

Into the quagmire

MANUFACTURING TERRORISM

When Governments Use Fear to Justify Foreign Wars and Control Society

T. J. Coles

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One of the most influential books published in the English-speaking world since the Millennium was James Bamford's 2001 *Body of Secrets* about the NSA. Although it attracted little attention initially, a nine page section about Operation Northwoods was noticed by the 9/11 sceptics. Northwoods was a 1962 Pentagon plan to commit a terrorist atrocity and blame it on Cuba, to provide the pretext for another invasion of the island.¹ Subsequently, that short section has had a major influence on many of those studying the activities of the contemporary secret state. If the American state was capable of this, what else has it – and others – been doing? Since Bamford revealed Operation Northwoods people look at terrorist atrocities and ask themselves: Who really did this? Who benefits? Is this a false flag operation? Mr Coles² is one of those people and the suspicion that we might be being conned by states' secret arms pervades his new book.

There is a chapter on 'false flags' – for which Northwoods is the exemplar – but which is almost entirely about the post-WW2 Gladio network in Europe and contains nothing about the UK; there is one on proxies, his 'second step in the manufacture of terrorism', which discusses US and/or UK sponsorship of

¹ Defense Secretary McNamara apparently rejected the plan.

The Northwoods documents can be seen at https://www.maryferrell.org/pages/Operation_Northwoods.html. It is just possible that the rejection of Northwoods led to the CIA plan to stage a phoney assassination attempt on JFK, which has been described by fringe participant, the late Chauncey Holt in his memoir. I reviewed this at the end of <https://tinyurl.com/y3q5c29o> or <https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster71/lob71-jfk-three-tramps.pdf>.

² The author has essays in *Lobsters* 67 and 68; and in issue 72 I reviewed an earlier book of his, *Britain's Secret Wars*, at <https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster72/lob72-britains-secret-wars.pdf>.

terrorists in Libya and Syria; and one on blowback – the unintended domestic consequences of imperial adventures.

There is also a chapter on simulations, faking an event. He discusses the Boston marathon bombing, which killed three people and injured hundreds more. He wonders about the identification of the two alleged bombers and tells us about a previous exercise conducted in Boston to deal with a bombing. Here it gets fuzzy. Even though the first version of the exercise was conducted a year before the actual bombings and the second version was not due until a month after the marathon, Coles reports someone who says that after the actual bombing, a voice on the PA system kept telling people that it wasn't real, just a drill. Why is this of interest? Because, although Coles doesn't refer to it, there is a body of conspiratorial research round the Boston bombing which believes the bombings didn't take place, were faked.

He does something similar with the 7/7 bombings, describing anti-terrorism/crisis management exercises conducted in London, which presumed a bombing on the Tube – as happened on 7/7. One such theoretical exercise was being conducted by a former policeman, Peter Power, when the 7/7 bombings took place. In Power's exercise the three Tube stations he *imagined* being bombed were those *actually* being bombed. Coles reports this and the conclusion of the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee that it was just a striking coincidence. It certainly was. How do we know about the Power exercise? Because Power phoned into Radio 5 Live to report it after the bombings took place. I heard his call. He was stunned by the coincidence.

So why tell us in detail about these two incidents? Describing the anti-terrorism exercises – in a chapter about faking an event – enables Coles to titillate our suspicions without committing himself to the absurd theories which surround Boston and 7/7.

Coles' central interest is in

' . . . terrorism attributed to Muslim extremists ("Islamic terror"). It is also about the incomparably greater violence of the state, both the state in general and its hidden hand in terrorism.'

Yes, the state has used 'incomparably greater violence' against Muslim countries than we have experienced in the UK. But has the state's 'hidden hand in terrorism' been greater than Muslim violence in this country? Has state-sponsored or state-manipulated terror in the UK been greater than what we might call spontaneous or authentic Muslim violence?

There is no question that some of the Jihadi attacks in this country have been carried out by people with whom the British state was in contact. As Craig Murray has pointed out:

‘. . . the Royal Navy had evacuated the Manchester bomber en route back to the UK after his Western backed terrorist jaunt in Libya; . . . the Manchester, Westminster and London Bridge terrorists all had extensive pre-existing relationships with the British security services. . . .’³

And that identifies the central issues: the role of the secret arms of the British state which, while apparently trying to prevent ‘terrorism’ here, use some of the same ‘terrorists’ in foreign policy adventures in the Middle East and elsewhere. But is there evidence of more than that? Not that I can see. What we do have is evidence of conflict within the state. The police’s desire to arrest individuals has been frustrated by MI5’s desire to monitor and recruit them; and occasionally this is complicated further by MI6’s desire to use them in their operations alongside the Americans.

The author is much more certain about some things than I would be. For example, this on p. 6:

‘Compare this to the WTC [World Trade Centre] bombing in 1993: there is unanimous agreement that an FBI-produced bomb was used in a sting operation which resulted in an act of terrorism being allowed to take place.’

‘Unanimous agreement that an FBI-produced bomb was used’? That simply is not true. There is wide agreement – from *New York Times* to the conspiratorial fringes – that the FBI mishandled the situation when they had an informant inside the bomb plot. Beyond that it gets very murky, very quickly.⁴

And there is this on p. 65: ‘. . . Home Secretary Theresa May’s “open door” policy for jihadis, circa 2011 to 2012, when Britain was facilitating the wars in Libya and Syria.’

An open door? At that point in the text there is footnote 195. This leads to a piece by Nafeez Ahmed,⁵ which, in turn, cites a report in *Middle East Eye*, headlined “Sorted” by MI5: How UK government sent British-Libyans to fight Gaddafi’. Its first sentence is:

‘The British government operated an “open door” policy that allowed Libyan exiles and British-Libyan citizens to join the 2011 uprising that

³ <<https://tinyurl.com/y3kxe3pg>> or <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2019/03/pure-ten-points-i-just-cant-believe-about-the-official-skripal-narrative/>>

⁴ See, for example, <<https://tinyurl.com/y62pj4k5>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/28/nyregion/tapes-depict-proposal-to-thwart-bomb-used-in-trade-center-blast.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1>>

⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/yd5btja8>> or <<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/isis-recruiter-who-radicalised-london-bridge-attackers-was-protected-by-mi5-232998ab6421>>

toppled Muammar Gaddafi even though some had been subject to counter-terrorism control orders. . . .'⁶

So: the original source, *Middle East Eye* – which is reliable – reported there was an 'open door' policy for British-Libyans to *leave the UK to go to Libya*, not that there was 'an "open door" policy for jihadis'.

Coles states that Ramadan Abedi – the father of Manchester Arena suicide bomber Salman Abedi – was 'a paid MI6 operative' (p. 62) but offers no citation for the claim. Mark Curtis, working the same material, writes:

'Ramadan Abedi is believed to have been a prominent member of the LIFG, which he joined in 1994. This was two years before MI6 covertly supported the LIFG in an attempt to assassinate Gaddafi, an operation initially revealed by former MI5 officer, David Shayler. At the time MI6 handed over money for the coup attempt, the LIFG was an affiliate of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, and LIFG leaders had various connections to his terror network.'⁷

Another source, *Intel Today*,⁸ quotes David Shayler as believing that Ramadan Abedi was an MI6 asset codenamed Tunworth.⁹ Since Shayler was on the Libya desk in MI5 at the time, his opinion on this is to be taken seriously¹⁰ and it seems very likely that the Manchester bomber's father had been working with MI6 against Gaddafi.

And then there are Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada. On p. 58 we are told that Abu Qatada was an 'MI5 asset' and Abu Hamza was an 'MI6 asset'. Two journalists, David Rose and Richard Norton-Taylor, with access to the British spooks, reported that MI5 initially viewed Abu Qatada as 'all mouth' (Norton

⁶ See <<https://tinyurl.com/y42sbmfv>> or <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sorted-mi5-how-uk-government-sent-british-libyans-fight-gaddafi>>

⁷ 'What will be the blowback for UK government after Libya revelations?' <<https://tinyurl.com/y6g7gjop>> or <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/what-will-be-blowback-uk-government-after-libya-revelations>>

⁸ Produced by Ludwig De Braeckeleer, who has an entry on Wikispooks <https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Ludwig_De_Braeckeleer>. See also <https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Intel_Today> .

⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y4b82amo>> or <<https://gosint.wordpress.com/2018/05/29/uk-is-the-father-of-the-manchester-bomber-a-mi6-asset/>>

¹⁰ Shayler's whistle-blowing partner at the time, Annie Machon, discusses 'Tunworth' in her *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers* (Sussex: The Book Guild, 2005), chapter 10, but was legally prevented from naming him.

Taylor)¹¹ and both Kamza and Qatada as 'harmless rent-a-gobs' (Rose).¹² But, as for Abu Qatada's connection to MI5, there is one story in *The Times*, dramatically headlined 'Al-Qaeda cleric exposed as an MI5 double agent'.¹³ The text, however, does not justify the headline, saying:

'Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the United States and Jordan all asked to question Abu Qatada about his links to al-Qaeda but were refused.

Instead, MI5 agents held three meetings with the cleric, who bragged of his influence among young Islamic militants and insisted that they were no risk to Britain's national security.

He pledged to MI5 that he would not "bite the hand that fed him".

He also promised to "report anyone damaging the interests of this country". Instead, he was recruiting for al-Qaeda training camps.'

The claim that Hamza was an 'MI6 asset' has footnote 157 next to it. That is a piece in the *Daily Mail* which does *not* say that Hamza was an MI6 asset.¹⁴ During Abu Hamza's trial in the United States his lawyer claimed that Hamza 'secretly worked for MI5' – not MI6 – to 'keep streets of London safe'.¹⁵ That Hamza also met MI5 is true.

'Special Branch, the intelligence-gathering arm of Scotland Yard, had been talking to Abu Hamza since early 1997, when he was still preaching in Luton. In the classified records of the meetings he is referred to by the codename "damson berry". Unknown to the police, MI5 had also begun meeting Abu Hamza at the behest of French intelligence; he was given the MI5 code number 910. . . Confidential memos of meetings between the imam of Finsbury Park and his MI5 and Special Branch contacts reveal a respectful, polite and often cooperative relationship. There were at least seven meetings between Abu Hamza and MI5 officers between 1997 and

¹¹ <<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2012/jan/17/why-abu-qatada-cant-be-tried-here>>

¹² <<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/09/mi6-mi5-intelligence-briefings>>

¹³ Originally at <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-3-1050175,00.html>> which is behind a paywall but is reproduced at <http://physics911.net/pdf/timesonlinecouk_013105017500.pdf>.

¹⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/y6pnkoye>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2902801/Charlie-Hebdo-One-Paris-attack-suspects-mentored-terrorist-linked-notorious-Finsbury-Park-mosque-London.html>> Nor does Daily Mail + Abu Hamza + MI6 produce anything from Google.

¹⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/yxpl2unc>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/10814816/Abu-Hamza-secretly-worked-for-MI5-to-keep-streets-of-London-safe.html>>

2000.¹⁶

So: Hamza and Qatada met MI5 and/or Special Branch, and, by the sounds of it, both men assured the British state that they were not a threat etc. They did so hoping to be left alone – which they were for a time – while they recruited young men for jihadi causes. Richard Barrett, head of counter-terrorism at MI6 during Hamza's time as imam of Finsbury Park mosque, said of him during his trial in the U.S.:

'At first, Hamza was regarded as bit of a buffoon, but it was thought that nobody would take him seriously. That viewed [sic] changed over time as his connections with foreign extremists in places like Yemen and Afghanistan became clear and he built up a group of very dedicated followers. He was deliberately trying to skate on the edge of legality and he was very sharp in identifying the limits of the law.'¹⁷

A number of British Islamists may have been recruited by MI5 or MI6 but that, in itself, tells us nothing sinister. This is S.O.P.. If some of those 'assets' remained Islamists, despite being recruited, this would also tell us nothing. As Coles points out, in Northern Ireland the Republican movement was eventually penetrated from top to bottom and still functioned.¹⁸ The question here is: how much more destructive would the Republicans and the Islamists have been had they not been penetrated by the British state?

The central issue is to what extent are the British state's anti-terrorism personnel encouraging or even promoting terrorism. For this is what is happening in the U.S.: state and local authorities, but mostly the FBI, are essentially creating Islamic terrorists – are, in the title of this book, manufacturing terrorism. Trevor Aaronson notes:

'Of 508 defendants prosecuted in federal terrorism-related cases in the decade after 9/11, 243 were involved with an FBI informant, while 158 were the targets of sting operations.'¹⁹

¹⁶ <<https://tinyurl.com/y36a77gw>> or <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-nafeez-mosaddeq-ahmed/extradition-a-victory-for_b_1912918.html?>>. This is *Huffington Post* quoting Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The Suicide Factory* (London: Harper Perennial, 2010) (p. 229).

¹⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/y3ex6lne>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10841226/Abu-Hamza-guilty-former-MI6-chief-denies-cleric-was-informant.html>>

¹⁸ Looking at this penetration of the IRA Coles writes (p. 112): 'The anti-British IRA ended up as a quasi-proxy of the British state which played a deadly divide and rule game with the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland.' This, surely, is overstating it.

¹⁹ Trevor Aaronson, 'How the FBI created a terrorist' at <<https://theintercept.com/2015/03/16/howthefbicreatedaterrorist/>>.

Of that kind of operation there is little evidence in the UK.²⁰ The US and UK situations are not comparable. The UK has a significant Muslim population, some of whom support jihad. MI5 is having to monitor substantial numbers of actual or potential jihadis in the UK.²¹ Proportionally the U.S. has a much smaller Muslim population than the UK.²² Nevertheless, post 9/11 the U.S. created a large structure to detect what essentially is not there – domestic Muslim terrorism. Unable to acknowledge the minuscule nature of the domestic threat, that structure creates something to justify the budget it receives and the careers it is sustaining. Hence all the operations described by Trevor Aaronson and others.²³

The book's title refers to 'manufacturing'. You don't manufacture by accident. It requires intention. What Coles doesn't do is show that intent – at least not in this country. He infers it and presumes it but the evidence isn't there. Nonetheless, this is an interesting read, even with my reservations. And others think highly of it. The front cover carries this comment from former CIA counterterrorism officer John Kiriakou: 'This book should be required reading, not just in colleges and universities, but in every organization in the international intelligence and law enforcement communities.'

Coles does show, as others – such as Mark Curtis – have done, that HMG's policy of tagging along with the Americans has been disastrous in the last 20 years or so. The real authors of the Manchester Arena and 7/7 bombings are Tony Blair and the rest of the Cabinet who allowed Blair to play the role of George W. Bush's loyal flunky and so generated this 'blowback'.

²⁰ But see Nick Must's 'How viable was the 'ISIS-inspired Theresa May murder plot?' at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster76/lob76-south-of-the-border.pdf>> and the case of Lewis Ludlow, 'the Oxford Street terror plotter' at <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47458354>>. Thanks to Nick Must for these examples.

²¹ See for example, <<https://tinyurl.com/yxs46s5a>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/islamist-extremists-uk-highest-number-europe-25000-terror-threat-eu-official-isis-islam-britain-a7923966.html>>.

²² Muslims are less than 1% of the U.S. population. In the UK they are 5%.

²³ See, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/yxkhjmdm>> or <<https://www.businessinsider.com/fbi-is-manufacturing-terrorism-cases-2016-6?r=US&IR=T>>.