



Humane

The New Face of War

SAMUEL MOYN

two weddings



...and a funeral?



what is wrong (if anything is) with America's war on terror since 9/11?

- ▶ standard answer: inhumanity
- ▶ from a legal perspective, norms governing the conduct of hostilities have been institutionalized since the middle of George W. Bush's administration (with lots of dispute about how well); in comparison, norms governing the initiation and continuation of hostilities – statutory, constitutional, international – have not fared as well

Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians from US Drone Practices in Pakistan

THE UNCOUNTED

By AZMAT KHAN and ANAND GOPAL NOV. 16, 2017

alternative possibility

- ▶ what if what is wrong is war's increasing humanity – or, more exactly, its humanity may have abetted the fact that it lacks limits in time and often space?

forms of US war since 9/11

- ▶ heavy-footprint intervention (Afghanistan/Iraq)
- ▶ proxy war (Syria/Yemen)
- ▶ light or no-footprint counterterror
- ▶ -drones
- ▶ -special forces (150 countries in 2018)

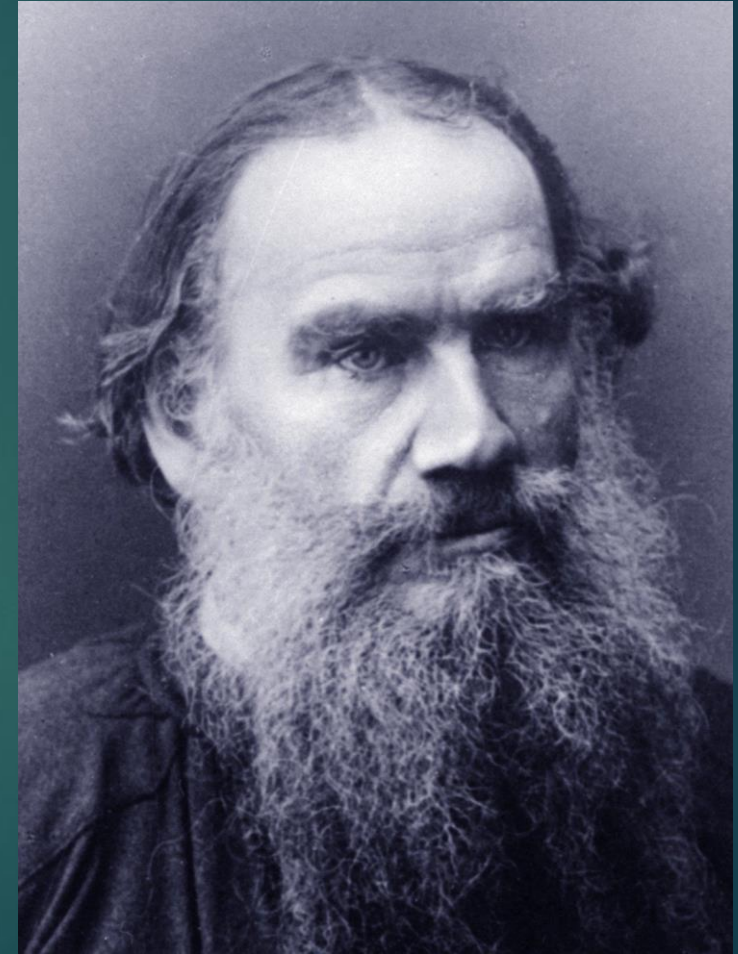
U.S. Special Forces Deployed To 70% Of The World In 2016

Countries where U.S. special operations forces conducted operations in 2016*



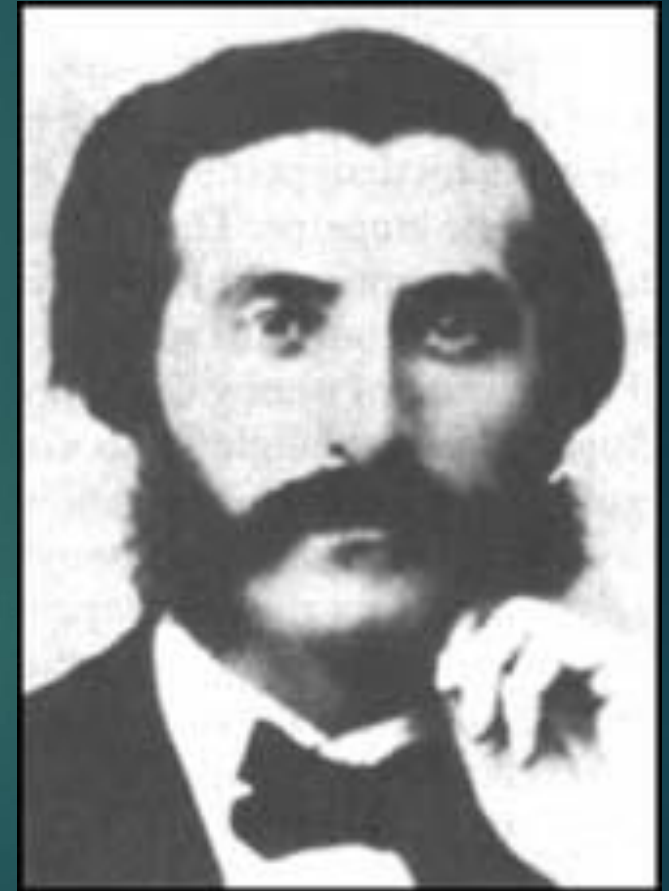
Leo Tolstoy

- ▶ Prince Andrei: "What I would do if I had power ... would be not to take prisoners. ... That change alone would transform the whole aspect of war and make it less cruel. ... If there were none of this playing at generosity in warfare, we should never go to war, except for something worth facing certain death for ... But playing at war, that's what's vile; and playing at magnanimity and the rest of it. ... They talk of the laws of warfare ... and humanity to the wounded, and so on. That's all rubbish."



the Red Cross and the law of war

- ▶ humanizing war as indirectly abolishing it (?): “The [Geneva] Convention has furnished an argument in favor of the brotherhood of men. Recognizing that after all they belong to the same family, men have concluded that they ought to begin by showing some regard for one another’s suffering, pending a time when a still stronger conviction of their common humanity shall lead them to understand that the very idea of killing one another in war is monstrous. ... The humanization of war could only end in its abolition.”



comparative abolitions

- ▶ abolishing v. “ameliorating” chattel slavery: “Who does not know that slavery is an evil? But men are not yet ripe for freedom, and liberation will produce horrible disasters’ — men use to say concerning slavery, forty years ago.”
- ▶ animal slaughter: law regulating the conduct of hostilities like “the magnanimity and sensibility of the lady who turns sick at the sight of a slaughtered calf — she is so kind-hearted she cannot see blood — but eats fricasseed veal with a very good appetite.”
- ▶ capital punishment

“humanity” in slaughter

Tolstoy: law regulating the conduct of hostilities like “the magnanimity and sensibility of the lady who turns sick at the sight of a slaughtered calf — she is so kind-hearted she cannot see blood — but eats fricasseed veal with a very good appetite.”

Pachirat: “If aerial bombardments — and unmanned US Air Force drones in particular — serve as an exemplar of ... distancing at its most technologically supreme, the brute, physical materiality of the [walls] of the industrialized slaughterhouse offers a stark reminder of how basic technologies of distancing — a wall, a mirror, a checkpoint, a gate — can operate effectively even at close range.”



limits of Tolstoy's analogy

- ▶ infliction of pain and suffering on non-human v. human animals
- ▶ experimenting with removing killing from war – including of combatants

implications

- ▶ Tolstoy's implications: don't make war (slavery, animal slaughter, death penalty) more humane unless you want to risk entrenching it
- ▶ our implications: counteract the possible risk that humanizing war helps entrench and legitimate it, thus making it harder to end

a tale of three presidents



My Lai (1969) v. Abu Ghraib (2004)

1st Photos of Viet Mass Slaying

WEATHER
Snow flurries and
colder today.
High in the upper 20s.
Details on Page 5-C.

THE PLAIN DEALER

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER
CLEVELAND, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1969

FINAL
Stocks & Races
Dow-Jones off 5.21

128TH YEAR—NO. 324 * * * * * 96 PAGES 10 CENTS



Exclusive

This photograph will shock Americans as it shocked the editors and the staff of The Plain Dealer. It was taken by a young Cleveland area man while serving as a photographer with the U.S. Army in South Vietnam.

It was taken during the attack by American soldiers on the South Vietnamese village My Lai, an attack which has made world headlines in recent days with disclosures of mass killings allegedly at the hands of American soldiers.

This photograph and others on two special pages are the first to be published anywhere of the killings.

This particular picture shows a clump of bodies of South Vietnamese civilians which includes women and children. Why they were killed raises one of the most momentous questions of the war in Vietnam.

**Cameraman
Saw GIs Slay
100 Villagers**

By JOSEPH ESZTERHAS
(c) 1969, The Plain Dealer

A clump of bodies on a road in South Vietnam.



analogies:
horror/shock
mobilization
disanalogies:
antiwar v. antiatrocity
results

multicausal endlessness

- ▶ objective persistence of threat
- ▶ distance of American public
- ▶ lack of exposure of American public (draft)
- ▶ limited exposure of Americans soldiers—esp. after move to light- or no footprint war
- ▶ changing toll for American soldiers: more wounded (1 dead: 4 wounded for much of history, now 1: 10)
- ▶ less visible financing
- ▶ humanity?

current political context

- ▶ very unpromising?
- ▶ but last two presidents have run as antiwar candidates (of some kind or other) – reflecting popular fatigue with endless war
- ▶ Trump
- ▶ how do activists pick their battles – to make endless war more humane rather than addressing those norms (statutory, constitutional, international) that challenge it?



humane control

