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Counterterrorist Profiling, the Self, and the Problem of Open and Quiet Skies

Editor

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Title: Counterterrorist Profiling, the Self, and the Problem of Open and Quiet Skies

Open Skies has several common referents in security policy. One is a proposal presented at the 1955 Geneva summit by United States (U. S.) President Dwight Eisenhower. The U. S. and the Soviet Union were to share the exact location of all their respective military installations and to conduct aerial surveillance to assure compliance with arms control agreements (1). A descendant of this proposal is the Treaty on *Open Skies* which operationalized as of 2002 and authorized unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of signatories to enhance mutual understanding and confidence through gathering information on military forces and other concerns (2). More recently, mass media sources and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) have divulged a *Quiet Skies* surveillance program implemented by TSA as of 2010 (3). This includes collecting information on some members of the traveling public presumed to pose acceptable transportation risk to help validate risk-based, terrorism profiling criteria. All *Skies* referents presume to know what is being looked for, but this presumption may be problematic.

Let's consider *Quiet Skies* and counterterrorism profiling. The presumption has been that some combination of verbal and nonverbal behaviors of some individuals will denote unacceptable risk. In essence, the self, i.e., the verbal and nonverbal behaviors, of each such individual is being looked for. But what if there is no self? This radical possibility goes beyond the already difficult of an individual having or manifesting multiple selves—each partially elicited and constituted by specific spatio-temporal, social, and other situations. The possibility of no self has been contemplated and analyzed throughout intellectual history (4), one exemplar being the work of 18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume (5). He posited that moment-to-moment sequences of what actually are very similar experiences are construed by each of us as if by a trick of imagination as a consolidated entity, a self. And this seems to be the case for each of us for each of our selves and respective selves, and when we perceive the self or selves of each other.

If Hume is correct then, what counterterrorism profilers are looking for may not exist, but is only presumed. This has several clinical implications as well. For example, *ipseity disturbance* refers to disruption or diminishing of an individual's sense of even a minimal or basic self (6). The Humean implication would be that the 'disturbed' are accurate as their selves approach nothing, while 'normals' are inaccurate as they revel in their robust something—selves. And *Capgras syndrome* refers to an individual with a delusion that a family member, friend, or associate (including pets) have been replaced by an identical impostor (7). The Humean implication would be that the delusion is that any self is an impostor and the bearer of the syndrome is on the road to perceptual accuracy. As well, individuals with *Cotard's syndrome* (8) might at least be contented along with their sense of being dead or not existing with the accuracy of a selfless life world.

No self? This might help explain lack of support for the predictive validity of transportation security-based profiling (9). However, the future may be more promising as more sophisticated research on the reliability and validity of criminal profiling informs transportation security (cf. 10). Meanwhile, optimal resource allocation for intelligence and counterintelligence operations—viz., interception of communications and penetration of social networks—are the way forward. And as for *Open and Quiet Skies* programs, the skies are not cloudy all day, but they may as well be.

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Keywords: Aviation Security, Counterintelligence, Intelligence, Open Skies, Profiling, Truth.

Abstract/Description: Psychological profiling supporting counterterrorism may be based on an invalid presumption.

Disciplines: Other Psychology, Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations

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