels across space and time. Note, for example, how President Trump referenced the ways that American imperialists in the Philippines, led General Pershing, supposedly used bullets dipped in pigs’ blood to “deter” hordes of Muslim Moro fighters (Shalby). On several occasions during 2016 and 2017 America’s commander-in-chief insisted that the use of these types of imperial strategies led to decades of peace in Southern parts of Philippines and that this provided lessons for today’s warriors who fought “Islamic fundamentalists.”

These *dispositifs* are not created in a vacuum. As Phillips argued, the works of George Romero, Wes Craven, John Carpenter, and others who have contributed to the production of some of these popular culture visualities were not always

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viewed as purveyors of “respectable” genres (10). However, changes in cultural moods, and the recent mainstreaming of zombie films underscores the permeable boundaries that exist between societal anxieties and similar affective states, especially during times of war. As we note below, it is no coincidence that some planning against zombies resembles counterterrorist planning against Muslim or Arab “others.”

Twenty-first century audiences, who enjoy watching episodes of the *Walking Dead* or *Game of Thrones*, are helping craft a sub-genre of monstrosity narratives that we are calling “postcolonial zombie terrorism.” We extend the work of Professor Al-Ghabra, who as argued that we are living during times when human beings become “monsterized” when neoliberals feel perceived crises of neoliberalism and colonialism (33). Neoliberal anxieties in the sense that economies can crash, and colonial monsterization that is based on contemporary settler colonial anxieties.

Unlike the European vampires of old, or the colonial hordes that could be fought off until they died, the new morphing enemies straddle the line between fact and fiction as the “undead” pose supposed terrorist threats that cannot be defeated with maxim guns or conventional weaponry. Today’s Department of Defense needs different monsterring.

As countless communication and interdisciplinary scholars have noted before us, there is no shortage of anxious post-9/11 communities who put up walls and join groups of “preppers” as they prepare for all types of catastrophes. While Professor Calafell has commented on the potential subversive functions of some of these contemporary monsters, Watts reminds us of the problematic nature of some of these zombie characterizations that may be admissions of “postracial fantasies” that take advantage of “tropes of (bio) racism” (329). Phillips has explained that the return of particular “Gothic” representations has everything to do with a “cultural resonance” between projection of horror films and the presentist needs of societies (12).

Clearly journalists, academics, governmental officials, and many others are discovering that zombie discourses can no longer be treated as mere fabrications, ephemeral collections of commercialized phantasms or entertaining visualities. While some writers argue that these figurations are only used for “thought experiments” (Prospero), others aver that the popular circulation of materials on the undead in zombie apocalyptic frames reflects and refracts not just “reel” but “real” societal problematics.

That said, where are those studies of monsterring that put on display how these representations actually impact neo-liberal or neo-colonial governmentalities? Where are those critical cultural investigations that provide demonstrative evidence that documents how zombification actually influences U.S. or other Western official decision-making in counterterrorist situations?

In this particular essay we provide readers with a nuanced praxiological and critical cultural reading of how some sub-genres of monstrosity gothics are symbolically and materially linked to a key topic—U.S. counterterrorism and public perceptions of preparedness. As Jackson explained critical terrorist studies now involve the intersectional study of “ontological, epistemological and praxiological issues” (6), and this means that scholars need to investigate how particular representations are actually appropriated by empowered Western decision-makers. For example, rather than simply speculating about how particular acts of zombification or monsterring “may” have influenced U.S. leaders or institutions praxiological studies put on display how zombies are referenced in key emergency and counterterrorist texts and contexts.

We argue that savvy U.S. governmental officials have tried to hijack interest in monsters and zombies in order to further their militaristic agendas in their fight against post-9/11 enemies. Using a purposive sampling of key mainstream and alternative press commentaries on zombies and preparedness against terrorism--as well as a detailed critique of a key Department of Defense text called CONPLAN 8888--we illustrate how interest in zombies is used to help legitimate the use of massive violence against both “reel” zombies and “real” terrorist enemies. Instead of simply being dismissive of terrorist zombies as matters of “play,” empowered state actors produce ideological governmentalities that take advantage of the polysemic features of zombie apocalyptic rhetorics to help further American warfighting.

However, if we want to understand the meaning of the “post” in these postcolonial zombie studies readers need to be aware of some of the genealogical, colonial fragments that prefigured the more contemporary terrorist monstrosities. We therefore begin with an overview of some of the early U.S. imperial monsterring before commenting on governmental appropriations before and after the circulation of CONPLAN-8888.

Enemy Monsters and the Formation of American Martial Gothics

Both colonial policing of older “voodoo” monsters and control of post-colonial hordes might be conceptualized as variants of what Johan Höglund and others now call the “American Imperial Gothic,” a genre that includes fragments that have been taken from older European gothics, tales of “benevolent assimilation.” These representations of the other are just some of the “master narratives” that are, “by definition, lies and untruths” (Poole xv). Historian Poole goes on to argue that given that fact that “monsters have been manufacturing complex meanings for four hundred years” don’t expect that anyone is going to find any single definitions of a monster when critics tackle a “messy subject like monsters” (Poole xiv).

This is especially the case when neoliberals use popular representations of Gothic “others” to explain Cold War horrors, post-Vietnam worries, and post-9/11 insecurities. As Höglund explains video games, movies, governmental exercises, and gun shows put on display those “muscular” angels who oftentimes provide the only bulwark against a whole host of “Gothic” others, including “angry ghosts, vampires, zombies, atavistic monsters, serial killers, cyborg hordes let loose from hell” or “extraterrestrial invasion forces” that threaten to “overrun the planet” (1).

Sadly, as readers might imagine, the contemporary formation of many postcolonial zombie terrorist displays and performances is based on residual archival materials that put on display the horrific nature of the creative destruction that came when indigenous communities around the globe came in contact with American, European, and other imperialists. Buescher and Ono remarked that even “benevolent colonialism” cannot win “without the concurrent elimination” of “identifiable threats” that often take the form of the “dark, colonized man” [sic] (146). In today’s counterterrorist planning, it is the zombies—with their persistence, their apparent irrational behavior, and other existential threat--that are linked to preparations to deal with Arab or Muslim threats.

Today’s “Islamic fundamentalists” join a long list of colonial foes. Our Anglo-American contested histories and selective public memories are filled with tales of how outnumbered white settlers had no choice but to use overwhelming force when righteous forces had to confront savage others. When European imperialists sat down to write down the laws that dictated how they would carve up places like the “Dark Continent” they also had to craft international laws that

would regulate how they would fight in these violent altercations. Those who were not allowed to have a say in any of this planning were the hordes of Africans, Asians, and other colonized subalterns, who became “their dark alter ego, the uncivilized ‘barbarian,’ ‘savage’ from which the lawgivers sought to ‘distance themselves’ (Mégret 1-5). Those supposedly impervious to pain set the stage for today’s zombification.

In fascinating ways those interested in colonial or imperial hordes or the zombie apocalypse now troll the World Wide Web as they learn about antiquated ethnic, class, and gendered disputes that took place historically when some questioned the morality of having peasants use crossbows against nobles on horses. They find texts written by those conversing about the legality of using snipers, mustard gas, dum-dum bullets, and any other weapons that needed to be used to stop those on the peripheries of empire from winning colonial engagements. Those interested in “Steampunk,” for example, can dress up in costumes that combine their interest in the Zombie Apocalypse with studies of the British celebrations of the battle of Omdurman. This mesmerizes some because this was a battle that took place near Khartoum in the Sudan, where some 11,000 heavily-armed British soldiers killed 60,000 supposedly blood-thirsty savages called the Mahdists, while losing 47 European lives (Clark pars. 1-25).

Another variant of the American monster gothic, that focused on “Arab” or “Muslim” threats, appeared in the tales that would be told by generations of soldiers and American diplomats who celebrated the “victories” of soldiers like “Black Jack” Pershing. Pershing was a US military leader who led hundreds of soldiers in battles that stopped the spread of Muslim “piracy” and “outlaws” in the Southern Philippines. Newspaper accounts, books, memoirs, U.S. governmental documents, posters, and films that were circulated after the Spanish-American War tried to explain why several conflicts on Jolo Island led to the massacre of hundreds—if not thousands—of men, women and children. These were the colonized who tried to flee to volcanic regions in order to avoid U.S. colonial governmentalities. The use of artillery and a new weapon—the .45 caliber revolver—were used to kill somewhere between 600 and 1000 Moro “Mohammedan” fighters who refused to surrender. After what many today call the 1906 Bud Dajo Massacre the slaughter of knife-wielding “*juramentado*” was justified by defenders of U.S. army officials by referring the existential dangers that came from the “religious fanatics” who “believed paradise to be their immediate reward” if they were “killed in action with Christians” (IVC Author par. 34). It would be some of these very same

Muslim communities, and their suppression by generals like Pershing, that President Donald Trump was referencing during the 2016 campaign trial as he talked about the efficacy of using bullets dipped in pig blood to stop Muslim hordes. The deaths of those who died on Jolo Island were just some of the hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who were killed, and had their villages burned, between 1898 and 1920.

During the 1920's books like William Brook's novel *The Magic Island* tapped into the older European fears about slave or class rebellions and they were adapted for "New World" audience who learned about the nexus that existed between social control, capitalism, and "vodou" practices in Haiti. A few years later films like Victor Halerin's *White Zombie* (1932) and Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) brought some of these same tropes to the silver screen, and Western fears about the lingering impact of the Great Depression could be linked to native "voodoo" priests, white slave victims, and the threat of decolonization. "As zombie legends took root in the U.S.," explained Zimbardo, "they expressed imperialist anxieties associated with colonialism and slavery, fears of racial mixing and specters of white people becoming dominated through zombification" (273).

The British stories that would be told about the battle of Omdurman, and U.S. remembrances of the Bud Dajo Massacre, can be viewed as just some of the countless examples of Anglo-American martial gothics, military orientalist tales (Porter) that pit the prowess of the West against Eastern "others." In today's postcolonial defenses and appropriation of these gothic figurations "the forces of darkness represent the threat from many different political entities: extremist Islam, Chinese economic competition, Russian imperialism, or even the anti-war, and anti-gun, liberal left" (Höglund 1). However, unlike the older hordes that could be killed and controlled by maxim guns the new postcolonial zombie terrorists are the undead who pose greater threats.

The Praxiological Zombification of Contemporary "Islamic" or Radical "Arab" Enemies

As noted above, critical praxiological studies, that merge together theory with praxis, are investigations of how contemporary empowered audiences actually use cultural representations to advance key political, social, legal, or military

objectives. In this particular case, as Al-Ghabra once argued “some of today’s monstrous creations are symptomatic of colonial anxiety and have resulted out of today’s modern colonialism that is carried out through the ‘War on Terror’ and the U.S. of presence in the Middle East and other countries” (25). Arjana similarly noted that critical genealogical studies of monstrous representations of Muslims in various Western imaginaries—that cover temporal periods spanning more than 1200 years—illustrate how dehumanizing representations became a part of dense representational landscapes. These landscapes were populated with other monsters, including dwarfs, giants, and dragons. She contends that the sedimented nature of all of this Islamophobia explains Western obsessions with “hijab bans and outlawed minarets, secret renditions of enemy combatants, Abu Ghraib, and GTMO” (1)

In the same way that colonial figurations of “voodoo” were used to rationalize threats that came from empowered former slaves in Haiti, monstrosity and zombification strategies are used by those who wish to take-for-granted the need for aggressive “counterterrorist” strategies that help normalize and legitimate select representations of Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Hamas, or other “terrorist” enemies.

Given the nature of post-9/11 anxieties it is understandable why so many popular cultural representations, historical accounts, diplomatic efforts, and military initiatives focus on securitizing borders and the perceived need to stop the pernicious spread of perfidious “Islamic fundamentalism.” In Sophia Rose Arjana’s genealogical study of Muslims and monstrosity she touches on many of the martial features of this vilification as she traces anti-Muslim sentiments during Medieval, Ottoman, and other colonial and postcolonial periods. Her review of the “archive of Muslim monsters” and anxieties” about “Jihad” (16) helped her explain how incidents like Abu Ghraib during Operation Iraqi Freedom could be linked to earlier concerns regarding the “giant, man-eating Saracens of medieval romances” where “Black Saracens” were shown in medieval art “executing saints” and “murdering other Christian innocents” (Arjana 102).

As we explain in our next two sections, even apparently benign or neutral preparedness texts produced by Western militarists can carry similar conscious or unconscious messages.

Military Preparedness, Counter Insurgency, Counterterrorism, and The Invention of the Postcolonial Zombie Terrorist

There are obviously many co-authors involved in the production of neo-colonial or post-colonial counter-terrorist rhetorics that reference real and symbolic post-9/11 threats. Notice, for example, the haunting ways that then-President George W. Bush, during a visit to South Bend, Indiana (September 5, 2002) characterized the nation's latest foes: "This is a war where we're fighting tough people, smart killers, who hide in dark caves or who kind of slither into shadowy recesses in large cities and parts of the world and then send youngsters to their suicidal death" (Bush 1547). These types of attributes—hiding, slithering, moving in dark recesses—help set the stage for military zombifications.

In the same way that U.S. generals once worried about the fanaticism of Muslims during the "suppression" of the Moro rebellion in the Philippines those who produced new American martial gothics magnified the dangers presented by their opponents. In 2014 Army General Dempsey argued that some surging Islamic State groups had some "apocalyptic, end-of-days strategic vision," and he invited his listeners to move from supporting a restricted series of airstrikes in Iraq to sanctioning more extensive bombing campaigns elsewhere (Associated Press Staff par. 1-3.). The generic template—that assumed that publics saw the need to fight fanatically "Mohammedan" or "Muslim" hordes—was passed on to other generations. However, the inflections changed as particular presentist needs influenced the morphing and twisting of the specific rationales that would be used to destroy threatening hordes. Texts like Dempsey's helped fabricate the new postcolonial zombie terrorist, that required drastic action.

Note how presences and absences, the naturalized securitized assumptions and possible irruptions, become a part of this type of performative application of zombie conceptualizations. The threats that are prioritized are not the ones coming from individuals or small groups in the West—in the form of lone wolf terrorism or Right wing terrorists—but are instead coming from the populations living in the "Eurasian landmass." This is in keeping with the notion that it is places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Indonesia, or other Arab or Muslim sites, that serve as the geopolitical reservoirs for zombie-like contagion. We can see that some of the very same arguments that were once used to rationalize President George W. Bush's harsh interrogation techniques (based on "unitary executive" powers), or sanction President Barack Obama's use of "necessitous" drones, are now being

adapted to confer even greater powers to those military forces who have to stop the spread of “zombiesm.” Zombies are no longer “limited to nation-states and terrorist groups” because “zombies” are “contagious” (Neocleous 21).

Implementing a “Real” Plan for Controlling Zombie Terrorism-- CONPLAN 8888 – America’s “Counter-Zombie Dominance” Strategizing

The figure of the zombie still haunts U.S. military thinking to this day. The Pentagon made headlines in 2014 when a fictional planning document created by U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) was obtained, and reported on, by Foreign Policy, commonly referred to as simply FP (Lubold). The document published by FP was entitled CONPLAN 8888, and it purported to offer USSTRATCOM’s plan for achieving “counter-zombie dominance” in the event of a worldwide, zombie apocalypse. The “disclaimer” section that opened CONPLAN 8888 made it abundantly clear that this was a training exercise for military planners that had used “hyperbole” and suspension of reality in an effort to “take a very dry, monotonous topic and turn it into something rather enjoyable” (USSTRATCOM 3).

But there was also a political reason for the use of the fictional zombie scenario. This was the avoidance of “the political fallout that occurs if the general public mistakenly believes that a fictional training scenario is actually a real plan.” Instead of “using the fictional ‘Tunisia’ or ‘Nigeria’ scenarios” normally used by U.S planners the document authors explained that they elected “to use a completely-impossible scenario that could never be mistaken as a real plan” (USSTRATCOM 3). Interestingly, we learn that these trainers believed that zombies were a viable substitute for the two “third world” countries that would have normally been the object of such a training scenario.

In short, the goal was to provide a scenario to train strategic military planners to think about the possibility of a global threat to human survival, but to do it in a way that did not raise political alarm bells. Indeed, the document opens by saying: “This plan was not actually designed as a joke” (USSTRATCOM 2). Thus, while the scenario is hyperbolic and unreal, it was not unserious.

The report generated quite a bit of media buzz. A search of *Google News*--from the time it was created through late November 2017--returns around 130

results. Our purposive sampling of the roughly two dozen English-language articles found among these results demonstrated that less than a handful engaged the underlying ideas and assumptions of the plan in a serious or critical way. Thus, it would seem that CONPLAN 8888 achieved its goal of avoiding “political fallout,” despite the attention that it received. This, we contend, was a result of the hyperbolic nature of the scenario and the news media’s resulting difficulty in determining how seriously to take the document. As we explain below, those who produced this plan could make ideological claims about the “other” that were hidden by neutral-sounding terrorist allegations.

Much of the tone for English-language media reaction to CONPLAN 8888 was set by the initial *Foreign Policy (FP)* reporting, which was ambivalent about whether the plan was real. The *FP*’s headline claimed, “The Pentagon Has a Plan to Stop the Zombie Apocalypse. Seriously.” The second paragraph begins, “Incredibly, the Defense Department has a response if zombies attacked,” and the third describes the plan as, “Buried on the military’s secret computer network.” That all sounds very real indeed. Only later in the piece did *FP* acknowledge that the document was created as a training exercise and that the plan it contains is not real. Or did it? The article then adds that, even if the real document does not contain a real plan, “should there be a zombie apocalypse, the military indeed has a plan” (Lubold).

One would have expected *FP* to have had a more nuanced, perhaps even critical, view of CONPLAN 8888, but perhaps the authors here took for-granted the existential nature of “Islamic” fundamentalist threats. After all, it is a publication widely read by serious-minded national security professionals and other neo-liberals. Instead, it ignores most of the more troubling aspects of the plan, including the potential use of nuclear weapons and declaration of martial law, both in the United States. Instead, the article presents CONPLAN 8888 in a click-bait, man-bites-dog style of reporting, that does little to unpack the ideological assumptions embedded in both zombie and terrorist rhetorical texts.

Most other English-language coverage followed *FP*’s lead, exhibiting ambivalence about the realness of the plan and providing little to no substantive engagement with its contents. There were few notable exceptions, however. For example, the UK’s *Daily Mail* ran a story on the plan that cited the *FP* article. Though the *Daily Mail* article quotes a U.S. military spokeswoman saying, “This document is not a U.S. Strategic Command plan,” the article otherwise treats CONPLAN 8888 as a real plan, even claiming that UK’s Ministry of Defense has

a similar plan (Reilly). Other sources that portrayed the plan as real included Russia's state-run *RT* and *Sputnik*, *Time*, and an online publication for Chinese Americans called, *Yibada* (Bridge; "Day of the Dead"; Stampler; Villasanta; V.). Several sources also clearly portrayed CONPLAN 8888 as fictional. These included *PBS*, *Gizmodo*, *Huffington Post*, and *Washington Times* (Tam; Novak; Whitehead; Ernst).

Did this lack of serious engagement underscore the point that military analysts were willing to treat postcolonial zombie terrorists as "real" figurations whose fictive nature could not hide ontological realities? As mentioned above, less than a handful of the two dozen English-language articles we analyzed provided any substantive or critical engagement with CONPLAN 8888's contents. For example, one local news report suggested that the Pentagon should focus its exercises on real scenarios and took note of the plan's contemplated use of nuclear weapons inside the United States ("Pentagon Has Zombie Apocalypse Plan"). In the *Washington Post*, Tufts University professor Daniel Drezner—one of the most popular academic writers on public discourse and zombies—criticized the "trigger happy" nature of the plan, especially its contemplated use of nuclear weapons. Otherwise, his main criticisms were that CONPLAN 8888 did not take the threat seriously enough and that the plan was not widely known among DOD leaders (Drezner).

The two articles that engaged most critically with CONPLAN 8888 came from the *New York Post* and *The Huffington Post*. The *New York Post* article raised possibility that zombies represent "radical Muslims," asking, "Is this some kind of perverse, politically correct humor? Is the government substituting outlandish villains for, say, radical Muslims?" The same article considered the focus on zombies in the USSTRATCOM document to be reflective of our collective fears about Ebola at that time, and it also mentioned more generalized societal anxieties about terrorism, the economy, and climate change (Peyser).

The harshest criticism of CONPLAN 8888 came from *The Huffington Post* article written by a libertarian author who writes about the growing police state in the United States. He saw the DOD document as reflective of growing "government paranoia," fears that American citizens are the real enemy, and government planning for mass civil unrest and martial law. Both articles make some insightful points about the DOD document (Whitehead). Sadly, analysis of those articles using the social media analytics platform *SharedCount.com* show

that neither were shared at all on popular social media platforms, meaning that they likely had very little impact on the wider discourse about CONPLAN 8888.

We argue that this lack of critical engagement with CONPLAN 8888 is not the result of lack of concerning material in the document. As mentioned above, the first disturbing aspect is the substitution of zombies for scenarios that would normally involve countries from the African continent. We know that “third world” others—especially in colonial or imperial contexts—have historically been described in zombie-like terms or even as zombies. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that CONPLAN 8888 identifies the origins of “zombie infections” as “the Eurasian landmass.” Textual portions of the document warn about the dangers of immigration by potentially infected Others, noting that “air and sea traffic . . . could transport the source of a zombie infection to North and South America” (USSTRATCOM 5). In theory, the training that is a part of the “Joint Operational Planning and Execution System” is intended to help USSTRATCOM “preserve the sanctity” of human life by neutralizing zombie hordes (3).

Oftentimes the authors of the CONPLAN 8888 use postcolonial arguments that mirror earlier European rationales for the use of maxim guns or other weaponry. For example, the document reflects the recent penchant of the U.S. for unilateral use of force when it notes that “the rapidity at which zombie outbreaks spread” may necessitate “unilateral military force” by the United States (USSTRATCOM 5). This also replicates some of the same legalese that appears in other texts about the use of enhanced interrogation techniques, drones, and other controversial weapons. We would argue that some of the very same geographical bases that are used for launching attacks on Al-Qaeda, Taliban, and other terrorists—“Hawaii, Guam, and Diego Garcia”—are the spaces and places that are used to refuel the war machines that go after zombie threats (USSTRATCOM 16).

Moreover, the nation’s commander-in-chief needs the “flexible” tools that can be used to fight off postcolonial zombie terrorists. As in the U.S. “war on terror” CONPLAN 8888 contemplates a response that encompasses the “entire globe” (USSTRATCOM 9). This response, we are told, must include the elimination or eradication of zombies. This is a viable option because the plan assumes that zombies are non-human, incurable, and, therefore, outside of the law. The document states in no uncertain terms that “LOAC [Law of Armed Conflict] will not apply to zombies” (USSTRATCOM 14) and that, therefore, “[t]here are almost no restrictions on hostile actions that may be taken either defensively or

offensively” (USSTRATCOM 8). Those responses will involve using “all available forces,” including “bomber and missile strikes” (USSTRATCOM 10). The plan even contemplates that “nuclear weapons. . . are likely to be the most effective weapons against hordes of the undead” (USSTRATCOM 22). Indeed, complete elimination even applies to the dead undead and will include “ensur[ing] all zombie corpses are immolated” (USSTRATCOM 11). We see here shades of the legal debates about whether terrorist suspects and “enemy combatants” have any rights at all under international or domestic law. Zombification aids the cause of militarists who want to “take the gloves off” when dealing with such savage enemies.

That said, there is one kind of zombie that may not even be truly dead after immolation. This is where we see shades of discourses that portray the “war on terror” as a never-ending ideological or spiritual battle. So-called “evil magic zombies” or EMZs, can be created and “weaponized” by “evil magicians” who use occult powers to create a zombie so powerful that it cannot even be truly destroyed by immolation (USSTRATCOM 6, 14). Thus, the plan says, “the Chaplain Corps may provide the only viable means of combating EMZs. As such, atheists could be particularly vulnerable to EMZ threats” (USSTRATCOM 14).

These are allusions that allow the producers of CONPLAN-8888 to use a mixture of fantasy and realism as they put on display the prowess of muscular-Christian warriors. Like the “war on terror,” where one cannot reason with fanatical terrorists, the authors of the document tell us that zombies “cannot be deterred or reasoned with in any way.” Instead, military capabilities must be applied to “zombie-inducing forces” like rogue states, groups, or individuals (including “evil magicians”) who are creating or promoting zombies. Like combatting terrorists, it is not just that zombies themselves who must be eliminated, but also the recruiters, funders, and ideological leaders (the “evil magicians” who radicalize youth into weaponized suicide attackers), but also the “rogue states” who harbor these bad actors (USSTRATCOM 12). This brings to mind the drone attacks on recruiters like Al-Awlaki or the U.S. disposal of Osama bin Laden’s corpse at sea.

As Calafell once argued, “some monsters” simply “reify structures of domination” (118) and it is no coincidence that Defense planners use some types of zombification to legitimate the unshackling of military power during what Agamben would call “states of exception.” States of exception, according to

Agamben, have to do with the carving out of a state's use of emergency powers in ways that prevent civilian oversight of military decision-making.

The U.S. government's use of zombies allows for the appropriation of these emergency powers by the military in both zombie and terrorist contexts. Interestingly, we see a reconfiguration of the citizenry's relationship to the military here too. "Given the likelihood of an all-out threat to 'human survival', it is likely that this plan will be executed concurrently with a declaration of martial law within CONUS and US territories," the document states (USSTRATCOM 8). Just as there will be no restrictions on how military force can be used against the non-human enemy during early colonial "emergencies," there will also be few restrictions on the postcolonial interactions between military forces and the humans they are meant to protect.

In the end, the underlying assumptions about foreign "Others," and how to deal with what we have called postcolonial zombie terrorism, are not as thinly disguised as the authors of CONPLAN 8888 may believe. Or, perhaps the authors are not attempting to disguise them at all. Perhaps, in poststructuralist terms, they are saying more than they realize because they do not have full control over the language they use. Perhaps they have been infected by a zombie rhetoric of colonialism and race that hides "neo-colonial colonial anxieties" under the guise of "desensitizing warfare" (Al-Ghabra 27).

Conclusion

Clearly Crockett and Zarracina are right when they contend that the "undead have been used by filmmakers and writers as a metaphor for much deeper fears; racial sublimation, atomic destruction, communism, mass contagion, globalism—and, more than anything, each other" (par. 3). As we noted above, there are strategic reasons why these topics have been linked so many colonial gothic narratives or post-9/11 anxieties.

In this particular essay we have provided readers with a brief genealogy of some of the colonial antecedent zombie genres that have gone into the production of contemporary monstrosities, and we our praxiological investigation has purposely focused primary attention on U.S. governmentalities that continue to appropriate zombie obsessions in an attempt to encourage us to take-for-granted the need to fight implacable Islamist foes. In future years we should not be

surprised when ISIL zombies will join the legions of other monsters—slaves, rebels, Mau Maus, Nazis, Al Qaeda operatives, the Taliban, “Muslim fundamentalists”—who populate so many geopolitical and cultural imaginations. Watts has written about the *jouissance* involved with the shooting of Obama-like zombies, but think of how expansive these interests can become when returning soldiers and their families can prepare for many other futuristic terrorist threats.

Given the unknowing acting and speaking that we referenced above critical cultural scholars cannot sit on the sidelines and provide merely descriptive studies of texts like the CONPLAN-8888. It behooves us to join the ranks of those who refuse to see zombies as only “reel” monsters when so many others lose their lives in a seemingly endless “War on Terrorism.”

“Real world terrorist mobs like ISIS and Boko,’ argued Cohen, are “striking similar to fictional zombie hordes” so why not see what “lessons learned” could be taken from “zombie literatures” to help deal with “real world threats”? (par. 15). Perhaps it also time to consider how praxiological zombification can be utilized to fabricate threats and rationales for even more creative counterterrorist destruction.

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