

The Death Squad Dilemma: Counterinsurgency Policy and the Salvadoran Model

BY STEVE DOBRANSKY

Abstract

This paper analyzes and evaluates the use of death squads in counterinsurgencies. It, particularly, examines the Salvadoran counterinsurgency (COIN) model and its potential applicability to current and future wars. The Salvadoran model involved widespread use of death squads and other paramilitary units both officially and unofficially sanctioned. Despite being hailed as a success by many in the COIN community, the Salvadoran model was not applied in the Afghan and Iraq Wars. This paper attempts to explain the key factors in determining whether or not the Salvadoran model tends to be more applicable in an unconventional war and, if so, whether it can be done successfully. This paper compares El Salvador with other countries that have been engaged in counterinsurgencies and, then,

Steve Dobransky is an Adjunct Professor at Lake Erie College. He is completing his Ph.D. at Kent State University and is ABD. He has an M.A. from Ohio University and a B.A. from Cleveland State University. He majors in International Relations and Justice Studies. Contact: sdobrans@lec.edu.

Foreign Policy Journal, October 28, 2014

determines what enables some governments to apply full-scale the Salvadoran model and others not to. This paper concludes with the results and then makes recommendations on how the international community can deal much better with the future threats of death squads, including the establishment of an international organization and force to deter and stop if necessary death squad activities.

Introduction

Death squads have been a common occurrence in many wars throughout history. In both interstate wars and internal conflicts, government and non-government forces have used violence against unarmed populations. Despite the millions of people killed through these paramilitary actions, scholars have only recently attempted to conceptualize and theorize on the use of death squads. Many research projects have been done on individual cases (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, et al.), but little has been done in the aggregate. Most attempts at understanding death squads and other atrocities have come after the fact. Relatively little has been done to tie together the many cases and then develop an overall conception of death squads and how best to deal with them.

Without an established understanding and regular discussion of death squads, there are little institutional or scholarly frameworks to promote the deterrence or prevention of death squads, let alone a quick and strong reaction against them. The less death squads are talked about, the less prepared people are to deal with the matter in the future and before it is too late. Given the current international system and trends, the security situation suggests that there may be a greater inclination towards the use of death squads and other paramilitary groups in the coming years and decades. The U.S. is declining and there are many weak and propped up governments that may resort to death squads in order to maintain the status quo and protect their vulnerable economic and energy resources. Thus, it behooves us to talk much more about death squads and how to deal

with them before they occur and, as a last resort, immediately after they begin. Millions of lives may depend on it.

This paper examines the death squad issue from a scholarly and real-world perspective. It analyzes a number of cases, especially El Salvador. It builds upon recent scholarly research. It applies the findings to develop a more comprehensive framework for better understanding the issue. And, it calls boldly for the international community to establish the necessary mechanisms and forces to ensure an around-the-clock and around-the-world surveillance of death squad activities and the sufficient capabilities to resolve any threats and violations quickly and effectively, regardless of any other country's veto power or opposition. It concludes with a number of recommendations on future research and objectives.

Death Squads and Scholarly Research

The subject of death squads is a very sensitive and often disturbing topic. With today's technology, the written word on death squads is accompanied often by the most gruesome images of murdered and dismembered bodies, ranging from babies to adults. The consequences of irresolution are obvious. There have been a number of scholarly works in the past decade that have made significant progress in terms of explaining the potential reasons for using death squads (Campbell and Brenner 2000; Downes 2008; Mazzei 2009; et al.). A number of scholars have used historical and qualitative approaches (Pirnie and O'Connell 2008; Austin and Rosenau 2009; et al.), while a few others have used quantitative methods (Downes 2008, most notably). The research, however, has broken down into two general groups, with one focusing on the human rights side of the death squads issue and the other analyzing the military counterinsurgency side. Few scholars have tied the two areas together. Moreover, little has been done to incorporate the recent issue of global energy security with death squads and other paramilitary activities, despite the reports coming out of Nigeria and

elsewhere about villages being wiped out to clear the way for oil companies to move in.

Death squads have been used successfully at a tactical and strategic level for centuries and this success has encouraged many more uses to this very day. Even in failure deaths squads are often not considered obsolete since the extreme measures are seen as making every effort to win and only in the end is it recognized that the cause is lost. Failure is attributed usually to political and socio-economic factors and not to death squads and other extreme means (Jones 2009; Rosenau and Long 2009; Marston and Malkasian 2008; et al.). Therein lies the problem and the challenge for scholars and others. How should people, countries, and the international community address this enduring issue, let alone resolve it? How do people deter death squads, as well as quickly stop their use? What institutions, powers, and personnel are needed to address sufficiently this issue? Scholars are only now making active forays into this all too long avoided area.

Death squads are defined as any paramilitary force, government or non-government, that kills unarmed civilians during a state of conflict, usually avoiding direct identification and accountability (Campbell and Brenner 2000: 1-4). Death squads often go by other names (state terrorism, paramilitary operations, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, gang-related murders, etc.) since it is considered a politically loaded term and many governments prefer not to be associated with it. Semantics aside, death squads have been a common and very destructive force throughout history. Millions of people have been killed by death squads, many of them in the past one hundred years. World wars, small wars, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, terrorism, etc. have all provided the context and opportunities for mass murdering unarmed populations. Death squads have been used by many governments, elites, and other groups, regardless of size, power, and wealth. Regime type and democracy have not stopped various governments from being associated directly or indirectly with death

squads, such as the U.S.'s implementation of the Phoenix Program in the Vietnam War being (Downes 2008).

Scholars have attempted to narrow down the confines of modern day death squads, recognizing that slaughtering innocent civilians has occurred throughout history. Scholars have noted that there have been more recent developments in terms of nationalism, technology, and international standards which have drawn lines that separate the past century from thousands of years prior (Campbell and Brenner 2000: 14-18). This paper follows these modern parameters and focuses primarily on the 20th century to the present, with heavy emphasis on the post-WWII period.

Current Context and Questions

Death squads have had mixed military and political results. It is important to understand that there is a complex set of factors that exist at the time of deciding whether or not to use death squads. Given the millions of past deaths and the possible millions more in the future, it is critical to understand better why death squads are employed and how to deal more effectively with them, let alone prevent or quickly stop them. Why are death squads formed? Who decides? Why do people kill unarmed civilians, especially repeatedly and *en masse*? What makes one person or group more prone to initiating or participating in death squads? What type of nature and character leads one to pull the trigger repeatedly on women and children? What can people do inside and outside a country to deal with death squads?

There have been many individual reports on death squads and atrocities, especially by human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. None of these organizations, however, appears to have created an aggregate study and explanation of death squads. They have tended to be more like the police and fire department in terms of responding after the fact to a major crime or disturbance. Many scholars and journalists have tended to do the same over the last century. Many have reported on the specific cases

in detail and then have moved on. Scholars have only begun in the last decade or so to categorize all the uses of death squads and attempt to establish a theoretical framework to better understand the causes and effects of them. A comprehensive study of death squads is extremely rare. In the past decade, there have been only a few studies that have provided us with an analysis of multiple cases and attempted to theorize on the matter (Campbell and Brenner 2000; Downes 2008; Mazzei 2009; and a few others). Some good research data and evaluations have been made. This has been a step forward, but only a step. Much more needs to be done, especially on the practical application side. The scholarly works need to be fused with the institutional realities to develop an effective means of counteracting death squads.

Overall, this study examines the death squads issue from the 1980s to the Afghan and Iraq Wars. It emphasizes the El Salvador case, since it is praised often as a successful COIN model. It attempts to explain why the Salvadoran death squad model has been looked upon so favorably in the last several decades despite its lack of application in the current wars on terrorism and insurgencies. The paper, thereafter, considers the international trends and the probabilities of more uses of death squads, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq since most/all U.S. troops leave, as well as in places where there are strategic resources and commodities. The more recent issues of Libya, Ivory Coast, and other cases of civilian uprisings make this issue even more compelling and urgent. This paper stresses the possibility of future uses of death squads, unless substantial changes are made. It concludes with suggestions on how best to proceed and what to focus on in the future in terms of scholarly research and political activities.

The Salvadoran Counterinsurgency Model

The civil war that raged in El Salvador from 1980 to 1992 is often described as a successful model for counterinsurgencies, which included the use of death squads. The Salvadoran model involved

large numbers of paramilitary units that were privately funded or were officially and unofficially government forces (often just a change of clothes). The death squads were guided by military, political, and economic elites (Mazzei 2009; Amnesty International 1988). They sought to eliminate not only the armed insurgents but anyone who may have been supportive or sympathetic to the insurgent cause. Their goal was to kill many and intimidate the millions of others into submission. The Salvadoran civil war waged viciously, as the right-wing government and economic elite contended with the left-wing forces led by the FMLN. An estimated 75,000 civilians died during the war, many attributed to death squads. The death squads were virtually all supportive of the government and the status quo. The Salvadoran model quickly reached international dimensions when four American missionaries were brutally raped and murdered in December 1980 by Salvadoran military forces. This brought the spotlight on the American government's role in supporting the Salvadoran government. American military aid exposed the School of the Americas (SOA) in which many death squads members were said to have attended. A number of military officers accused and found associated with death squads had been trained at the SOA in Fort Benning, Georgia. This connection highlighted the phenomena in international affairs in which major powers supported smaller powers in maintaining their governments by any and all means, including death squads. The Cold War was the context and often the justification, but major powers and death squads had existed long before the Cold War.

By the time the Salvadoran civil war ended in 1992, many American counterinsurgency experts were hailing the Salvadoran model of handling civilians and insurgents as a major success. Despite the fact that the Salvadoran government quickly sued for peace once the U.S. government threatened to cut off all military aid to it (after six Jesuit priests were shot point-blank by death squads right on a San Salvador university campus), many people concluded that the Salvadoran model had succeeded. Yet, the death squads and

the military never achieved victory. They only achieved a negotiated settlement, despite their complete control over their country and having the full support of a superpower for 12 years. In the end, the FMLN and other leftist groups were allowed to enter the political system. They competed and won around 25 percent of the vote for years thereafter and, then, finally won it all in March 2009. So, after all the death squads and 75,000 people killed, the leftist insurgents finally won politically and took control of the Salvadoran government. Nevertheless, the Salvadoran COIN model is still declared a success and is referred to as the current go-to model for fighting and winning counterinsurgencies. Why?

The Salvadoran COIN model is an interesting case of apparent—or deliberate—misinterpretation of cause and effect, as well as propaganda and historical revisionism versus reality. The right-wing Salvadoran government is presented as the victor, along with the U.S. and the “forces of freedom.” Yet mass death, destruction, and impoverishment of the civilian population was necessary for the right-wing government just to survive, often through the use of death squads. If such a stealth policy of mass murder was needed to “win,” then it raises the question as to why there was such an impetus in hiding the real fight and who the aggressors were. The U.S. government stood by for a decade and watched the mass death squad activities, and it supplied all the necessary means for the Salvadoran government to conduct an unconventional war. Only when the American public and international community were pushed over the edge and rose up in protests after the killings of the Jesuit priests did the U.S. government feel compelled politically to threaten to cut off military aid unless the Salvadoran government sued for peace. Hence, the important lesson here is that a weak Salvadoran government needed a major power like the U.S. to supply militarily and support politically the means for major death squad activities for many years. Only when the protector and provider threatened to deny continued means of survival did the Salvadoran government feel a need to stop the death squads and go to the negotiating table for peace. This

suggests that the Salvadoran government's use of death squads had reflected its undemocratic character and lack of major public support from the very beginning of the civil war. And, on the other hand, it suggested that the use of death squads had greatly alienated many more Salvadoran citizens and people throughout the region and world. This mass opposition and outright disgust would have led eventually, in all likelihood, to a defeat and collapse of the Salvadoran government sooner or later if U.S. military assistance had ended. Payback would likely have been quite extensive and severe for the government and death squad culprits (unless they escaped the country). Peace negotiations and amnesty, however, saved all of them from prison or worse, except for a few low-level personnel implicated in the murders of the four American missionaries and Archbishop Romero.

The Salvadoran COIN model demonstrates that the world's inability to prevent a major power from assisting and protecting a government using death squads to fight a war is a critical component to resolving the issue. The Salvadoran government felt compelled to use all means, including death squads, to survive. It clearly had little support from most of the Salvadoran people. But, its ability to use death squads on a comprehensive and long-term basis was premised upon outside military support and diplomatic cover by a major power. The world community watched and was unable to do anything about it. This shows that the lack of an established international organization that had the legal right and sufficient forces to stop death squads and protect civilians was an absolutely critical factor in the Salvadoran equation. It is clear that it has been the decisive variable in many other death squad cases in the past and maybe many more in the future. The Salvadoran and U.S. governments exploited the world's lack of necessary means and laws to stop death squads. Until this changes, many more weak governments and their foreign supporters can take advantage of this huge loophole in the state system and mass murder their population in order to survive. The Salvadoran case suggests that an international

agreement should be made that would require all countries to immediately suspend military aid to any government involved directly or indirectly with death squads, as determined by a specified and impartial international organization. Even one case of death squad activity should trigger automatically this mechanism without any vote or domestic say. The international community, moreover, should guarantee the support for and survival of any government that adheres to this anti-death squad/genocide principle while its adversary does not.

Counterinsurgencies after El Salvador

Fresh off the “success” of the Salvadoran model, it is interesting to note that the model was not applied to any degree in Somalia in 1992-1993. Somalia may be relegated to a humanitarian operation despite the fact that it went well beyond that, as the movie *Black Hawk Down* showed. The U.S.’s quick exit may have enabled policymakers to avoid a very tough and cold-hearted choice as to whether or not to use death squads, by proxy or other means. It also may indicate certain political and moral compunctions of U.S. policymakers when possibly supporting death squads when U.S. forces are in theater. Somalia was over too quickly to test anything. The lack of a stable central government in Somalia also may have undermined the potential options. Furthermore, there is no evidence whatsoever that U.S. policymakers even considered using any sort of paramilitary organizations within Somalia. Thus, the “successful” Salvadoran COIN model was never applied. This suggests that right from the beginning the Salvadoran model was set aside for a more realistic and measured vision of U.S. COIN strategy that did not utilize death squads.

Bosnia (1994-1995) and Kosovo (1999) involved many death squads and they garnered much international attention. The death squads, however, were primarily U.S. opponents and often were civilian and ethnically oriented. Serbia’s government was blamed for many death squads, though the evidence suggests that many of the

death squads emerged from all sides of the conflict and from the grassroots levels. Historically, this occurred many times in this area for centuries. Once these recent conflicts were suppressed, there were international efforts to separate the sides and resolve matters. No lustrations and revenge killings followed in any significant proportions during this resolution period. Many accounts, however, suggest that the hatreds were just forced beneath the surface and many of the peoples still live completely segregated. This opens up the possibility that conflict may erupt quickly and at any time and death squads could be used again.

COIN in Afghanistan and Iraq: The Death Squad Dilemma?

In many other counterinsurgency wars since 1992, death squads were not applied at any governmental level. If the Salvadoran model was such a success, then it has not been explained why the model has not been applied in Afghanistan from 2001 to the present, and in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. The U.S. had been involved directly or indirectly in a number of conflicts up to 2001, but Afghanistan and Iraq represented long-term counterinsurgency wars. Despite their initial appearance of conventional warfare, both wars quickly entered the counterinsurgency phase. The U.S. government by all accounts was not prepared for a counterinsurgency war, let alone a long one. This raises the question as to whether the U.S. or native governments will sooner or later relegate itself to contracting out to death squads in order to completely win these conflicts or just to survive. Or, does the U.S. have to be far enough away for plausible deniability? The Salvadoran model suggests that U.S. forces, besides a few advisers, will not be present in any sizeable numbers when death squads are operating in support of a pro-U.S. government. The Phoenix Program in Vietnam had the fog of war, i.e. mass death and destruction to work behind, and was only revealed well after the fact. Moreover, the much publicized 2007 U.S. military counterinsurgency

manual that was headed by General David Petraeus emphasizes ethical and mostly indirect and peaceful means of winning insurgencies.

The 2007 U.S. COIN manual builds upon many past experts and writings such as David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964), which calls for winning the hearts and minds of civilians. Galula, in fact, attributes France's defeat in Algeria to its inability to understand fully that protecting and assisting civilians is a critical element to winning unconventional wars. Galula contradicts sharply the death squad adherents by arguing that the civilian population is both the fuel and intelligence for the enemy's forces. He, thus, says that civilians must be won over in order to deprive the enemy of energy and obtain the necessary information to disrupt and defeat them. Death squads, from Galula's point of view, drive the civilian population into the hands of the enemy and, therefore, must be rejected and prevented by all pro-government forces. Galula recognizes that the size of the general population is far greater than the size of death squad activities and, therefore, must be given much greater value in life than death. France learned the hard way and lost. Galula's writings, however, are still well-read among many COIN experts to this day. General David Petraeus's 2007 COIN manual had Galula written all over it and cites it in the Annotated Bibliography.

Despite the many experts supporting a soft strategy of winning the hearts and minds, there have been many rogue non-government groups and individuals in both Afghanistan and especially in Iraq who have carried out killings and torture. There, however, is no substantial evidence that these were directly in support of the newly established governments. The closest evidence suggests that the U.S., Afghan, and Iraqi governments have used paramilitary forces to assassinate insurgent/terrorist leaders and high-level personnel but not civilian populations or low-level opponents (Jones 2008; Pirnie and O'Connell 2008; Long and Rosenau 2009; Moyar 2009; Tan 2009; et al.). According to Solomon Hughes, many COIN experts feared that the link between death squads and Iraqi security forces

was very real and that the U.S. “was sponsoring a new Phoenix Programme in a desperate effort to head off growing insurgency” (Hughes 2007: 190). Hughes states that U.S. officials “denied that the US was involved in any such sordid business, but at the same time the government was happy to hire a company named after operation Phoenix” (Hughes 2007: 190).

Afghanistan and Iraq raise a number of issues in terms of how long these weak and propped up governments can survive without substantial U.S. military personnel on the ground. Iraq is already having significant violence and is very close to civil war, just a few years after all U.S. troops left. Afghanistan could go down much quicker and more extensively when most/all U.S. troops leave. Will the native governments seek a negotiated settlement with their opponents or will they attempt to go to the extreme in order to survive and possibly win? If the world’s only superpower has for a decade been unable to defeat the insurgents with its own forces, then it suggests that the much weaker native governments may have to go to the extreme in order to stay alive. This highlights the possibility of future death squads, which few people talk about. On the other hand, if these governments do not go all-out to survive, then would the U.S. try to get rid of them and install more compliant and extreme forces similar to what was done with Diem in Vietnam in 1963? Would the U.S. contract out overtly or covertly to native forces or mercenaries to carry out the dirty work? Would the U.S. allow these governments to fall and have these wars end up as failures because it and/or the current native governments were not willing to use extreme measures to win? These are all hypotheticals now but may not be for long. Hughes, in fact, states that many mercenary, i.e. private security, firms like Blackwater (later Xe and now Academe) are ready-made for extreme measures if the price is right and the customers demand it (Hughes 2007: 190-191). Other COIN experts and writings such as Roger Trinquier’s *A French View of Counterinsurgency* (1964) contend that hardcore measures must be taken against insurgents and their supporters in order to win or at

least survive the asymmetrical warfare. Trinquier and others make it clear that governments cannot be moral, weak, indecisive, or sensitive when it comes to fighting counterinsurgencies. They argue that the general population should be protected and won over by positive means as well as by fear. Terrorists and their sympathizers should be terrorized, these COIN experts declare. Yet, there is quite a fine line between a very aggressive COIN strategy as Trinquier and others contend and the potential for human rights abuses. This demonstrates how delicate the matter is between fighting militarily and winning the hearts and minds of the people. Each component is necessary and each could lead to the defeat of the overall COIN policy. How far should a government go in trusting and even arming the general public and to what extent should it draw up the walls of security and coercion to prevent and eliminate enemy supporters, especially in major urban areas. The degrees and methods of government COIN strategy on each front will likely determine whether the majority of the native public sides with the government or the enemy and, eventually, the final outcome of the war.

The Future of Scholarship and International Action

The current circumstances and developing trends in the global system raise a number of provocative questions that scholars need to answer. What type of governments and policymakers make the decision to use death squads. Under what circumstances? For what reasons? For how long and to what extent? Does a moral or political standard exist to justify death squads? What type of mental framework is needed to order death squads, look the other way, and actually be the person directly carrying out the killings? These are a number of questions that scholars have only started trying to answer in order to understand fully the use of death squads.

Direct interviews with death squad members and policymakers would contribute greatly to our understanding of the formulation and implementation of death squads. So far, there have not been any direct interviews with death squad members and decision makers.

Mazzei (2009) came close but veered off by just contacting a few individuals indirectly associated with death squads in El Salvador. This would give us a much better and thorough benchmark for predicting and anticipating the use of death squads in specific locations and circumstances. And, it would give us a clearer picture of what types of international organization(s) and forces would be necessary to deter and stop death squad proponents. In other words, what type of international structure and force would be taken seriously by potential death squad actors in order to deter them? What needs to change and be added to the anti-death squad/genocide equation to prevent mass murder from happening? It may be difficult to swallow for many scholars and it may be terrifying for some to be seated next to a death squad member or initiator, but it would offer us a tremendous insight into the minds and decision making processes of the primary culprits themselves. Then, collecting direct interviews from multiple cases could be used to form a theoretical structure and conceptual operationalization of death squads. And this, in turn, can be used to create a real-world international organization and force that would be best in preventing death squad behavior. In sum, scholars need to take it to the next level and go right to the heart of the fire, the death squad members themselves, in order to understand fully death squads and translate the knowledge and insight into practical applications to prevent further uses.

The current Afghan and Iraqi governments have apparently said “no” to death squads up to this point. Will this continue to last? And, will the death squad option be placed on the policymaking agenda if either of the two governments appears on the verge of collapsing? Understanding the root causes and sustained application of death squads may go a long way in helping us prevent the possible future downturn towards death squads in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as elsewhere. It, thus, is critical for scholars and others to work with political, military, and other leaders in helping to establish both a

domestic and international structure and process for deterring and, if necessary, stopping death squads.

Creating international military quick-reaction forces would be a bold step in the right direction. These military forces could be autonomous and be capable of global deployments. They could have sufficient firepower (on the ground and in the air) to stop genocide. Furthermore, civilian mass accompaniment groups (a possible expansion of the individual Peace Brigades International operations into divisions, which will monitor and protect cities, villages, and large groups instead of just individuals) could be a very effective non-governmental method to help detect the buildup of death squads by having a substantial number of monitors on the ground and with the potential targets. Moreover, legally binding other countries in a convention on anti-death squads would allow an international force to have an unobstructed and independent ability to intervene immediately in any location throughout the world to stop death squads. No country should be able to prevent or veto the use of global forces to stop genocide and other atrocities. This international treaty and structure would provide the necessary credibility that may deter death squads from even happening. But, as long as an international convention does not exist, the international community cannot be taken seriously by many countries, as Rwanda and Sudan demonstrated.

In all, much more constructive forces and processes must be established to make significant progress on the matter. Deterrence, prevention, and if all else fails, stoppage of death squads should be a top priority of the international community. So far, there is no established structure and force in the world whose primary duty is to prevent death squads. Until this changes, death squads will continue in all likelihood. Scholars should lead the way in promoting a fundamental transformation in the world to end death squads. They should focus on establishing a framework and process for bringing together the international community and, then, forming the necessary regime and power to effectively stop death squads once

and for all. They and others also must encourage their governments to sign-on to this effort. There should be intense criticism and public shaming of those governments who oppose such an international and completely autonomous force to stop death squads. In the end, this may lead truly to a new world order, one without death squads, and one where millions of lives will be saved. The Obama Administration created recently a board specifically to monitor potential developments of genocide and other atrocities. It is a start, although it does not seem to be more than a small office to coordinate a number of U.S. executive departments and others who will follow the lead of the President. Much more needs to be done on the international level and a complete commitment to international justice and the prevention of genocide/atrocities should be signed, empowered, and enforced legally by global forces and should not be contingent on the approval of one country's political leader.

Finally, the U.S.'s economy needs to be taken into account in the death squads equation. The worse the U.S. economic situation gets in terms of debt and long-term stagnation, the more extreme measures may have to be considered to maintain the current international system. This raises a number of issues as to the growing possibility that the Salvadoran model may be introduced sooner or later in the Middle East and elsewhere (in some form or another) as America's power continues to wane and other threats emerge to challenge it elsewhere. This may be a desperate alternative measure but one that American policymakers may be inclined increasingly to use instead of large-scale U.S. military forces or re-implementing the draft. And, given how vulnerable the international economic system is in many parts of the world, extreme means may be a quick decision for some policymakers and corporate executives in order to keep the strategic commodities and minerals flowing to the advanced industrialized world. If current trends continue, then the end of history and the age of democratic peace could all have been a temporary transition to a new and much more dangerous world in which death squads may become a more common tool for fighting, surviving, and possibly

winning conflicts, as well as maintaining the existing economic order. Time is about to reveal the answer.

Conclusion

Overall, the scholarly literature on death squads has been relatively sparse. The theoretical and conceptual foundations have just been laid down on extrajudicial killings, but the very root causes of individuals initiating and sustaining death squads are still in question, especially from an academic point of view. Much more needs to be done to analyze and evaluate the use of death squads and the potential means to deter and, at last resort, stop them. The more discussion we have, the better our understanding and predictive powers. The more scholarly research, the more likely for preemptive and preventive measures to be developed. Up to now, relatively few scholars and works have been focused on death squads. This has been surprising and very unfortunate. Considering the potential consequences, it seems that this is would be a critical and urgent issue within the scholarly and political fields. The research up to now indicates otherwise. And, the ability to translate and magnify the scholarly works to the general domestic and international publics is even more imperative. George Clooney and other celebrities should not be the sole and primary means for getting out the message on death squads and their repulsiveness, let alone the ones to rely on for advocating international action against death squad activities.

To the present, the scholarly research has been divided up and very limited and interspersed. There must be more consistency and regularity, let alone comprehensiveness on the issue of death squads. Furthermore, much more needs to be done to combine the human rights field with the military counterinsurgency wing. For too long, there has been a major gulf between the two sides and this has undermined the overall goal of a complete understanding of and solution to death squads. Galula, and Trinquier tried to stress this as far back as 1964. Petraeus and others have tried to do so recently. Much more needs to be done and in a much better way that

translates into real-world results and successes. And, a lot more needs to be pursued in terms of how future energy policies and security needs will relate to the potential uses of death squads and other paramilitary activities around the world. This involves analyzing the likelihood of government and multi-national corporations possibly using or subcontracting out to death squads (aka paramilitary units, mercenaries, etc.) with international impunity and what can be done to prevent or stop it. The fact that private security firms had been given immunity from prosecution in Iraq, while U.S. forces were there, and elsewhere despite their egregious behavior should be noted and international law should be changed accordingly. This is a start but the enforcement mechanisms must be created to support such international law and civilized behavior.

In the end, there is a wide open field to apply scholarly research techniques and concepts to the death squads issue. Scholars and others can play a significant role in trying to help prevent the future uses of death squads. These efforts may be absolutely critical. Many more people should be motivated to move in the direction of prevention of rather than the all-too-often reaction to death squads. Let us hope that scholars and others will look forward instead of backwards and make every effort to reduce the chances of future death squad activities. There is much more to learn. And, there is much more to be done on an individual, national, and international basis. Only strong and effective measures can deter or stop death squads. All levels must be on the same page and understanding. There must be a willingness to engage the issue head on and do what is necessary to construct a permanent and powerful structure to ensure that death squads are relegated to history. The UN and other international organizations should take the lead in promoting the establishment of such a structure that is veto-proof. Thousands of highly trained and mobile troops along with a well-trained humanitarian contingent should be developed for this anti-death squads/genocide system. The international community is capable of carrying out the mission. The question is whether the sufficient

numbers and powers are willing to do so. This is the key question that hangs in the balance. Many, many lives are waiting to see what the answer is. Let us hope that the decision is made sooner rather than later. Everyone at all levels can play a significant role in promoting a new international organization for the prevention of death squads and genocide. Scholars have the chance to take the lead and help guide the international community towards a new world order in which death squads and genocide are the thing of the past. Let us move forth from here and hope that the winds of peace take us to this new place of freedom and humanity.

Bibliography

- Al-Baddawy, Alison and John Mackinlay.2008. Rethinking Counterinsurgency. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Amnesty International. www.amnesty.org.
- Amnesty International.1988.*El Salvador: 'Death Squads'—A Government Strategy*. London: Amnesty International Publications.
- Arnold, James R.2009.*Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.
- Bregman, Ahron, ed.2008.*Warfare in the Middle East Since 1945*.Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Campbell, Bruce B. and Arthur D. Brenner, eds.2000.*Death Squads in Global Perspective: Murder with Deniability*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Downes, Alexander B.2008.*Targeting Civilians in War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Galula, David.2006.*Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Foreword by John A. Nagl. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Hammes, Thomas X.2004.*The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*.St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press.
- Horne, Alistair.2006.*A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*.New York: NYRB, 2006.
- Hughes, Solomon.2007.*War on Terror, Inc.: Corporate Profiteering from the Politics of Fear*. New York: Verso.
- Human Rights Watch.www.hrw.org.

- Jones, Seth G. 2008. *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- . 2009. *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Klare, Michael T. and Peter Kornbluh, eds. 1988. *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Long, Austin and William Rosenau. 2009. *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Malkasian, Carter, and Daniel Marston, eds. 2008. *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*. New York: Osprey Publishing.
- Mazzei, Julie. 2009. *Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces? How Paramilitary Groups Emerge And Challenge Democracy in Latin America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Moyar, Mark. 2009. *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*. Foreword by Donald Kagan and Frederick Kagan. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Parsons, William S. and Samuel Totten, eds. 2009. *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*. Third Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Pirnie, Bruce R. and Edward O'Connell. 2008. *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006)*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Runningen, Roger. 2011. "Obama Sets Up Board, Steps to Prevent Mass Atrocities." *Plain Dealer*, August 5, 2011, A4.
- Shackley, Theodore. 1981. *The Third Option: An American View of Counterinsurgency Operations*. New York: Dell Publishing.
- Shafer, D. Michael. 1989. *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sriram, Chandra Lekha, Olga Martin-Ortega, and Johanna Herman. 2010. *War, Conflict and Human Rights: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Summers, Harry G. 1995. *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press.

- Tan, Andrew T. H. 2009. *U.S. Strategy Against Global Terrorism: How It Evolved, Why It Failed, and Where It Is Headed*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Trinquier, Roger. 2006. *A French View of Counterinsurgency*. Foreword by Eliot A. Cohen. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Ucko, David H. 2009. *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Foreword by Lt. Col. John A. Nagl. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- United Nations. www.un.org.
- United States Government. 2007. *United States Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*. Forewords by General David H. Petraeus, Lt. General James F. Amos, and Lt. Colonel John A. Nagl. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Watson, Roland. 2005. "El Salvador-Style 'Death Squads' to be Deployed by US Against Iraq Militants." *The Times*. January 10, 2005.
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_america/article410491.ece (accessed September 13, 2010).
- Zartman, I. William, ed. 1995. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.