5. Spectacles of the Shopping Mall

Over the four days of al-Shabaab's Westgate Mall attacks, the movements of the terrorists and their victims were captured on a multitude of recording devices, including by over 100 CCTV cameras, and scores of personal phone cameras, and news cameras. Audiences all over the world watched as corporate media networks competed for minute-by-minute scoops, as al-Shabaab announced the success of the operation on their social media sites,[1] and as government forces entered into the fray, also claiming victory.[2] International audiences watched as the mall became a microcosm for the intersection of international terrorism, corporate news networks, and the military-industrial complex, as each attempted to grapple with the events and take control of the emerging narrative. All these elements coalesced, turning the tragedy into one of the most viewed—and sustained—media spectacles of recent times, with footage being constantly broadcast over the four days of the attack, and for some time after.

In addition to inflicting mass casualties, with the increasing availability of, and access to, information and communication technologies, even poorly-equipped and poorly-funded terrorist organizations can produce media "spectacles" to publicize their ideological messages. Through the media, terrorists wield a power that "is judged not by their actual numbers or violent accomplishments, but by the effect these have on their audience."[3] The casualties resulting from the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the 2013 Westgate Mall attacks, and the 2015 Paris attacks were able to have detrimental effects on international publics, even though these atrocities were perpetrated by a small group of terrorists. The shock of such terrorist spectacles reverberates through corporate media networks as well as through a variety of social media channels.[4] If communication is considered to be at the heart of human activity, then extremist communication is no exception, and terrorist attacks can be read as acts of political commu-

nication. These ideological conflicts are taking place as much in the media as they are on the ground, and, in this sense, "terrorism *is* communication and, as such, is really aimed at the people watching."[5]

The pervasiveness of mobile technology, social media connectivity, and corporate media network competition meant that the Westgate Mall attacks were inevitably turned into a global media spectacle that served both the terrorists, whose message was circulated around the world, and media networks, which were provided audiences and advertising revenues.[6] Because of this interdependence, "the relationship between media and terrorists is often described as a 'symbiosis.'"[7] Corporate news networks compete for audience share often by broadcasting sensationalist information, with terrorist acts providing a steady stream of content—especially for 24 hour news networks. In a perverse paradigmatic shift, "news organizations supply terrorists access to their audiences in exchange for the right to publish information about events that will entice consumers to purchase their products."[8] Similarly, terrorist organizations make full use of information and communication technologies to connect with each other, with other international networks, and, to communicate their various messages to authorities and international audiences. Modern terrorist networks understand the need to create synergies with international news organizations in order for their message to be picked up and disseminated further across media platforms. This has become a relationship of mutual interdependence "since both terrorists and news organizations benefit when information about terrorist attacks is turned into the commodity of news."[9]

Increasingly, the conditions in which news media and entertainment media operate are aligning, especially in cases where the same parent corporation owns both news channels and entertainment channels.[10] Such sharing of business plans and content strategies means that previously unique areas of media are being integrated, making their products similar in style and substance.[11] The fierce competition between media networks is largely a result of the structures in which they operate and the many commercial pressures they face. In order to streamline the operations of media conglomerates, "many top media executives today come from the corporate world, and no longer from the ranks of journalists. They are less sensitive to the quality and truthfulness of pictures. In their eyes, the market for information, the news business, is first and foremost a means of making profits."[12] The ways in which corporate news networks choose to

cover tragic events, such as terrorist attacks, are often "formulated to prolong the salience and news-worthiness of the event. This is done, in part, by frame-changing the evolving news story and by raising controversial issues."[13] Entertainment and "news formats, or the way of selecting, organizing, and presenting information, shape audience assumptions and preferences for certain kinds of information,"[14] and the ways in which news is packaged and presented influences the way audiences are expected to think about an event. It is becoming standard practice for media networks to turn stories into protracted dramas in which "violence is not something to be condemned but to be appropriated,"[15] a key feature of how the Westgate Mall attacks were represented by news networks all over the world.

While the proliferation of alternative sources of information may be regarded as more inclusive, and even more democratic, they remain largely unaccountable to the notion of media ethics. As news media rush to broadcast their latest findings regarding a media-saturated event, they often release not only unverified information, but sensitive pieces of information—ones that could ultimately have consequences for the victims and their families, as well as impacts on steering police operations and terrorist actions in such situations. In many instances, reporters attempting to cover the active Westgate Mall attacks interfered with or influenced police operations. Outside the mall, crowds of reporters gathered and shared a variety of information, footage, and photos, regarding the whereabouts of Kenyan security forces, which may have "endanger[ed] the lives of the responders, and might have contributed to the prolonged siege, as the terrorists received live information detailing the armed response against them and were able to use this information to enhance their response."[16]

Similarly, the media's compromising of victims occurred during the Hyper Cacher supermarket siege in Paris in 2015. A number of media networks, including 24-hour news channel BFMTV, delivered a live broadcast during the siege revealing the location of six people who were hiding in the supermarket's cold room, and endangered their lives in the process. As a result, in the aftermath of the events, victims and their families resorted to suing these channels, arguing that "the working methods of media in real time in this type of situation were tantamount to goading someone to commit a crime."[17] Similarly, in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall attacks, the Media Council of Kenya released a report criticizing media coverage of the events, stating "that journalists, in their bid to report from the scene, breached the Code of Ethics by publishing graphic pictures of

the dead and injured."[18] The Media Council further found that the Kenyan media failed in its duties of informing the public, and made no attempts to give a "historical, cultural and social explanation of terrorism and instead focused on [the] dramatic, most violent, bizarre, tantalising and brutal accounts of the attack magnifying the impact of their horrifying brutality."[19] In an attempt to call for unity in the face of public anger and confusion, the Kenyan government promoted the Twitter hashtag "we are one," which was subsequently subverted into "we are wondering" when no official reports were forthcoming in the aftermath of the attacks.[20] To date, there is still no definitive official report that comprehensively explains the details of the Westgate Mall atrocities.

Digital Media and the Globalization of Terror

The reach of international terrorists extends into new parts of the world with the expansion of globalization processes, the proliferation of information and communication technologies, and extremists' access to these media tools. Terrorists are "no longer geographically constrained within a particular territory, or politically or financially dependent on a particular state, they rely on technologically modern forms of communication" to create global communities and connections.[21] In this sense, terrorism, is "one side of a globalized modernity made possible by advanced technology, geographical mobility, open flows of communication, and the breaking down of territorial divisions."[22]

With the help of media networks, terrorists broadcast their unprecedented efforts at producing content, creating a cache of media texts.[23] Al-Shabaab is adept at digital communication, and delivers its message through a variety of media, including a radio station, Radio Andalus, with presentations and programs delivered in the English language, and its media center, the al-Kataib Foundation for Media Production, regularly produces high quality films and documentaries that are fluent in the visual grammar and cultural codes of professional media texts.[24] In today's media saturated environment, terrorist organizations use the internet as the primary form of communication to release their messages to the world, whether to eager subscribers, to oppositional authorities, or to horrified publics. During the Westgate Mall attacks, al-Shabaab's media, and especially its social media accounts, were operating at full force with multiple and constant communications over the four-day siege.[25] The ter-

rorist group live-tweeted "258 times between September 21 and September 25"[26] in order to claim direct responsibility for the attack, referring to it as the "Westgate spectacle."[27] This was the first time that a terrorist group used Twitter to make such an announcement.[28]

In the aftermath of al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001 attacks, terrorism supporters had to seek out specific clandestine websites in order to express their solidarity, and the terrorist group was beholden to traditional and mainstream media for the global dissemination and recognition of its messages. The form and structure of traditional mass media, including television and newspapers, meant that stories and footage needed to be verified by researchers and fact checkers at these networks. For a story to be publicized largely depended on editors and network owners, and whether they dared to engage in unverified sensationalization, or whether they upheld strict gatekeeping media principles of informing and educating the public. In the early 2000s, al-Qaeda was obliged to fax statements to corporate news networks with a hope that they would be noticed and circulated publicly.[29] Even though some networks responded, other broadcasters were able to simply ignore the extremist message, making it more difficult for supporters to access these pronouncements.[30] In many ways, while traditional media forms still reported on terrorist activities, they served to withhold the circulation of terrorist messages.

With increased accessibility and ubiquity of digital media networks, "social media has changed the dynamic fundamentally. It has eliminated the terrorists' dependency on mainstream media, reversing the relationship by making mainstream media dependent on" terrorist media content.[31] Making full use of information and communication technologies, "terrorists have direct control over the content of their messages by constructing and operating their own websites and online forums, effectively eliminating the 'selection threshold.'"[32] With the advent of digital media networks, all information and communication technology users, whether terrorist or otherwise, gain new controls over the dissemination of their own messages and publicize their own news without having to wait for the necessary permissions from editors and network owners. Those afforded the technological means are able to gain access to international audiences through digital technologies which, in many ways, are "designed to account for the entry of nonstate actors into the fields of war and diplomacy and to describe how information works as a weapon within this extensive field of combat."[33] Social media platforms offer open access to the public

domain and allow for extremist ideologies to be shared with audiences beyond specific support groups of like-minded people. Terrorist ideologies, and "messages posted to social networking sites reach audiences immediately, and are extremely easy to access and redistribute, exponentially multiplying their audience."[34] Where once media was defined by gatekeepers, it is now beset by gatecrashers.

Through digital communication technologies, terrorists and their supporters are able to engage with other audiences on a number of fronts, where the "internet contributes to several activities of terrorist groups, such as fundraising, networking, and coordination, as well as information gathering."[35] Terrorists are able to communicate their messages, to engage in their own research regarding best practices on their violent activities, to educate others in their ideologies, and to build radical global communities of like-minded people.[36] The rise of online extremist activity correlates directly with the rise of digital global networks and access to these technologies. In 1998, there was a total of fifteen officially defined terrorist organizations that had some kind of online presence. In 2005, extremist related online sites mushroomed to over 4,000.[37] Most terrorist organizations use a multitude of digital technologies and are active on a number of media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube, Google Earth, etc.[38] In 2014, the Islamic State terrorist organization even managed to create an Arabic-language Twitter app, translated into English as "The Dawn of Glad Tidings," which posted tweets directly from the group's account to users' personal accounts after soliciting their personal information.[39] The app was seemingly straightforwardly uploaded to Google Play, the official application store for Android mobile devices, and was instantly and easily downloaded by many of the terrorist group's supporters.[40] It was used to channel "40,000 tweets in one day as ISIS marched into the northern Iraqi city of Mosul," making the story "trend" due to the large and sustained volume of online traffic.[41] The application has since been removed by Google.[42] Communication through digital media has become the norm for people all over the world, provided they have access to the means of communication, and terrorist groups are no exception.[43]

Extremists are especially active on the internet as various digital platforms provide the requisite anonymity for their messages to be publicly dispersed, and also shelters these actors from the reach of authorities as they are able to better obscure their identities and locations.[44] The ability

to operate multiple accounts is an integral feature of contemporary social media platforms allowing anyone with access and ability to operate numerous accounts with a high degree of anonymity. When and if an account is reported and shut down, this causes only a temporary disruption, and users are able to easily open alternative accounts. During the Westgate attacks, for example, al-Shabaab used five different Twitter handles.[45] Any time one of these was taken down and made inactive, news media "reporters received an email from the group's press office informing them that they could now follow" a new Twitter handle.[46]

At times when there is an ongoing investigation of suspected terrorist activities, authorities and network owners will deliberately keep these social media platforms and accounts open in order to better monitor the online messages and to gather information regarding the identity and locations of those communicating.[47] Consequently, in many instances, those policing terror and opposing terrorist ideology are "liking," "friending," and "following" known terrorists' Facebook and Twitter accounts, and adding to the audience and follower numbers of extremists. At one point, one of al-Shabaab's Twitter accounts boasted more than 15,000 followers, including journalists and terrorism analysts.[48] Thus, the anonymity afforded by digital media platforms has served to complicate discernable divides between terrorists, their supporters, policing authorities, and inquisitive members of the public.

Information technologies have allowed for both terrorists and antiterrorists to communicate back and forth with each other on a regular basis. Since waging war on the battlefield of the media has become a paramount concern for counter-insurgency operations, government efforts have been targeted at online message battles and promoting a direct counter-narrative to terrorist ideologies. At one time, the traditional stance of authorities was to not deal with terrorists in any way. However, this denial of communication, or even acknowledgement of terrorist messages, is unsustainable in the age of digital communication, significantly changing the paradigm. The US State Department has even created the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), which is a government unit dedicated to communicating with terrorist supporters in an effort to counter their ideologies with alternative messages.[49] In the age of digital media, there has been a crucial transformation in the stance of authorities, with communication at the heart of the contemporary anti-terror strategy.

In order to speak directly to all these disparate audiences, terrorist networks have taken to communicating in a variety of different languages, with an emphasis on English. In this way, terrorists respond to the contemporary tenets of globalization, and especially the global culture promoted by Western power holders. Communication in English belies two different trends. The first is that, since modern terrorist networks are made up of a collection of foreign fighters hailing from a variety of different countries and linguistic backgrounds, English then becomes the common language of communication for these disparate group of actors. The second is that the audiences of terrorist messages, whether willing or unwilling, are also global, and so many of the "official" and centralized terrorist communication channels use English as a unified narrative trend. The Islamic State's Al Hayat Media Center, for example, "is specifically aimed at non-Arabic speakers, particularly younger viewers, and its output is closer to mainstream broadcast standards than" that of any other terrorist group.[50] Similarly, al-Qaeda publishes an English language online magazine called *Inspire*, and factions of the Taliban post English language retorts online with the aim of communicating a message to international audiences and to speak directly to Western authorities.[51]

During the Westgate Mall attacks, al-Shabaab released a barrage of social media messages, mostly in English, with the aim of connecting with, and appealing to, an international audience.[52] During the attacks, many of the messages and tweets emanating from al-Shabaab's social media accounts showed a sophisticated use of the English language with phrases such as "reap the bitter fruits of your harvest,"[53] and "#Westgate: a 14-hour standoff relayed in 1400 rounds of bullets and 140 characters of vengeance."[54] The widespread use of English on social media channels is interesting insofar as it complicates the normative figure of the terrorist—once largely defined as a provincial, regressive other—who now appears more global, connected, and educated, and thus more difficult to define.[55]

Social Media and Personal Narratives

Especially during times of upheaval and unrest, and in emergency situations, reporting on active events, including live reporting on platforms such as Twitter, has become a common feature of online news gathering and dissemination. Most recently, Twitter has proved its importance as the source of breaking news, rather than just an optimal medium for report-

ing breaking news, in what is termed "real time." During the Westgate Mall attacks, Twitter emerged as the main social media accompaniment to the tragedy, and its specific method of communication suited the needs of many of those involved.[56] Twitter was key to relaying short, rapid messages from inside and outside the mall, and, importantly, was the chief communication platform used simultaneously by the terrorists and their supporters, the victims and their families, the local public, the news media, government officials, and international audiences.

Because social media channels allow for a fast and efficient means of communicating news, people from outside and inside the mall were the first to raise the alarm about the unfolding tragedy, with many commenting on the sound of gunshots and explosions. The first public alert that something was amiss at Westgate Mall was relayed through Twitter within minutes of the first explosions by someone from outside the mall at 12:38 pm, a few minutes after al-Shabaab launched the attack.[57] In quick succession, the next few tweets came from people within the mall, directly experiencing the attacks, followed by a barrage of tweets exchanging queries, concerns, fears, prayers, and other snippets of information—both true and false.[58] These user-generated exchanges of information created a matrix of questions and answers regarding events on the ground, and established narratives of the attacks long before the Kenyan authorities and the news media became involved.

During the first few hours of the Westgate Mall attack, it became apparent that not only was there little coordination between the Kenyan security forces on the ground, there was also poor coordination between them on digital communication platforms. The Kenya Police and Kenya Military were new to the platform having "joined Twitter less than ten days prior to the attack,"[59] and many of the government departments were not connected to each other, leading the Ministry of Interior to publicly ask the Kenya Military account to "follow" it back on the second day of the siege. These disorganized attempts at communicating through the platform prompted Twitter itself to ask Kenyan government units to verify their accounts.[60] The National Disaster Operations Centre (NDOC Kenya) was the first government body to tweet about the Westgate attacks at 1:05 pm, and "the first (local) media house to tweet about the incident was K24 TV at 1.11 PM, 33 minutes and 17 seconds after the first tweet."[61] This was followed by a tweet from an international news organization, Associated Press, at 1:15 pm.[62] Thus, ordinary people were the first in the chain of

communication to break the news about what was happening at Westgate Mall, followed by a government unit, then confirmed by a local news network, and, finally, circulated by an international news organization.

After the news about al-Shabaab's Westgate Mall attack became public and was broadcast on local and international news channels the story gained worldwide momentum, and social media channels were abuzz with multiple messages posted by those hiding in the mall, along with those posted by al-Shabaab and their networks in Somalia and abroad, government authorities, emergency responders, and the general publics in Kenya and abroad. Westgate Mall became a site for the production, consumption, and commodification of terror, where corporate news networks, extremists, and government authorities all competed for control of the public story. There was an extraordinary array of messages volleyed back and forth from a variety of perspectives, arguing from a diversity of ideologies, pleading for prayers, asking for assistance, accusing, justifying, boasting, gloating, and informing—and misinforming.

With over 67,849 tweets posted over the four-day attack, the chaotic multiplicity of voices, opinions, and information relayed through Twitter made it increasingly difficult for authorities, terrorists, witnesses, and news networks to maintain a coherent narrative.[63] The PSCU Digital Kenya Twitter account, the official communications channel of the Kenyan Government, tried and failed to control the flow of information, tweeting: "We are appealing to Media to avoid showing photos of our @kdfinfo soldiers. Kindly, Only tweet what you are absolutely sure about #Westgate."[64] In another tweet, "the Kenya Police asked a Twitter user to delete a message that contained pictures of military helicopters preparing to launch an attack on the mall,"[65] and the Kenyan Disaster Operation Center contacted a news channel asking it to delete a story. Through these failed attempts at controlling information, it becomes apparent that in the sphere of digital communication "censorship and regulation are alien to the nature of social media,"[66] and unverified stories receive the same circulation and publicity as official pronouncements, further eroding the concept of media gatekeeping.

Despite the Kenyan government's attempts at separating fact from fiction, it too was guilty of releasing a great deal of false information.[67] Many of the news items released, even though false, were capitalized upon by anti-terror authorities at home and abroad, and were used to align with wider political interests and foreign policy concerns, especially in the for-

mation of the global narrative of the "war on terror." For example, in the aftermath of the attacks, there was an immediate backlash against Somali refugees in Kenya, with the Joint Committee on Administration and National Security, and Defence and Foreign Relations recommending that the Dadaab and Kakuma Refugee Camps "be closed and resident refugees repatriated to their country of origin."[68] The Westgate Mall attacks became a blank slate upon which a multitude of fears were projected. Some of the unsubstantiated information relayed by witnesses, the media, and government sources, included: there were ten to fifteen terrorists; the attackers took hostages and tortured them; one of the terrorists dropped his gun, changed his clothes, and slipped into the crowd of people escaping the mall; and that the terrorists were a coalition of Somalis, Kenyans, and Arabs, led by a white woman.[69] Even Interpol became embroiled in the circling of misinformation and "issued an international arrest notice for Samantha Lewthwaite, a British woman who is the widow of one of four London suicide bombers."[70] When news of Lewthwaite's implication was created through false social media stories and on news networks, it was al-Shabaab who later made the correction, tweeting: "We have an adequate number of young men who are fully committed & we do not employ our sisters in such military operations #Westgate."[71] Thus, through social media platforms, terrorists are afforded the opportunity to directly oppose official pronouncements with their own personal narratives.

Information and communication technologies allow for users to generate their own narratives and social realities, and these same privileges are extended to terrorist organizations and their supporters. Through a variety of online communication platforms and social media campaigns, terrorists "can directly share their positions—on their own terms and in their own words—to shape media coverage of their actions,"[72] even as they perform heinous acts. During the Westgate Mall attacks, al-Shabaab's tweets repeatedly attempted to justify their actions by constantly referring to atrocities perpetrated by Kenyan troops in Somalia. They also attempted to highlight themselves as protagonists taking center stage in the Westgate Mall story by live-tweeting the events,[73] and by announcing a series of heroic justifications, including: "The Mujahideen entered #Westgate Mall today at around noon and are still inside the mall, fighting the #Kenyan Kuffar inside [sic] their own turf."[74] The term "Mujahideen," meaning holy warriors in Arabic, was used repeatedly in al-Shabaab's online postings to imbue the Westgate gunmen with a heroic status. In another tweet

posted on one of al-Shabaab's accounts, the attackers were further hailed as "Westgate Warriors."[75] The seminal phrase coined by Jenkins in 1974 that "terrorism is theater" has never sounded louder than in the contemporary media-saturated environment, where extremists have positioned themselves as protagonists in their own mediated dramas.[76] During the Westgate attacks, al-Shabaab said as much, tweeting that "the mesmeric performance by the #Westgate Warriors was undoubtedly gripping, but despair not folks, that was just the premiere of Act 1."[77]

Commodification of Terror and Media Productions

As with most ideological battles, narrative construction and opposition take center stage, and play out in a variety of available media and digital platforms. Modern terrorist identities are created through a multitude of different media platforms, including self-produced films, social media campaigns, applications, and videogames. Much extremist video footage is expertly filmed, edited, and distributed, and shows a sophisticated understanding of the medium of film, including the use of dramatic license and synchronization of music and image. One al-Qaeda supporter, Younis Tsouli, identifies as "Irhabi007,"[78] meaning Terrorist 007 in Arabic, in order to endow himself with elements of spy thrillers and movie culture. Despite terrorists' outspoken disavowal of the corruptions of Western culture, the connection between popular cultural artifacts such as movies and videogames and terrorist activity can be read in many of their online narratives, and terrorists are fluent in the language of media texts.

In the contemporary era, it has become the norm for terrorists to record themselves before an attack in order to validate their actions and to leave behind a record in the form of an autobiography. In the age of digitally-enabled international terrorism, audiences are key to the action, and have become privy to viewing an event from a variety of different angles. Advances in digital technology and ubiquitous CCTV footage has meant that audiences are not only able to witness footage from "within" a terrorist attack, but often footage that is recorded by the perpetrators themselves as they commit their atrocities. For example, French extremist Mehdi Nemmouche used a GoPro-style camera when he killed four people at the Brussels Jewish Museum in 2014,[79] as did Mohamed Merah who recorded "a series of attacks in which he killed seven people" in 2012.[80] Following the trend, during the attack on the Hyper Cacher supermarket in Paris in

2015, Amédy Coulibaly wore a GoPro camera as he took hostages. Audiences confronted with a terrorist's first-person point of view footage, are obliged to, willingly or unwillingly, become part of the spectacle. Producing subjective-view footage, terrorists simultaneously shoot weapons and camera footage, while those watching become the simulated shooter, seeing what the attacker sees and doing what the attacker does—techniques normally employed in videogames.

Such comparisons between terrorist activities and video game content have become a discursive norm. In first-person-shooter videogames "conflict is experienced from an embodied, subjective viewpoint, rather than from the detached overhead view that is common in other types of games. The simulation of embodiment connects players to a character and encourages them to identify with the character's experiences and motives."[81] The structure of a videogame has even been utilized in terrorist recruitment and training methods whereby in some clandestine operations recruits are required to pass "through a series of tests in password protected websites and restricted chat rooms before [being] accepted and joining the terrorist group."[82] Abu Sumayyah Al-Britani, a British fighter for the Islamic State, describes the act of shooting as being: "better than, what's that game called, Call of Duty? It's like that, but really, you know, 3D. You can see everything's happening in front of you."[83] Thus, everyday cultural practices and videogame enthusiasm and proficiency can then be used in the enactment of violence outside of the mediated text.

Through mediated communication, and especially through cultural texts, both terrorists and anti-terrorists communicate in a shared language based on similar cultural media codes. The US government similarly uses entertainment products to bridge the gap between real and symbolic violence with appeals to mainstream commercial media forms. Films and videogames "work like advertisements for the military lifestyle, interpellating players into a military mind-set and turning them into 'virtual citizen-soldiers,' ready to accept the legitimacy of hard power and willing to apply it to virtually any social problem."[84] The US government produces its own videogames, including the US Army's *America's Army* and the US Marines' *Full Spectrum Warrior*. These games "allow players to slay terrorists in fictionalized and Orientalized cities in frameworks based directly on those of the US military's own training systems."[85] In these forms of popular entertainment, the distinction is blurred "between virtual entertainment and remote killing,"[86] and to make these games more appealing

"control panels for the latest US weapons systems—such as the latest control stations for the pilots of armed Predator drones [...] now imitate the consoles of PlayStations, which are, after all, very familiar to recruits."[87] Both the terror and the anti-terror stances justify their particular forms of mediated violence and encourage the dissemination of these texts across media platforms. In this sense, "the spectacularization of fear and the increasing militarization of everyday life have become the principal cultural experiences shaping identities, values, and social relations"[88] where the "threat of terrorism and violent crime provides the state with the legitimating power to increase its security and militaristic directions."[89]

The war on terror has been actively promoted as a communication and military strategy in a variety of cultural texts serving to "position militarism at the center of public policy and social life."[90] In many ways, such Western media efforts "only seem to be providing more raw material for Isis's image library. Hollywood has even been accused of setting the tone, with its dark, doomsday scenarios, not to mention its own expensive recruitment films, from Top Gun to Transformers, made with the cooperation (and conditional approval) of the US military."[91] Similarly, the US Department of State often overlays its own anti-terror messages edited with violent extremist footage, creating a hybrid collage of terrorist brutality, including "gruesome images of beheadings and executions."[92] The US Department of State's Twitter site, Think AgainTurn Away, regularly "links to Isis-related news stories" to highlight their depravity, but in doing so also gives the terrorist group further publicity. This strategy only helps to normalize violence, and anti-terror media efforts often engage in the creation, circulation, and consumption of terrorist violence. For example, when the Islamic State released a recruitment video using snippets of the *Grand Theft Auto* videogame, the US Department of State parodied this very same footage with their own anti-terror message that reads: "Don't let Isis be your controller!" Over time, "Isis supporters have parodied Think AgainTurn Away's parodies. It becomes a hall of mirrors."[93] Since "the spectacle of terrorism trades in moral absolutes whether it makes such claims in the name of religion or human rights,"[94] representations of violence in the media escalates as each side of the war on terror rationalizes its actions even as they produce more violent media content.

Previously, one of the key differences between how this violence was represented on both sides of the divide was typically through the art direction and choice of camera angles: messy, blood-splattered close-up shots

of death favored by extremists, versus clean and detached wide shots favored by state authorities, and often delivered by technologies of distance such as drones and satellites.[95] This distinction is gradually changing, and corporate media networks are increasingly pandering to more violent depictions of terrorist events. In a world defined by ideologies of globalized economic liberalization, the ideational forces of marketization and commodification shape value systems and extend "beyond the commercial realm into other spheres of human society,"[96] and media coverage of atrocity is no exception. In such ways, "as image-based technologies have redefined the relationship between the ethical, political and aesthetic, they are largely used to service the soft war of consumerism and the hard war of militarism."[97] The ideological dovetailing between the state and cultural industries can be seen most acutely during times of conflict, when it becomes especially pertinent to construct particular ideological allegiances and to counter others. The communication strategy wherein the state appeals to the expertise and persuasive skills of the entertainment industry has been prevalent since the early twentieth century. "American military propaganda was transformed during World War II when Hollywood directors went to work for the government and injected a sense of drama into documentary formats. The Why We Fight series, in particular, is well known for its rousing tone, appeals to the emotions, and, above all, its Walt Disney animation sequences."[98] Today, the war on terror is being "mediated through an overwhelming array of visual forms and media, including photography, sculpture, painting, film, television, advertisements, cartoons, graphic novels, video games, and the Internet."[99] The formal articulation of terrorism has, in many ways, been propagated as much by the counter-narratives of the media and government authorities as it has by acts of terror.

The discourse of terrorism is propagated from multiple angles and players, including the terrorists who enact violence in public space; the militarized response that engages in counter violence; the security apparatus that locates, observes, and monitors; the corporate news and social media networks that circulate and sensationalize; and the authorities that capitalize on terrorism for creation of policy and deployment of retaliatory action at home and abroad. The narrative of terrorism is being fed by the input of all these actors and activities, and, with the aid of information and communication technologies, "is constantly retold and re-evoked by wider audiences."[100] As the US enacts such tactical operations as "Burnish-

ing the Steel,"[101] audiences all over the world have grown accustomed to a seemingly unending cycle of mediated violence, obtrusive surveillance of public and private spaces, intensified militarization of spaces of consumption, and increased commodification of terror. Although the militarism of everyday spaces since September 11, 2001 has been most actively promoted by the United States, the powerful anti-terror discourse has become global in its reach and influence.

Through mediated cultural texts, the parallels between corporate capitalism and terrorism can be read most acutely at the symbolic level and in many of the images and recorded footage that emerges during global tragic events. "While the merging of terror, violence, and screen culture has a long history, a new type of spectacle—the spectacle of terrorism—has emerged in the post-9/11 world, inaugurated by the video images of the hijacked planes crashing into the World Trade Center,"[102] and all the subsequent cultural texts these images engendered. Nowhere was the intersection of corporate capitalism and terrorism more symbolically manifest than in the spectacle of terror produced on September 11, 2001, which, as has been mentioned countless times, "looked like a disaster film."[103] Because most international audiences experience terrorist atrocities through the media, a common initial reaction to the brutal images and footage emanating from disastrous situations is to associate them with the fiction of film.[104] Moreover, during major contemporary terror spectacles, news media networks provide all the hallmarks of a film production, and expertly provide and set up cameras, personnel, sets, newsrooms, editing suites, pundits, reviews, interviews, and audiences. In similar fashion to the highly orchestrated visual culture of terrorism produced in the wake of September 11, 2001, footage of al-Shabaab's Westgate Mall attacks was repetitively circulated in a steady stream of images that were instantly consumed by audiences struggling to understand the sudden penetration of violence into the predictable everyday backdrop of a city central urban commercial venue.[105]

The confined space of Westgate Mall provided a camera-ready action set for al-Shabaab's attacks, and became a microcosm for the filmed action viewed through the lenses of hundreds of cameras, beamed into the centralized command station of a remote security office, and then via media networks. During the attacks, there was an extraordinary amount of footage recorded by "more than 100 security cameras inside the mall, video from television crews and modest cellphones, as well as still photo-

graphs."[106] Audiences watching the tragic scenes unfold on the news were presented with the precise moment when shoppers, only a few minutes ago engaged in all kinds of commercial activities, were transformed into frightened captives attempting to escape from view.[107] With omnipresent CCTV security cameras, not much could escape being recorded, and the architecture of the typical mall designed as an open, panoptic space worked against those trying desperately to avoid detection.

The CCTV cameras rolled for most of the first day of the attacks like a reality television show in which audiences all around the world were taken inside the mall to watch what was happening on the ground.[108] News organizations released streams of video from the multiple security cameras and from personal cameras, capturing much of the rampage, including victims being killed or others hiding in the private areas reserved for staff and not normally traversed by mall visitors: in ventilation shafts, toilets, stairwells, and storerooms. The cameras also recorded the more quiet moments taking place "behind the scenes" when the attackers seemingly decided to no longer pursue any more victims, and to take refuge in the Nakumatt supermarket's storeroom. The security cameras recorded several hours of the attackers' actions, including relaxing and temporarily putting down their weapons, tending to one of their wounded accomplices, eating and drinking, taking turns to pray on a mat on the ground, and audio-free hours in which the perpetrators idled while waiting to be confronted by government forces.[109]

The acute juxtaposition of extreme violence and the everyday colorful commercial products and advertising billboards of the shopping mall presents some of the most memorably shocking images to emerge from the Westgate massacre. After the attacks, Reuters photographer Goran Tomasevic described the scenes at Westgate Mall as a warzone, and that although he had "been stationed in Syria during the worst of their devastating civil war, not to mention Libya, Kosovo, and Afghanistan," Tomasevic said "the massacre in the upscale mall was still more shocking."[110] Instead of the generic placeless familiarity and predictability of the commercial surroundings, Westgate Mall became imbued with the signifiers of war ricocheting through its fantasy-laden corridors.

The atrocities, combined with the ways in which the public and the international news media covered the events, produced powerfully evocative images that transformed the ordinary and everyday space of the mall into a defamiliarized world where the boundaries of reality became in-

creasingly blurred. There is a surreal quality to much of the footage and many of the photos that emerged from the attacks, and an acute contrast between the world of the real—frightened and injured people cowering in the aisles of the mall—and the pristine world created by the surrounding corporate culture—aisles filled with colorful products and advertisements featuring smiling, happy people.[111] In an image of the Westgate attacks reminiscent of a horror film poster, it is difficult to untangle reality and fantasy wherein a body lies in a pool of blood directly under a macabre advertisement for a Halloween event due to take place at the mall the following week.[112] Highlighting the symbolic capitalism/terrorism nexus are further images of the wounded and dead being pushed out of the mall in shopping trolleys, themselves now ironically a "product" of the mall and of the massacre. The striking effect that is produced during these atrocities is the manner in which these images defamiliarize and confuse a peaceful, casual, or sunny setting with the extreme violence that has occurred. With the help of information and communication technologies, never have international audiences been presented with such a plethora of imageries of violence creeping into their everyday lives.

Except, international audiences *have* been presented with violent imagery in the media, but in different circumstantial settings and with different effects—as entertainment or news that does not elicit the same audience or government reaction. Such an intersection of different forms of violence is exemplified by an image in which armed Kenyan soldiers crouch at the entrance of Westgate Mall cinema and are framed by a poster of the film *Elysium*,[113] making it hard to separate the terrorism-induced theater from the corporate entertainment theater and the sanitized violence packaged as a blockbuster film. As the Kenyan soldiers are pictured during their disorganized rescue attempt, they are overseen by a gun-toting Matt Damon, and the unwavering certainty of commodified corporate culture. In this cinematic representation of warfare, the Hollywood hero is likely to be successful, translating into the victory of corporate cultural hegemony. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard reminds us that even though the Vietnam War signaled a colossal moral and tactical loss, the United States was able to not only recoup, but to achieve success in the many films made subsequently and to be victorious at the box office.[114]

Two days into the siege, Kenyan security forces detonated a rocket-propelled grenade, effectively destroying the mall, shutting down the power, and wiping out the camera feeds.[115] Without a complete visual reference

from which to construct a narrative of events, what could not be seen on screen either did not exist as part of the Westgate Mall attacks narrative, or could not be verified—especially since witness testimonies, news reports, and government statements were often contradictory and even false.[116] By sifting through recorded footage gathered through CCTV surveillance, news networks, and personal mobile cameras, one can begin attempting to piece together how the events unfolded. However, even then, the story of the Westgate Mall attacks, like any film, can only be represented as fragmentary and refractory, and its interpretation subject to edits and camera angles. To date, a documentary film titled *Terror at the Mall* contains one of the most comprehensive collections of footage and images that emerged from the attacks, and includes a variety of witness interviews. The director, Dan Reed, and his team sifted through more than 2,000 hours of footage, witness testimonies, and "information that none of the investigating authorities had reached."[117] One of the survivors of al-Shabaab's attack notes "that the film offered the first true depiction of what had happened that afternoon in Nairobi, a story that was muddled and meddled with by [sic] conflicting reports coming from media, government, and foreign intelligence agencies."[118]

Not to be outdone by official media networks in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall attack, al-Shabaab's own dedicated media unit, al-Kataib Foundation for Media Production, released a feature-length film titled *The Westgate Siege: Retributive Justice*, which was "distributed on Twitter on February 21, 2015 in two versions: one in Arabic and another in English."[119] Information and communication technologies have thus enabled terrorists to not only present their own propaganda and versions of events, but to do so in a highly professional and packaged way and to compete with official media networks. Additionally, with the prevailing capitalist forces encircling Westgate Mall, it is unsurprising that the tragedy was commodified almost immediately after the attacks, with street hawkers in Nairobi touting "different movies depicting the attack and hundreds of copies were sold on the first day they became available."[120] One of these documentaries was titled *Terror Attack at Westgate*. It "has little in the way of a plot or commentary, [and] was manufactured by a group called Titanic Videos,"[121] an organization that pirated the MGM lion logo as part of its branding.

The wealth of visual material and the abundance of recordings that emerged from the Westgate attacks were used by the various sides of

the war on terror, as well as by opportunistic others, in their efforts to condemn, congratulate, or profit from the atrocities. The fluid combination of different types of commodities and marketing activities within the same space of the shopping mall suspends and decontextualizes the normative and discursive differences between capitalism and terrorism, imbuing them with attributes of other objects strategically placed around them so as to create a complementary and commerce-driven continuous narrative. The next chapter concludes with an examination of how the constant threat of terrorism has been similarly commodified in the form of the ubiquitous security apparatus. Under the rubric of neoliberal practice, terrorist activities are rendered profitable for both terrorists and those opposing them.