

# The Politics of Bombing: Wholesale, Retail and Improvised

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*Bombs, domestic and foreign, are defining the nature of politics in the United States, the European Union and among radical Islamist groups and individuals. The scale and scope of bomb-politics varies with the practitioner. 'Wholesale bombers' are state actors, who engage in large-scale, long-term bombing designed to destroy adversary governments or movements. 'Retail bombers' are groups or individuals engaging in small-scale, sporadic bombings, designed to provoke fear and secure symbolic outcomes.*

*Apart from planned bombings, there are improvised bombings committed by deranged individuals who engage in suicide attacks without any political backing or coherent purpose.*

*In this paper we will focus on the nature of 'wholesale' and 'retail' bombings, their frequency, political consequences and long-term impact on global political power.*

## Bombing as Everyday Events



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The US and EU are the world's foremost practitioners of '*wholesale bombing*'. They engage in serial attacks against multiple countries without declaring war or introducing their own citizen ground troops. They specialize in indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations – unarmed women, children, elders and non-combatant males. In other words, for the '*wholesale bombers*', unleashing terror on societies is an everyday event.

The US and EU practice 'total war' from the skies, not sparing a single sphere of everyday,

civilian life. They bomb neighborhoods, markets, vital infrastructure, factories, schools and health facilities. The result of their daily, 'ordinary' bombing is the total erasure of the very structures necessary for civilized existence, leading to mass dispossession and the forced migration of millions in search of safety.

It is not surprising that the refugees seek safety in the countries that have destroyed their means of normal existence. The wholesale bombers of the US-EU do not bomb their own cities and citizens – and so millions of the dispossessed are desperate to get in.

Wholesale bomb policies have emerged because prolonged ground wars in the targeted countries evoke strong domestic opposition from their citizens unwilling to accept casualties among US and EU soldiers. Wholesale bombing draws less domestic opposition because the bombers suffer few losses.

At the same time, while mass aerial bombing reduces the political risks of casualties at home, it expands and deepens violent hostility abroad. The mass flight of refugees to US-EU population centers allows the entry of violent combatants who will bring their own version of the total war strategies to the homes of their invaders.

Secular resistance has generally targeted enemy soldiers, whether they are imperial invaders or jihadi mercenaries. Their targets are more focused on the military. But faced with the politics of long-distance, wholesale bombing, the secular opposition becomes ineffective. When the 'secular opposition' diminishes, ethno-religious combatants troops emerge.

The Islamists have taken command of the resistance, adopting their tactics to the imperial policy of total serial wars.

### Retail Bomb-Warfare

Lacking an air force, Islamist terrorists engage in ground wars to counter imperial air wars. Their response to drone warfare, is hand-made improvised bombs, killing hundreds of civilians. Their victims may be decapitated with hand-held swords, rather than computer-controlled missiles. They capture hostile population, committing pillage, torture and rapine, rather than bomb from a distance, to dispossess and drive into exile.

'*Retail bomb*' terrorists are generally decentralized and may be recruited overseas. Their bombs are crude and indiscriminant. But like the *wholesale bombers*, they target population centers and seek to provoke panic and despair among the civilian population.

Islamist '*retail bombers*' seek to expand their range by attacking the home countries of '*wholesale bombers*' – the US and Europe. These attacks are exclusively for propaganda and do not constitute any threat to strategic imperial military targets. They expose the vulnerability of their enemies' civilian population.

While imperial bombers and Islamists bombers have been at war against each other, they have also served as allies of convenience. Several recent examples come to mind.

US-EU '*wholesale bombing*' campaigns against Libya, Syria and Yemen worked in tandem with Islamist mercenary ground fighters. '*Wholesale bombers*' devastated the infrastructure and military installations of the governments of Syria and Libya in support of

advancing Islamist ground troops. In other words, '*wholesale bombings*' are not sufficient to achieve targeted 'regime change', thus the resort to terrorist 'retail bombers' and jihadi 'head choppers' to advance on regional and local targets.

The most blatant recent example of the convergence of imperial wholesale bombers in support of Islamist retail bombers and terrorists was the September 17, 2016 US-EU attack on a Syrian military installation, killing and wounding almost two hundred Syrian soldiers who had been engaged in combat against ISIS terrorists. While Washington claimed that the hours-long aerial bombardment of Syrian government soldiers was a 'mistake', it allowed the jihadi 'retail bombers' to take the offensive and overrun the base. Acting as air-support for ISIS, the US Pentagon effectively shut down any possibility for peace negotiations and sabotaged a fragile ceasefire. This was a major victory for Washington's politics of permanent wholesale bombing and 'regime change'.

Just as the US launched its propaganda and wholesale bombing attack against the Syrian government, an improvised 'retail bombing campaign' was launched in the US - in Manhattan and New Jersey! The latest series of retail bombing attacks in the US led to three dozen, mostly minor, injuries, while the brutal US wholesale bombing of Syrian troops killed over 62 government soldiers and wounded many more. The political impact and consequences of wholesale and retail terror bombings in both regions was highly significant. The US had no more right to launch an air attack on Syrian government troops engaged in defending their country, than the US-based retail terrorist (an Afghan-American) had in planting improvised bombs in US cities. Both actions are illegal.

#### Political Consequences of Bombing Warfare

The US-ISIS coordinated bombing of Syrian soldiers has set the stage for all-out warfare. Peace talks were violently sabotaged by the Obama Administration. Syria and Russia now face the combined forces of ISIS, Turkey and the US with no hope for a negotiated solution. The battle for control of Aleppo will intensify. Russian negotiators have failed to check their cynical American 'allies' in their much-ballyhooed 'war on terror'. They have no choice but to continue to supply air cover for their Syrian government allies.

The US has embraced the Turkish invasion of Syria, betraying both their Kurdish allies and some element among their ISIS partners. Bombing continues to be Washington's main option in the Middle East.

The recent retail terror bombing in the US has the predicted consequence - a mass media whipped into a frenzy of fear mongering. New York City is further militarized. The face of the 'enemy' (a young Afghan-American, whose own father had tried to turn over to the FBI for his jihadi connections) is on a hundred million TV screens continuously. The electoral campaign salivates in anticipation of a terror war for whoever wins the presidency. Blind fear rather than concrete economic demands take the place of political debate.

Immigrants, Muslims and terrorists replace Wall Street tax evaders, profiteers and speculators as the villains in a country mired in economic and social crises. Economic policies, which have created mass insecurity and misery, are obscured by the militarist rhetoric.

Militarism, war and wholesale bombing replace the incremental advances in improving peaceful productive relations with Cuba and Iran.

the politics of bombing, as a strategy and way-of-life affects domestic and foreign policy . . . even as the vast majority of American voters look for alternatives, for jobs, housing, and education and seek to live without fear and threats.

Wholesale wars lead to retail wars. Overseas bombs lead to bombs at home. Invasions and occupations provoke outrage and retaliation. The answer is not to do unto others what you don't want done on yourself.

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