Re-contextualizing
The War on Terror

Emilie Beck

Honors Dissertation in Geography, Spring 2018

Hofstra University

Table of Contents

Introduction

Since its inception, the United States has implemented and administered various campaigns that were designed to dominate and establish economic and political hegemony over otherized peoples through systematically violent, militarized, and colonial methods. These campaigns have required a series of transfigurations of spaces, redrawing pre-existing borders—and at times creating new ones, and mutilating the peoples and cultures which existed within those spaces they sought to control and/or settle. This can be seen with the colonial expansion of the United States' borders, first with the initial establishment of the thirteen European colonies on the East Coast of North America and the subsequent extension and expansion of European presence and domination of spaces in North America through Manifest Destiny and the settler colonial push westward. The United States government has orchestrated numerous imperial projects against foreign nations, some of which have been carried out through the alleged wars on Communism, Drugs, and most recently, Terror. Most arguments in favor of U.S. imperialism rely on a series of colonial ideological frameworks and are discursively constructed to naturalize, normalize, and perpetuate U.S. hegemony around the world. Most often, arguments that are in support of U.S. imperialism employ the rhetoric of 'salvation,' 'liberation,' and 'spreading freedom and democracy,' though these narratives are used to disguise and camouflage the predominantly violent and criminal nature which categorizes the United States' role in the world.

The Bush administration launched the War on Terror in 2001 in response to the terror attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11th. The first phase of the War on Terror targeted Afghanistan, and the second, launched in 2003, targeted Iraq. The War has expanded dramatically since 2001, now involving 76 countries in a variety of ways. Though there are active U.S. military combat missions in 7 countries, I limit my analysis of the War on Terror to Afghanistan and Iraq (Brown University's Costs of War Project, 2017). Under the guise of the

War on Terror, the government and military of the United States has violently reshaped the political, economic, and societal forms of organizing life within Afghanistan and Iraq with the intention of rebuilding these spaces in the image, and interest, of the United States. Motivated by principles of neoliberal global capitalism, the War on Terror has generated a tremendous amount of money for multinational corporations in the defense, security, and construction sectors. While there is no official body count, the wars conducted under the War on Terror are responsible for killing upward estimates of several million people directly and indirectly—many of which are civilians—and millions of people have been displaced both internally and across borders (Buncombe 2017; Mechanic 2017; Rafferty 2017).

I analyze the Bush administration's discursive construction of the War on Terror as well as the integration of neoliberal capitalism and militarism which have become hegemonic discourses that have been used to manufacture consent and justify, naturalize, and normalize a state of perpetual warfare for profit. I also analyze the grounded impacts of the War on Terror as it has disrupted, transformed, and at times destroyed spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The research and subsequent analysis I conducted on this topic is four-fold. First, I situate, frame, and contextualize the War on Terror within critical understandings of space and the ways in which conflict affects the active construction of spaces. More specifically, I explore the ways in which the government of the United States constructed and employed discourses and images to rationalize and naturalize the War on Terror. I situate this analysis within the contexts and rhetoric of development, neoliberalism, and U.S. hegemony. I also address the racialized construction of a monolithic identity of 'the terrorist'. Second, I analyze the discourses and rhetoric that President Bush employed to facilitate a series of cartographic performances and create imaginative geographies which were meant to legitimize war in Afghanistan and later Iraq. Third, I ground this analysis of the discursive construction of the War on Terror within an understanding of the ways

in which neoliberalism and militarism have been so deeply integrated within the United States. I also analyze the ways that these discourses have mobilized political transformations and fractured, destroyed, and reconstructed spaces within Afghanistan and Iraq. Fourth, I explore statements and testimonials from non-violent civil society groups in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have been working to promote democracy in their countries and overthrow U.S. and all foreign control and occupation. Their persistent resistance, embodied experiences, and situated knowledges of U.S. imperialism through the War on Terror have been strategically ignored, devalued, and rendered invisible by the mainstream media apparatus of the United States. By centering their statements and presenting their understandings of the War on Terror, this section provides critical insight to the realities of the war on the ground and challenges hegemonic narratives in the United States.

My purpose in exploring this topic is rooted in my belief that we must oppose imperialism and work for a different world order that is equitable, peaceful, and sustainable. I understand the War on Terror to be the latest project of U.S. imperialism. Though there are many ways in which the War on Terror is unique to other imperial projects the U.S. has carried out before, it is for the most part, a continuation of what the elite of the United States has done since the violent and genocidal foundation of this country. I analyze a series of geographic, racialized, and gendered myths that have constructed the War on Terror and allowed the United States and its allies to disrupt, fracture, and in many ways, destroy spaces in Afghanistan and Iraq. The War on Terror operates according to the imperial notion that the elites of the United States have a right to control and dominate social, economic, and political affairs around the world. The United States does not have such a right to monopolize the co-construction of space, the use of resources, and systems of organizing human life. On the contrary, all people, including the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, have the right to participate in the ongoing formations of structures which organize social, political and economic life at local, national, and global scales.

Methodology and Positionality

In this thesis, I have employed several lenses of analysis in my literature research on the War on Terror as it has been carried out in Afghanistan and Iraq. The literature comes from a variety of fields, including human geography, political science, and the study of colonialism and imperialism. I see these approaches, of feminist methodologies, discourse analysis, and postcolonial theory as interconnected lenses which have helped me formulate my understanding of the War on Terror as an imperial project. These lenses have informed my understandings of the literary material I am working with, analysis of U.S. military and foreign policy as it relates to the War on Terror, and assessments of the effects the war has had on economic, political, and social spaces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I have employed a feminist methodology to inform my overall rationale for this thesis. While this thesis is not explicitly focusing on the ways that women are impacted by the War on Terror and engage in anti-imperialist activity, feminist theory calls for a "renegotiation of the role and structure of institutions and the production of knowledge [and of] power relations within society" so that the ways in which people engage with the world are more reflective of the heterogeneity existing within it (Kitchin and Tate 2000, p. 23). Furthermore, President Bush and his administration routinely manipulated gender constructions and broadly painted Afghan women and girls as helpless victims which the United States could liberate through the War on Terror. In this way, the Bush administration capitalized off of a repressive and patriarchal regime in Afghanistan. The administration did not demonstrate any comprehensive attempt to improve living conditions for women and girls in the country. Contrarily, as will be outlined later in this paper through civil society statements from a feminist organization in Afghanistan, U.S. interference and occupation has had devastating consequences for Afghan women and girls. Therefore, questioning uneven imperial power relationships that intersect and are negotiated through the War on Terror is

in line with a feminist framework of critically addressing oppression and contributing to the dismantling of oppressive global systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice.

Through an analysis of the hegemonic discourses that were produced in the West and the image of space that the War on Terror is constructed within, this thesis emphasizes the "presence and absence of particular bodies, subjects, and knowledges" (Thien 2009, p. 71). Representation of situated knowledges and embodied experiences of Afghans and Iraqis as citizens and resistors to imperialism has been largely absent in the United States. This attention to narratives, and the erasure of such, leads me to the next methodology that I employ, discourse analysis. Discourse has been defined as the "taken-for-granted, and most often hidden, frameworks and ideas that structure both knowledge and social practice. Discourses are thus sets of ideas 'and' practices that give statements, texts, rhetorics, and narratives particular kinds of meanings" (Berg 2009, p. 215). I analyze the dominant discourses that the Bush administration employed to create an understanding of the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq in the West, which were then used to justify the War on Terror and thereby create different spaces. Furthermore, discourse can be understood as a tool which maintains and perpetuates particular political or socio-economic arrangements of domination and suppression within uneven power relationships (Berg 2009). Through the discourse that the Bush administration used regarding the terror attacks on September 11th, al Qaeda, and the Taliban, he created a structure through which these phenomena could be understood in ways that served his interest in military engagement.

A primary function of language is to construct and support the performance of activity and identity in social spaces, and in this way, cultures and communities get constructed and reproduced in relation to one another (Gee 2005). I perceive language to be a tool through which both perceptions of reality and realities themselves are built. Therefore, those who have power over language and discourse have relational power over understandings of reality and reality itself can

be constructed accordingly. This thesis also examines the discourses and images that the Bush administration routinely employed to create the monolithic identity of the terrorist. These discourses used storylines, images, and reductionist frameworks of explanation to produce a single story of terrorism and dramatically simplified the spatial heterogeneity of Afghanistan and Iraq, equating these countries with terrorism and barbarism.

Said's work on Orientalism offers a useful bridge between discourse analysis and postcolonial theory. In *Orientalism* (1978) Said effectively argues that "European culture was able to manage the East politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, and imaginatively. The Orient never has agency, and never is a free subject, but rather is always constructed under impositions of power, both ideological and repressive" (Said 1978, p. 3). This thesis draws on Said's understanding of the various ways the West had produced the Orient, and applies this logic to the ways in which the United States has been able to equate Islam with extremism, and predominantly Muslim countries with terrorism. In relation to these constructions, the United States has been able to define itself as free and democratic wishing to bring liberation and freedom to Afghanistan and Iraq. I critically analyze and deconstruct these notions through an analysis of the Bush administration's rhetoric on military and foreign policy surrounding the War on Terror. I also contrast the stated goals of these doctrines with testimonials and writings from civil society organizations in Iraq and Afghanistan that take a firm anti-imperialist stance against U.S. occupation of their countries.

I must address my individual position in relation to this thesis subject as the societal, cultural, geographic, economic, and political structures through which my identity has been mediated are, in many ways, entangled with and constitutive of the hegemonic narratives of neoliberalism, U.S. imperialism, and American Exceptionalism. I am a descendant of European settlers who have lived on the East Coast of the United States for many generations. I am also a

peace activist, dedicated, both in my social and academic life, to work towards dismantling U.S. imperialism and creating life-affirming, peaceful, and sustainable alternatives to perpetual warfare and the increasing integration of militarism and neoliberal capitalism. It is from this position, as someone who believes in freedom and justice and stands in firm opposition to what my government has done in my name, that I approach this work. It is important to note that the ways in which I conceptualize freedom and justice in this paper differ greatly from the meanings of these terms within the dominant cultural order of the United States' government. The U.S. government's definition of freedom, the proposition that 'our' freedom was attacked on September 11th, and the neocolonial narratives surrounding the spread of freedom and salvation have been systematically used to oppress and kill the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq. It is the narrow neoliberal conception of 'freedom' which was centered in President Bush's rhetoric about the War on Terror that I depart from. I have never been to Afghanistan or Iraq, and I have lived my life outside of active armed conflict. However, I was five years old when the United States launched the War on Terror and in this way, I have lived almost my entire life in a country at war. Though I wholeheartedly oppose the War on Terror, I have, to varying degrees, consented to the political and economic hegemony that it has been trying to secure.

I recognize the sensitivity involved in representation and representability, and I have paid careful attention to the question of how, as a researcher from the United States, I can "avoid the inevitable risk of presenting [my]self as an authoritative representation of subaltern consciousness" (Gandhi 1998, p. 2). I do not claim to speak for the people of Afghanistan or Iraq. As Said argues, Western domination of the Orient cannot be separated from Western study and thought about the Orient (Said 1978). I hold that "any location is limited and also that knowledge is embodied, that is, grounded in real bodies. Such embodied knowledge comes from being in place, and from acknowledging the partiality of that location, rather than from claiming a special privilege or

knowledge of oppression" (Thien 2009, p. 73). Therefore, because knowledge is grounded in space, the knowledges and experiences of Afghan and Iraqi people and communities hold great influence on my understanding of the War on Terror and have informed my critique of U.S. imperialism.

I have been intentional in being reflective of my position in relation to the content I have analyzed for this thesis. My knowledge is inherently limited. My critique is of my government, and all those—including myself—who have, to varying degrees, been complicit in the actions of my government. My analysis of terrorism is facilitated through my understanding of the ways in which the West has produced and constructed terrorism through specific narratives. My understanding of the effects of the War on Terror as they manifest in the socioeconomic spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq are limited. I center the voices of those from Afghanistan and Iraq who have embodied experience and situated knowledges of the War on Terror. I try to avoid filtering their experiences through my own lenses of perception, though some degree of filtering is inevitable, namely in the decision of which statements to include. I do not seek to critically analyze their statements, as any attempt to do so would perpetuate the uneven power relationships I am criticizing in this thesis. I include their stories and testimonials because they propose a counter narrative, one that has been made invisible in the United States. The United States' ability to render certain bodies and knowledges invisible has been an integral part of maintaining the War on Terror and U.S. imperialism. Discourses and knowledge, and therefore power, are governed and controlled through accessibility. These counter narratives that have been formulated through embodied experiences need to be made visible in the United States, and I believe that doing so in this thesis is valuable in transnational feminist community building and scholarly work.

I have approached this thesis as a socially situated researcher and as noted by Jensen and Glasmeier (2010), there has been a call for "more policy-centric geographic research aimed at

social change" (Jensen & Glasmeier 2010, p. 84). In my research of U.S. military and foreign policy, I examined the broader framework within which this policy was created—the War on Terror does not exist in a temporal or spatial vacuum—and the structural realities that allowed for U.S. militarism to be converted into a capitalist enterprise in the name of national security have not been comprehensively addressed by many policy makers in the U.S. It is civil society and academics who have taken the lead in addressing this, and as an activist, an academic, and a citizen in the United States it is my responsibility to be critical of U.S. imperialism and advocate for methods through which we can reach alternatives.

Here too, at the level of policy examination, I have been reflective on my relationship with the subject matter, and am not making any claim that I have a solution or suggestion for the ways that Afghans and Iraqis should organize their social, economic, and political lives during or after the War on Terror. Only Afghans and Iraqis can make those decisions for themselves. The colonial ideology that the United States has the best form of societal organization that can be universally applied has been utilized to justify the War on Terror to the public. Instead, my focus on policy is centered around the United States' abuse of its power. I have written this thesis as an effort to contribute to the wide field of critical human geography which I believe is capable of producing social change. I recognize my role as an active agent in compiling and conducting research, and I believe I must be conscious of my social situatedness in order to promote the social change that my research demands (Jensen & Glasmeier 2010, p. 82).

Throughout this thesis, I interpret the War on Terror as text. I attempt to deconstruct it and see the imperial myths it was built upon, as part of a temporal process of colonization and domination by the West of the East (Pathak et al. 1991). I employ a postcolonial lens in this thesis as I believe that any critique of a contemporary imperial project, such as the War on Terror, must be informed by a comprehensive critique of colonialism and neo-colonialism, as embodied in

postcolonial theory. As Gandhi (1998) argues, postcolonial studies are similar to feminist theory and method in their rejection and "critique of seemingly foundational discourses. Unlike feminism, however, it directs its critique against the cultural hegemony of European knowledges in an attempt to reassert the epistemological value and agency of the non-European world" (p. 44). This thesis rejects the dominant discourses produced by the government of the United States about the War on Terror. Said wisely argues that all criticism should "think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom" (Said 1993, p. 21). It is with this in mind that I approach this thesis and conduct my analysis.

Critical Understandings of Space in the Context of Conflict

Contextualizing the Spaces of the War on Terror

For the purpose of the War on Terror, the United States has constructed, disseminated, and normalized certain narratives through the use of discourses and images to create ideas of Afghanistan and Iraq in western minds. Though it isn't always explicitly present in our consciousness, we engage with these places every day through consuming, reproducing, and sometimes rejecting or challenging these narratives. Key to these narratives are the ways in which the U.S. was able to integrate specific ideas and images of the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq. Space is not a natural given background within which all human and social interaction takes place, instead as Thrift (2003) argues, space is the "outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives which are slowly provided with the means which render them durable and sustainable" (p. 96). They are problematic because they are contested as people, at all scales from an individual to a community have ideas and plans for what a space can be. These desires do not exist within a political or cultural vacuum

as they interact constantly with uneven relations of power where some, more than others, can make their visions and plans for space a reality.

A relational understanding of space holds that space is always engaged in and undergoing a process of construction that is mediated through constant interactions amongst humans and the natural environment (Thrift 2003). Spaces are not set or determined, but are the result of ideas, activities, and often conflict. Under the framework of the War on Terror, the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001. However, the United States has a longer military history with Afghanistan that spans back to the Cold War era. When Afghanistan was occupied by the Soviet Union[1], the United States intervened to stop the spread of Soviet communism. The Mujahedeen, a fundamentalist Islamic tribal group which resisted communist reform and had a much different vision for Afghanistan than the Soviets had, was trained in Pakistan and armed by the United States and U.S. allies to drive out the Soviets. There is a long history of resistance to occupation in Afghanistan, and this resistance has most frequently been met with an inability or unwillingness of those imperial nations who seek to invade and conquer Afghan space to perceive Afghans as their equals. There has been a consistent dehumanization of Afghans where they are seen as uncivilized or barbarous. Dehumanization has been used throughout colonial and neocolonial history to justify the use of force, domination, and violence as opposed to diplomacy (Ewans 2005; Rashid 2008).

Because the United States was only interested in stopping the spread of communism and substituting in their own imperial reign, the United States and its ally Saudi Arabia ignored the Mujahedeen's extremist ideology and practices. The U.S. provided billions of dollars' worth of weapons throughout the 1980s, and Saudi Arabia matched them dollar for dollar. It is with these

---

[1] The Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan from 1979-1989.

weapons that the fundamentalist group was able to expand their control of Afghanistan's landscape (Kolhatkar 2002). The hypocrisy of U.S. military involvement has been apparent to Afghans since the beginning. In 1990, John Bums reported that "ordinary Afghans asked how the United States could allow the [Mujahedeen] rebels to fire American-supplied weapons into neighborhoods and bazaars, killing and wounding the ordinary people on whose behalf they claim to be fighting" (Kolhatkar 2002, p. 15). The massive assault on civilians is indicative of a self-interested and imperial foreign policy, rooted in principles of domination, with the interest of creating increased havoc and expanding U.S. control of the social and natural environments in the region. The United States continued to ignore and undermine the rights of Afghan citizens after the Soviet Union withdrew and failed to "provide security to Afghan women from the monsters they had elevated to power" (p. 15). The government of the United States demonstrated no interest in liberating Afghan citizens or assisting in any type of sustainable development. While the liberation of women is central to the narrative the United States has produced surrounding its involvement in the War on Terror in Afghanistan, women have systematically been excluded from state-building activities and peace talks (Barr 2017).

The 'Era of Development,' Neoliberalism, and U.S. Hegemony

After World War II, the United States emerged as a global superpower and there was a historic shift in geopolitics. Recognizing this new-found power, the United States attempted to concentrate and perpetuate their hegemony. With this goal for the future of the U.S. and its role in the world in mind, the Truman administration launched a campaign for the 'era of development'. It was described by President Truman as a bold new program where "the old imperialism - exploitation for foreign profit has no place" and instead envisaged a "program of development based on the

concepts of democratic fair dealing" (Esteva 1992, p. 6). However, democratic fair dealing has not been exemplified within U.S. foreign policy under the Truman administration or any administration since his. The 'era of development' really constituted a new era of imperialism, which had ideological connections to the older colonial forms of foreign domination, as well as contemporary neocolonial elements, most notably exploitation for foreign profit. Kwame Nkrumah, former president of Ghana, coined the term neocolonialism in 1963. President Nkrumah defined neocolonialism as "modern attempts to perpetuate colonialism while at the same time talking about 'freedom'" (Nkrumah 1965, p. 41). Neocolonialism posits that though colonization through direct political control has, for the most part been abolished, there are contemporary dimensions of colonialism. In a neocolonial model, power and control are exerted through more or less indirect methods. These less visible economic, political, ideological, and cultural processes which perpetuate colonial exploitation, continue to govern many local, regional, and global relationships today (Watts 2009).

Development thus became equated with U.S. hegemony and Americanization that followed. When President Truman gave this speech, he constructed a binary drawing a distinction between that part of the world which looked like the U.S.: that which was developed, and that which was not: that which was underdeveloped. And this binary took on a "colonizing virulence" as it held the power to define billions of people as underdeveloped, and then suppose the United States had the remedy (Esteva 1992, p. 7). However, people in the spaces President Truman constructed as underdeveloped did not view themselves this way, so the ideas that constituted and constructed development came from the West and were built on the values, ways of thinking, and ways of organizing social life of Europe and the United States. These ideas were superimposed, often violently, from the outside, and did not represent a bottom up approach, the will of the people,

or incorporate principles of 'democratic fair dealing'. Development, in this sense, cannot be understood as a natural process. Like space, development has and continues to be constructed through discourse: rhetoric, ideas, and practice. Development projects also exist within uneven power relations at various scales where some actors have more power to turn their ideas for a space into reality than others.

Escobar (1992) discusses planning as an integral part of transforming a space for the purposes of development. He states that planning includes the "application of scientific and technical knowledge to the public domain, [and] planning lent legitimacy to, and fueled hopes about, the development enterprise" (Escobar 1992, p. 132). Far from a natural given process, there is first an idea and a blueprint for how a space can function. Central to relative success of development and planning, one must have the power to attempt to make this idea of a space a reality. The concept of planning relies on the idea that changes in the way people order their political, economic, and social lives and cultural systems can be manufactured at will, again from the outside. These planning projects are naturalized in an attempt to indoctrinate people into the belief that what happens through development and planning is the natural order of things. However, there are "no neutral frameworks" and all planning projects are designed politically and economically, result from specific actions, and exist within a complex web of global power relations (p.132). In this way, planning is a process that attempts to "redefine social and economic life in accordance with the criteria of rationality, efficiency, and morality which are consonant with the history and needs of capitalist, industrial society" (p. 134-5). The fracturing and remodeling of societies and cultures in the interest of global capital under the guise of modernization and development can be seen in what the War on Terror has done to transform the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq. Under the guise of neoliberalism, people are dehumanized and commodified

which lends towards the expendability of human life wherever it poses a threat to market expansion.

In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey defines *neoliberalism* as an economic and political theory, which gained traction in the 1970s-80s, that posits that human well-being is best attained and advanced through economic liberalization and freedom for the individual entrepreneur (Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism has several core features including strong private property rights, open markets, free trade, privatization, a decrease of tariffs, and cuts to subsidies. These economic principles have massive implications on the ways in which ordinary people actively participate in construction of space. In the neoliberal model, the government is supposed to "create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" in order to secure that the markets will function properly (Harvey 2005, p. 2). With structural frameworks in place, the government is meant not to intervene in market affairs. In cases where a market does not already exist, Harvey argues that the role of the neoliberal government is to turn them into markets. The main objective of neoliberalism, especially as it pertains to a global capitalist economy, is seeking to "bring all human action into the domain of the market" where nothing exists outside of the processes of commodification and consumption (Harvey 2005, p. 3). Under this model, any and all things can and should be capitalized on.

It is through this model of the expansion of capitalism into every domain of life that we have witnessed an integration of neoliberal capitalism and militarism in the United States. *Militarism* as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary refers to a cultural and societal dominance of the military apparatus of a country as well as the ideals and values that inform its practice, and a policy of "aggressive military preparedness" (Merriam-Webster). Militarism can be understood as a philosophy in which warfare is deemed a suitable policy option and an appropriate way to

engage with the 'other'. Through the integration of neoliberal capitalism and militarism, The War on Terror has been, to a vast degree, privatized and is being fought for profit. Naomi Klein calls these "orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities, disaster capitalism" (Klein 2007, p. 6). Under the doctrine of *disaster capitalism*, there is a willingness and ability to exploit and, at times, create chaos and warfare for the sole purpose of capital accumulation. This can be seen in regards to what has been done to the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq, where the conflict has generated billions of dollars for the defense and security industries.

This integration of neoliberal capitalism and militarism can be seen most poignantly within the *military industrial complex* of the United States. The military industrial complex was first discussed in 1961 in President Eisenhower's farewell address. He spoke about the recent creation of a permanent arms industry of 'vast proportions' and emphasized that the implications of this would change the structures of our society (McAdams). He warned that we must work against the increased influence of the military industrial complex so that power does not get concentrated within it. However, today the military industrial complex is an almost all-pervasive alliance between the country's military, the arms industry, and politicians. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the military industrial complex as a staple of the way the United States engages with the world today. Through political contributions, the arms industry secures approval of military spending for private contracts, and these contracts pay for massive new weapons systems, which are then used to expand the United States imperial presence in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

As Harvey (2003) argues, Gramsci's use of the term *hegemony* allows for multiple interpretations. For the purposes of this paper, I primarily understand hegemony to be the way in

which political power is validated and exercised through the consent of governed subjects. At times, I understand hegemony to be a blend of consent and domination through coercion. Therefore, central to the functionality of neoliberal hegemony, is the idea that subjects consent to this economic model and participate within it, even if they disagree with it. Though there seems to always be micro pockets of resistance, often this resistance to hegemonic forms of social order inadvertently validate and participate in the oppressive systems that they are opposed to. Harvey (2005) argues that neoliberalism has "become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (p. 3). In order for neoliberalism to become hegemonic and integrated into the common sense of the masses, it was made to appeal to our values and desires, namely freedom. The terror attacks on September 11th were immediately interpreted as an attack on our freedom. However, the government of the United States operates on a particular definition of freedom which privileges itself and its interests over the rest of the world. It is in defense of this definition of freedom that neoliberalism has been forcefully imposed on many people who have resisted it.

Racialized and Orientalist Configurations of Space and Identity

Throughout much of her work, Fluri (2009; 2011; 2017) examines the neoliberal structure of U.S. engagement in Afghanistan. The Bush administration claimed that the War on Terror was justified because it would eradicate terrorism and could help Afghans develop a democracy. However, these "geographies of development are interlinked with neoliberal economics and imperial geopolitics that are spatially organized [and] rather than developing Afghanistan, this situation results in an extension and reproduction of hierarchical wealth and uneven development" (Fluri 2009, p. 987).

In this way, the War on Terror being discursively constructed as a development project in addition to a war does not depart from the history of the 'era of development' launched by the Truman administration. Since the U.S. invasion, much of the 'development' of Afghanistan and Iraq has taken the form of privatization of many services and natural resources in line with a neoliberal economic model. The War on Terror has been a for profit venture and Afghanistan is its first and longest sustained target. The effects of this have been detrimental to Afghans who are "bound by economies of desperation" as the conflict destroyed infrastructure including hospitals, impeded the transportation of food and aid, led to low levels of education as schools were destroyed or unsafe to attend, high levels of unemployment, and food insecurity (p. 991). Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, has been a key site for this U.S. led militarized international campaign of spreading neoliberal economics. The War on Terror relies on "the racial and orientalist configuration of these spaces [as] a key component in shaping the development policy and in many cases a militarized response (and continual presence of foreign troops) as a necessary component of "peace-building" and humanitarianism" (p. 988).

Orientalism is a style of thought and structure of logic wherein the Orient exists as an epistemological and ontological distinction of geography. Said (1978) analyses and discusses orientalism as the "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" and understands Orientalism to be a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p. 3). Throughout modern history, the West and, most recently and with increasing importance, the United States can be described as interacting with and attempting to manage, construct, and produce the Orient in its own interest. This can be seen in the way the U.S. has engaged with Afghanistan and Iraq through the War on Terror. Orientalism is a discourse

through which Europe and the United States have been able to manage and produce the Orient. The War on Terror relies on orientalist and racist discourses to define the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq as backwards, barbaric, and containing people who are terrorist extremists. Producing itself in relation to this, the U.S. is allegedly the bastion of democracy and freedom, and has set an example for structuring governance and organizing social life that should be aspired to all over the world. By reducing heterogeneity and creating artificial consistency within Afghanistan and Iraq, or blocking space[2], people living in these two countries have become equated with danger or threat. It is through this lens that the War on Terror operates. A story has been told about these spaces repeatedly, as the axis of evil, as terrorists, and as barbaric sub-humans who cannot be reasoned with, and in minds in the U.S., that becomes all they are.

The terror attacks on September 11th were historic because it was the first time since World War II that the United States was on the receiving end of the type of strategic violence that we have systematically administered since the very inception of this county, first on the native peoples, and later throughout Central and South America and Asia (Chomsky 2014). There has been growing anti-American sentiment around the world and instead of critically looking inwards, the United States mostly ignored it up until September 11th. Even in response to the attacks, the Bush administration did not seek to understand where the anger and motivation to carry out the attack came from. The administration did not publically situate the attack within the vast temporal

---

[2] Blocking space refers to the process of conceptually representing spaces and interactions within spaces by characterizing them with a particular action or function. Analytic boundaries are drawn and spaces are blocked into being a community space, a city space, or a capitalist space such as Wall Street. However, these manufactured boundaries are often unable to account for the highly dynamic and fluid nature of spaces, and thus reduce the heterogeneity within them (Thrift 2003, p. 99).

and spatial reality of U.S. imperial and neocolonial behavior. Instead of seriously and critically engaging with what happened and with the people that presumably did it, the United States demonized them, dehumanized them, and reduced all the spatial and cultural complexity within Afghanistan to block it as a terrorist space. This is very much in line with Said's (1978) conception of orientalism, wherein 'Orientals', and in this case 'terrorists', "were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or taken over" (p. 207). All of this exists within a long history of European colonization, white supremacy, and American exceptionalism. This complex web of racism, the construction of cultural stereotypes, and dehumanizing political imperialism has been so concentrated in the West and a Western nexus of knowledge and power that it has had the ability to "in a sense [obliterate the Oriental] as a human" (p. 27).

Images are an increasingly relevant element of space that get used to construct discourses and narratives and facilitate the creation of imaginative geographies (Thrift 2003). Images are ever present in our lives, with advertisements and a 24-hour news cycle images are constantly used to support hegemonic narratives. Images of events can become just as important as the event itself. They are a "key element of space because it is so often through them that we register the spaces around us and imagine how they might turn up in the future" (Thrift 2003, p. 100). They assist in the construction of space which is orchestrated through uneven power relations. In the United States on September 11th, the two planes flying into the Twin Towers was broadcasted on live television. All of the country, and many people around the world, saw it happen in real time. This image was then repeated throughout the news cycle over and over again so that it was plastered in the minds of just about every U.S. resident. The image was even commodified and can be bought in picture frames as it has been memorialized. On the other hand, we do not see images of war torn

Afghanistan and Iraq in the way that we saw the events of September 11th. What we are not able to see is just as important as what we are. We do not see the effects of the occupation and the news crews were strategically kept away from ordinary Afghans and Iraqis because it was important to the dominant narrative in the United States that they were made invisible. To show the real effects of the occupation would show Afghans and Iraqis as victims of U.S. warfare and imperialism, which undermines the hegemonic narrative that we are the harbinger of freedom and democracy.

This all assists in the creation and construction of 'the terrorist' as an archetype in the United States. Relying on incredibly simplified understandings of the cultural and political hybridity and diversity that exists within spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq, these spaces were blocked as terrorist spaces. Terrorists have been constructed as a force that is meant to be understood as a natural given phenomenon. The narrative surrounding the War on Terror by necessity constitutes the identity of a terrorist. The rhetoric that we hear about the terrorists we are at war with is that they are barbaric and violent people who are incapable of logic or reasoning and therefore, we must also use violence to fight and defeat them. It is important to note that there is no universal definition of terrorism. The United States defines it as "premeditated politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents" (National Counterterrorism Center, 2006). According to its own definition, the United States' employment of private defense contractors to violently subdue nationalism movements that are opposed to U.S. imperialism and neoliberal capitalism without consistently or comprehensively discerning between civilians and active combatants is terrorism. Many people around the world view the United States as the greatest threat to world peace (Wolfe, 2014 citing a WIN/Gallop International Survey). The actions and policies of the U.S. are perceived as dangerous, violent, and destabilizing by millions of people around the world. Yet, the U.S. continues to broadly label people terrorists

and threats to the nation if they are opposed to the United States' vision of development and civilization, which we have been forcefully imposing on other nations for decades.

As Mohanty discusses in "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," identities, like space, are constructed and do not pre-exist the social, political, and economic structures that they exist within. All identities are nuanced and deeply embedded in the micro politics of place and space. The narrative that is employed in the U.S. about terrorists places them in a vacuum, lacks any nuanced understanding of people who become radicalized, and is predicated on layers upon layers of historical amnesia. Most often, people become radicalized in response to the imperial presence of the United States, the killings of innocent civilians, and the forceful imposition of neoliberal capitalism in their lives. The U.S. is essentially trying to recreate Afghanistan and Iraq in its own image, not so they can be 'free', but so we can more easily dominate their economies and exploit their labor and resources. The government of the U.S. does not seem at all concerned about the histories, cultures, and senses of place that are destroyed in the process. The more the U.S. destroys these countries and divides the people, the longer it can justify its continued presence in these spaces as restoring 'order'. The realm of humanitarian aid and conflict reconstruction has also been, to varying degrees, integrated into a neoliberal model and there is vast exploitation (Fluri 2009). It is not at all surprising that people would resist these efforts with whatever means are available to them.

There is very little public effort made by politicians and mainstream media pundits to attempt to analyze and confront the underlying causes of violent anti-U.S. activity. By not discussing why people are driven to extremism and why it is directed at the West, we have essentially ignored and devalued the lived experiences of millions of people who are being oppressed and whose countries are being occupied by the United States. By ignoring the

understandings that people have formed, we are ignoring the ways that their realities have been affected by the violent imposition of neoliberal capitalism and imperialism. Instead, the narrative that we hear serves to dehumanize and demonize Afghans and Iraqis. The War on Terror operates in such a way that human lives are considered expendable. We don't hear the stories about families killed in drone strikes or villages destroyed from air raids. Often, the only way to access the resources necessary for daily survival is to join or support a terrorist organization which is able to supply those resources that the government is not. The War on Terror has destroyed infrastructure, killed hundreds of thousands of people, and ruptured the deeply rooted and historic sense of place that people felt in their homes. The brutality and barbarity of our own actions has been effectively hidden from the mainstream view, so that this neocolonial project of 'modernizing' Afghanistan and Iraq can continue.

The Discursive Construction of the War on Terror

President Bush's Rhetoric: Us vs. Them, Imaginative Geographies, and Cartographic Performances

Immediately following the terror attacks on September 11th in New York City and Washington D.C., President Bush made a speech addressing the nation. He categorized the events that transpired that morning as pure evil and representative of "the very worst of human nature" (2001b). He stated that the attacks threatened "our way of life" and that the United States was targeted because "we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" (2001a). The attacks on September 11th were discursively constructed as attacks on freedom. On that same day, the Bush administration prepared for war. President Bush stated that the United States military was ready and prepared, and that they would fight to "defend our freedom and all that is good" (2001b). The Bush Administration politically mobilized a narrow conception of neoliberal

freedom, as the very word freedom "resonates so widely within the common-sense understanding of Americans that it becomes 'a button that elites can press to open the door to the masses' to justify almost anything" (Harvey 2005, p. 39 integrating a quote from Rapley 2004). Because September 11th was discursively constructed as a terrorist attack on freedom itself, freedom had to be defended. Not only would freedom be defended, but the Bush Administration would also heroically spread its conception of freedom to Afghanistan and later Iraq. The construction of good versus evil created a dichotomy, defining the United States and our allies as free and benevolent while all those who stand against us are the embodiment of that evil, and all that is bad. President Bush stated that nations "who want peace and security in the world" are friends and allies to the United States and that they will work and fight together "to win the war against terrorism" (2001b). Though officially, war on a particular country was not waged on that day, President Bush declared the War on Terror.

The United States' chosen policy response to September 11th was war. The administration could have understood the terror attacks as a crime to be pursued through police and the criminal justice system, but by choosing to interpret the attacks as an act of war against the United States, we could then retaliate by waging war, allowing the Bush administration to co-construct other countries as our adversaries (Megret 2002). Because terrorism is a tactic, that is not homogenous or bound in any particular territory, the war could happen anywhere for any reason the United States' government deems fit. The construction of the political geography of terrorism has been projected and extended far beyond its initial focus: Afghanistan.

The Intelligence Community in the U.S. quickly gathered evidence that pointed to al Qaeda as the organization which committed the attacks. In his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress and the American people in 2002, President Bush described al Qaeda as a loosely

affiliated terrorist network, practicing a fringe and radical form of Islam, with the goal of "remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere" (2002a). Through this rhetoric, President Bush made it seem as though everyone, everywhere, are threatened by al Qaeda. He also stated that the intelligence community had evidence that al Qaeda had "great influence" in Afghanistan, and was supportive of the Taliban, who had formal control of most of the country from 1996-2001 (2001c).

In this speech, President Bush began to manufacture an image and produce the identity of the terrorist through the use of dehumanizing, gendered, and colonial discourses. Through the construction of terrorists as evil and barbaric villains, President Bush produced a relational identity for himself as the compassionate savior and the warrior who will defeat the terrorists. Firstly, President Bush constructed the idea that the United States was an innocent victim and that these attacks were completely unfounded. However, the terror attacks on September 11th did not occur in a vacuum independent of the United States' imperial history and "the roots of the global crisis which erupted on September 11th lie in precisely those colonial experiences and the informal quasi-imperial system that succeeded them" (Milne 2001). President Bush reduced and simplified the vast spatial and temporal complexity that led up to the attacks on September 11th. Furthermore, the repeated question after September 11th, "'why do they hate us' did not want an answer. More than a rhetorical question, it was a ritual act: to insist its un-answerability was a magical attempt to ward off this lethal attack against an American 'innocence' that never did exist" (Buck-Morss 2003, p. 24).

In conjunction with the construction of the United States as both the innocent victim and heroic rescuer, President Bush discursively created an imaginative geography of Afghanistan. Imaginative geographies are constructions that facilitate divisions within and create categories of

space. People have an idea that a space is theirs, and form understandings of what happens in that space in particular ways. As Gregory (2004) details, by blocking space in this way, and creating a space that belongs to 'us' this necessarily co-constructs the idea of a space that is 'theirs' which is immediately otherized. The space of the 'other' tends to be seen as lacking all which is good, namely freedom, that exists in 'our' space. 'Their' space is somehow inferior to 'our' space, and the people who live in those spaces are inferior as well. However, there is the underlying belief, particularly in imperial nations like the United States, that with our help and given the right tools, 'they' can be like 'us'. These imaginative geographies are fabrications but get brought to life inside uneven global power relationships (Gregory 2004). In this case, the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq were constructed in the West to justify going to war with these countries in a series of ways.

Firstly, in order to invade Afghanistan, the space needed to be related to al Qaeda. None of the alleged hijackers were Afghans. Though al Qaeda had no formal position of power within the country, President Bush described Afghanistan as a space where we can "see al Qaeda's vision for the world" (2001 c). The Bush administration had to conduct "cartographic performances" to justify an invasion of Afghanistan (Gregory 2004, p. 50). Firstly, the "performance of sovereignty" was orchestrated as the politically and culturally uneven spaces of Afghanistan were constructed and presented as a homogenous and coherent state (p. 50). Simon Dalby (2003) noted that many places in Afghanistan were missing "most of the normal attributes of statehood" and that these "simple cartographic descriptions" were utilized to simulate sovereignty in order to justify political action (74).

Also instrumental to the creation of the imaginative geography which attempted to justify war in Afghanistan, is that President Bush explicitly drew no distinction between those who actually planned and carried out the attack: allegedly certain members of al Qaeda, and the

government of Afghanistan: the Taliban. He justified war on the Taliban in Afghanistan by claiming that the Taliban knowingly and willingly harbored members of al Qaeda, and in doing so, "the Taliban regime is committing murder" (2001 c). In order to go to war in Afghanistan, the weight of the terror attacks on September 11th and the blame had to fall equally on the Taliban. The Bush administration ignored and reduced the vast spatial heterogeneity within Afghanistan and relied on the geopolitical ignorance of the general public to construct these stereotypes and simplifications. They intentionally blocked and constructed the space in order to control and manipulate it militarily, and "Afghanistan has been substituted for terrorism, because Afghanistan is accessible to military power, and terrorism is not" (Pfaff 2001). This reductionist narrative is one of the primary ways that the War on Terror was discursively justified. When President Bush said that War on Terror "begins with al Qaeda, [but] it will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated" he laid the groundwork for an expansive and unending War on Terror which has been waged in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen (2001 c).

Furthermore, in his description of Afghanistan, President Bush frames Afghan civilians as victims of the Taliban's brutal regime. While the people of Afghanistan have described the Taliban as a brutal and repressive regime, the Bush administration capitalized off of this oppression to tokenize Afghans as victims who need saving from the West. This ideology is both hypocritical and colonial. As was described by Kolhatkar (2002), the role the United States played in Afghanistan during the Cold War helped elevate the Taliban to power by supporting the repressive and extremist Mujahedeen. The United States has, for decades, engaged with Afghanistan in a way that has prevented civilians from building a country which is representative of the will of the people. President Bush's rhetoric and actions suggest that he does not see Afghans as dynamic

people with complex identities that exist within incredibly nuanced and uneven relationships of

power. In his discourse, he allows for two possible Afghan identities. Either you are a terrorist or

you are a victim of Islamic extremism. As Messerschmidt (2010) argues, this discourse utilizes

narratives of salvation in ways that reproduce colonial and patriarchal ideologies:

> [Bush's] particular communicative social action discursively constructed a regional and global heroic 'succorer' *hegemonic masculinity* in an attempt to sell the two components of his alleged global war on terror. The relationships constituting this discourse entail numerous metaphorical 'uncivilized' and toxic masculine *villains* (al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and President Saddam Hussein), numerous metaphorical emphasized feminine and infantile *victims* and/or *probable victims* (U.S., Afghan, Iraqi, and all 'civilized' men, women, and children everywhere), and a metaphorical 'civilized' and compassionate, yet only by necessity preemptively aggressive, hegemonically masculine *hero* (Bush Junior) who led the succor (i.e., military) efforts. (Messerschmidt 2010, p. 96)

President Bush categorized the war as defending not only our freedom and safety, but theirs

as well. He constructed himself as a protector and a hero, as someone defending freedom and

civilization from the 'barbarous' and 'evil' terrorists. The underlying notion of rescuing Afghans

and Iraqis, as well as the assumption that they need or want help from the United States, was used

to justify military action and the strategic use of extreme violence against the very communities

he claimed this war would protect. Throughout his many speeches from September 11th, 2001 to

the State of the Union Address on January 29th, 2002, President Bush described and constructed a

monolithic identity of terrorists and terrorist networks (including al Qaeda, the Taliban, President

Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden) as subhuman, uncivilized, and inherently evil villains.

There is no denying that the groups and people in question committed atrocities and caused

suffering on a massive scale, but to dehumanize them in an effort to impose the same level of

violence on Afghan and Iraqi people is inexcusable. Furthermore, President Bush capitalized off

of the patriarchal forms of social organization that existed in Afghanistan and Iraq and exploited

the oppression of Afghan and Iraqi women to justify war.

President Bush, as the commander in chief of the "great bastion of freedom" said he would protect liberty and freedom everywhere because it is a 'a way of life that is so essential to mankind' and regarded the War on Terror as a project that would allow people everywhere to become "'civilized' and thus 'realize their full potential'" (Messerschmidt 2010, p. 91). He employed this colonial rhetoric of salvation to justify the dramatic transformation of spaces, ideologies, and cultures that existed in Afghanistan and Iraq, which has been carried out through the strategic use of violence and mass killing.

On October 7th, 2001, President Bush launched Operation Enduring Freedom as the first phase of the War on Terror. The U.S. led coalition invaded Afghanistan and began their attack on the Taliban and al Qaeda. Within a month, the Taliban retreated from Kabul (Gregory 2004). Not long after the invasion of Afghanistan, the Bush administration chose their target for the second phase of the War on Terror. From the State of the Union on January 29th 2002 to his speech on March 19th, 2003 when he announced the invasion of Iraq, President Bush persistently dehumanized Saddam Hussein. These speeches contained descriptions of him as a violent "homicidal dictator" and a "tyrant" who was "addicted to weapons of mass destruction" (2003 a, 2003 b). Here too, President Bush exploited the brutality of the Hussein regime and the trauma and suffering of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to justify going to war there. He used their lives, their suffering, and their deaths as props to justify to the people of the United States and to the world that we should invade Iraq. The imaginative geography constructed by President Bush, which consistently used the colonial rhetoric of salvation, was performative and it produced the characteristics that it named (Gregory 2004). By creating one story of who a terrorist is and telling that story repeatedly, many in the United States were not able to conceive of terrorists outside of the narrowly defined framework that the Bush administration created.

Spaces of Invisibility and Camouflaged Politics

The imaginative geographies strategically organized and produced understandings of the territory of Afghanistan and Iraq through technical and technocultural capacities (Gregory 2004). Using highly advanced systems of intelligence and surveillance, the United States was able to produce and control the imaginative geography and the image space that was received here in the West. On October 5th, 2001, a Keyhole photo-electronic satellite was launched in companion with six other satellites operating for the United States military (Gregory 2004, p. 52). These satellites were able to take high resolution photos and bodies could be identified on the ground. After reports emerged in the press of extensive civilian casualties in the city of Jalalabad, the United States National Imagery and Mapping Agency "bought exclusive rights" to all commercial images of Afghanistan that were taken by those photo-electronic satellites (p. 52). With these images now exclusively controlled by the government, the media was denied access to images of the reality of war on the ground. By extension, people around the world, including U.S. citizens, were not allowed to see what our military was doing in Afghanistan. Journalist Maggie O'Kane said she and other reporters could only "stand on mountain tops and watch for puffs of smoke" as they were denied access to covering the war on the front lines (Gregory 2004, p. 52). Journalist Robert Hickey reported the Pentagon feared that "the images and descriptions of civilian bomb casualties—people already the victims of famine, poverty, drought, oppression and brutality—would erode public support in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world" (p. 53). The U.S. government's ability to manufacture image space created spaces of invisibility and a war without witness which was in sharp contrast to the hyper visualization of September 11th (Gregory 2004). By making the people of Afghanistan invisible, the government was able to manage the news in such a way that produced a space where

the people who were a part of al Qaeda and the Taliban, and unaffiliated civilians, "appear as nothing more than points on a map or nodes in a network: in short, as targets" (Gregory 2004, p. 53).

Additionally, by intentionally not discussing why people are driven to extremism and why it is directed at the West, the Bush administration has essentially ignored and devalued the lived experiences of a people who are being oppressed and terrorized by the United States. Instead, the narrative that we hear serves to dehumanize and demonize Afghans and Iraqis. The War on Terror operates in such a way that human lives are considered expendable. This expendability is camouflaged through particular rhetoric of politicians and in military parlance.

The discourse that surrounds the War on Terror is instrumental in shaping and framing the way the public thinks about these military operations. In "Unmasking militarism: hegemony, naturalization, camouflage" Ben Wadham and Amy Hamilton (2015) discuss discourses which serve to rationalize and justify militarism and the role that camouflage plays in this process. Camouflage is defined as "an ensemble of technologies used to maintain dominance by contributing to the normalization or the naturalization of the matter at hand. Social realities of war and militarism are hidden, masked, distorted, represented in particular ways" (Wadham and Hamilton 2015, p. 161). The critical piece of the national conversation that is lacking from mainstream media coverage is that the War on Terror was created by the ruling elites to camouflage and distort an imperial project that serves a global neoliberal agenda.

In the mainstream narratives about terrorism and the War on Terror, certain things are made clear, patterns of understanding phenomenon emerge, and particular ways of responding to the terrorists are deemed the only realistic ways to engage with them. Many truths are hidden and distorted to naturalize our militarized response to the resistance of neoliberalism and occupation.

The idea that the United States' use of violence is justified and that we have a right to defend ourselves and our interests from perceived threats no matter the cost is dangerous and has been disastrous for families, societies, and cultures that are on the receiving end. Necessary for the War on Terror to work, the underlying ideology had to be made unquestionable. Significant effort was made by those who profit from these wars to maintain their position of power within this system. Because the mainstream media is so thoroughly integrated with both the government and the military industrial complex, it is unable and/or unwilling to offer any critical analysis of the War on Terror, humanize Afghans and Iraqis, or seriously confront the imperial relations and actions which lead to terrorism and anti-U.S. sentiments.

Despite the mainstream media's dismissal of the reality at hand, there are many news outlets that are ready and willing to criticize the War on Terror as an imperial project. In 2015, The Intercept received a cache of documents detailing the inner workings of the U.S. military's assassination program in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. One document titled "Manhunting in the Hindu Kush: civilian casualties and strategic failures in America's longest war" published by Ryan Devereaux in October 2015 outlines the assassination program in Afghanistan. From 2011 to 2013 some of the most elite forces in the U.S. military supported by the CIA and other elements of the Intelligence Community set out to destroy the Taliban and al Qaeda forces that remained in the Hindu Kush along Afghanistan's northeastern border with Pakistan. Called Operation Haymaker, the campaign has "been described as a potential model for the future of American warfare: special operations units, partnered with embedded intelligence elements running a network of informants, pinpointing members of violent organizations, then drawing up plans to eliminate those targets from the battlefield" (Devereaux 2015). However, Operation Haymaker

has failed for the most part. Nine out of ten people who were killed in Operation Haymaker were not direct targets and were not associated with militant groups (Devereaux 2015).

The United States military hides many realities of the War on Terror through camouflaged language when discussing the results of their operations. For example, in remote killings the United States labels the dead as enemies until, and if, it is proven otherwise. When the dead include what is called in military parlance "military-age males" or MAMs, which are men between the ages of 16 and 40, they are automatically assumed to be a combatant, and will be labeled a terrorist without looking into the matter any further to try to find the identity of the person (Devereaux 2015). The reduction of human life and blatant disregard for the truth is striking. This particular way that language is used by the military to control and distort what civilians think we know about warfare is an example of the camouflaged politics that categorize the War on Terror, as well as contemporary U.S. domestic and foreign policy. This blatant disregard for civilian lives will never eradicate terrorism and anti-U.S. sentiments. It will, and has, instead fuel and perpetuate the resistance to the imperial acts that the United States is carrying out in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, this model that fails to distinguish between military and civilian targets is being described as the future of U.S. warfare.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, and the wars waged under the War on Terror in general, are significantly different from other U.S. wars. Unlike the war in Vietnam, for example, in these wars the government uses civilian contractors to support the U.S. armed forces. In Afghanistan, military contractors outnumber soldiers three to one. This has allowed for the assumption that there are less U.S. lives at risk. In the article "Remember Those Who Wore the 'Boots on the Ground'" by James Wright (2016), the metaphor of soldiers as boots on the ground is discussed as disguising the real prices paid by those who serve in the military. The metaphor

obscures and abstracts humanity and allows us to detach from the reality that young Americans are being deployed to kill young Afghans, in a war that we cannot possibly win, with no clear exit strategy in sight. This metaphor allows us to substitute leather boots for human flesh and blood that is spilled on all sides. The media generally helps to perpetuate a blurred narrative by constantly referring to defense experts that are entrenched within the military industrial complex and share the ideology that our use of violence is justified and necessary, regardless of the costs. In mainstream media, we rarely hear from peace activists in the U.S., or refugees, or anti-imperialism activists from conflict affected countries. Because of the increased technology and connectedness that characterizes contemporary life, we are able to read information from grassroots organizations in conflict affected countries to hear their perceptions and experiences of the conflict. However, these groups are not presented as reputable sources in the mainstream media, if spoken of at all. There is a monopoly on the type of information and knowledge that the public is able to hear about the War on Terror. In order to hear critical reflections, people must seek them out, and unfortunately many do not. This obscures the grounded realities and embodied experiences of this conflict, rendering lived perceptions invisible in the West.

Many people in the United States knew very little about Afghanistan or Iraq when the U.S. invaded. Even after several three years of being at war in Iraq, nearly two thirds of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 could not find Iraq on a map (National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs 2006). Politicians are able to rule and manufacture consent by taking advantage of and (re)producing systems that are conducive to an ignorant and uninformed citizenship. Despite many people in the United States not knowing much about Iraq, millions of people in the U.S. and around the world were opposed to the war. The documentary film *We Are Many* produced by Amir Amirani chronicles the global resistance to the United States and the United Kingdom's invasion

and occupation of Iraq. On February 15th, 2003, the world witnessed what Phyllis Bennis described as "the single largest mobilization of people in the history of humanity" (Bennis 2015, p. 11). Over 15 million people in 650 cities around the world marched against the invasion of Iraq (Bennis 2015). The massive demonstrations, which took place throughout the United States and the United Kingdom as well, went ignored by President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. They were not able to manufacture consent for this invasion. The people did not support it and the United Nations did not pass the resolution they needed to make this invasion legal, but the U.S. and U.K. had the power to invade anyway. According to former United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan, the U.S.-led war on Iraq is illegal as it was not sanctioned by the UN Security Council and violates the UN charter (MacAskill & Borger 2004). Furthermore, on March 7th 2003 the United Nation's weapons inspectors reported to the Security Council on the progress of disarmament and search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Chief United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix stated that his team of investigators along with Mohamed ElBaradei, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), found no evidence that President Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (UNSC/7682 2003, March 7). Blix requested more time and stronger mechanisms for inspection, arguing that military action against Iraq was unwarranted and that Iraq's peaceful disarmament was possible. In spite of this, the United States and the United Kingdom made the decision to invade Iraq, indicating that they were uninterested in the possibility of Iraq disarming peacefully. They refused to allow the inspectors to finish their search for weapons of mass destruction, further suggesting that weapons of mass destruction were not the true motivator for invasion. Considering this, one can argue that the governments of the United States and United Kingdom used the attacks on September 11th as a force which "provided Washington with the green light to stop asking countries if they wanted the US version of free

trade and democracy and to start imposing it with Shock and Awe military force" (Klein 2007, p. 9). This disregard for democracy and the freedom of millions of people to voice their opposition is in direct contradiction to what President Bush and Prime Minister Blair's stated mission was with invading Iraq.

Neoliberalizing Space: Foundation and Effects

Militarism at Home and Abroad

Through analyzing the domestic and foreign policy, as well as the speeches that have constituted the War on Terror, it is clear that the wars carried out under its name are being fought for profit. This reality has been strategically hidden and disguised from the U.S. public. People either don't see this reality, or they don't see this as problematic, in part due to the ways that neoliberal capitalism, neocolonialism, and militarism have been so successfully rationalized, normalized, and integrated into the common sense of the masses. The War on Terror has piloted the United States' strategic integration of neoliberal capitalism with militarism in Afghanistan and Iraq that is being carried out through perpetual warfare for profit.

The United States has historically and systematically used violence and militarism in campaigns like the War on Terror that were constructed to serve the interests of capital accumulation. These wars for profit get disguised, excused, and justified by the rhetoric of American exceptionalism and salvation abroad. The effects of this have been detrimental not only to people in the countries that the U.S. has invaded, but also to U.S. citizens, as the War on Terror has fundamentally undermined our national security while slashing our social welfare programs. Privatization and lack of public spending are representative of the increasingly neoliberal policies that politicians in the United States have adopted with the integration of free market capitalism and militarism (LaMothe 2011).

In the decade following the September 11th terror attacks, defense/military spending increased by 50% (Brown University's Costs of War project, 2017). Under the Trump administration in 2018, the U.S. will spend 59% of the discretionary budget on the military, leaving less money for health care, affordable housing, food programs, and education. This massive reallocation of public money has benefited private companies and defense contractors which serve as instruments of the United States' military industrial complex. Citizens are meant to believe that our economy is separate from our military, but they are increasingly connected. Our economy is now utterly dependent on the continuation of the militarized neocolonial project, expanding our reach into Afghanistan and Iraq, and securing our nearsighted interest in cheap oil. There has been a massive flow of public money to fund this predominantly private war, which has destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives around the world, and citizens of the United States are complicit in the process of 'modernizing' Afghanistan and Iraq to the advantage of Western corporations. In *The New Imperialism*, David Harvey explores by Hannah Arendt's thesis that militarization at home and militarization abroad are intrinsically connected. Regarding her thesis, Harvey states that "international adventurism of the neoconservatives […] had as much to do with asserting domestic control over a fractious and much-divided body politic in the U.S. as it did with a geopolitical strategy of maintaining global hegemony" (Harvey 2005, p. 195). In this way, the fear that many in the U.S. felt after the attacks on September 11th was exploited and politically mobilized to justify a perpetual warfare which has not only been detrimental to Afghans and Iraqis, but has also undermined democracy at home.

In *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,* Klein (2007) discusses disaster capitalism in which chaotic and disastrous events are perceived and treated as market opportunities to be exploited and capitalized on. The concept originally comes from Milton Friedman, who has

argued that a core element within contemporary capitalism is what Klein understands to be the shock doctrine. In *Capitalism and Freedom* Friedman states that:

> Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable. (Friedman 1962, p. ix)

Not only are disasters exploited, but at times disasters are created in order to administer exploitative economic shock therapy. Klein (2007) describes the mechanisms through which capitalism has been so deeply integrated with militarism. In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, the Bush administration was able to exploit the "fear generated by the attacks not only to launch the War on Terror but to ensure that it is an almost completely for profit venture" with defense contractors making billions of dollars at the expense of Afghan, Iraqi, and American lives (Klein 2007, p. 12). The Bush administration was composed of many disciples of Friedman and neoconservatives[3], including Donald Rumsfeld, a close friend of Friedman and President Bush's Secretary of Defense, who were "veterans of earlier disaster capitalism experiments in Latin America and Eastern Europe" (p. 12). The tremendous amount of suffering, human rights violations, and the strategic use of violence against millions of people has been carried out for profit under neoliberal capitalism.

---

[3] Neo-conservativism is a political ideology which favors the power of corporations, private enterprises, and a reinstitution of class power. It is in line with the neoliberal economic agenda favoring free market capitalism. Furthermore, neoconservatives "emphasize militarization as an antidote to the chaos of individual interests [and] they are far more likely to highlight threats, real and imagined, both at home and abroad, to the integrity and stability of the nation" (Harvey 2005, p. 82).

The Project for a New American Century: Foretelling September 11th

In 1997, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) was established to advance and advocate for this neoconservative agenda which later came to have great influence on President Bush. The project's champions included several key members of Bush's administration: Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and undersecretaries John Bolton and Paul Wolfowitz (Gregory 2004). The Project wrote a letter to Former President Clinton in 1998 pertaining to Iraq and Saddam Hussein. In the letter (signed by Rumsfeld, Bolton, and Wolfowitz, among others), they expressed their concern that American policy toward Iraq was not succeeding, and they feared that the United States might face a serious threat in the Middle East. Their concern revolved primary around Saddam Hussein, whom they suspected to be producing weapons of mass destruction. They felt that the United States could not depend on Gulf War coalition partners to ensure that sanctions were upheld and that Hussein could not circumvent UN inspections. They noted that due to an inability to determine the exact threat level and contain and control President Hussein's actions could destabilize the Middle East and that "a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will be put at hazard" (PNAC 1998). They urged President Clinton to implement a "strategy for removing Saddam's regime from power" noting that this will require "military steps to protect our vital interests in the Gulf" (PNAC 1998). Later, this argument is restated in their publication entitled Rebuilding America's Defenses. Their central goal is to advocate a policy that would secure the United States' global hegemony through military expansion and they note that this process of transformation "is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event - like a new Pearl Harbor" (PNAC 2000, p. 51). September 11th proved to be that event which the Bush administration, full of neoconservative Friedmanites believing that the United States should have global hegemonic power, was able to exploit to

privatize the military and launch the War on Terror designed to be perpetual and for profit. In fact, "within 24 hours of the attacks on New York City and Washington, Rumsfeld argued that Iraq should be a 'principal target' of the 'first round' of the war on terrorism" (Gregory 2004, p. 51).

The Bush administration outsourced many central responsibilities and functions of the government to venture capitalists. These functions range from health care for soldiers to those who interrogate prisoners. From 2003 to 2006 alone, the United States government and Department of Homeland Security issued 115,000 contracts to companies in the security business (Monahan and Beaumont, 2006). For example, Mike Battles is an ex CIA operative who now owns Custer Battles, a private security firm which has received roughly $100 million in federal contracts for their work in Iraq. He said that the "fear and disorder offered real promise" for his company (Klein 2007, p. 9). Similarly, Halliburton has secured $20 billion in U.S. government contracts for supplying housing, food, and other necessities to U.S. soldiers, as well as working to restore Iraq's oil infrastructure (Glanz and Norris, 2016). The War on Terror has been a "global war fought on every level by private companies whose involvement is paid for with public money with the unending mandate of protecting the US homeland in perpetuity while eliminating all evil abroad" (Klein 2007, p. 12).

Iraq: Auctioned Off and "Reconstructed"

These changes have not only been administered to the U.S. economy, but the economies of Afghanistan and Iraq as well. Substantial changes were imposed by the U.S. chief envoy L. Paul Bremer on Iraq's economy during the Interim government[4]. The economic changes are

---

[4] The Iraqi Interim Government took the place of the Coalition Provisional Authority on June 28. 2004 and was replaced by the Iraqi Transitional Government on May 3, 2005. The members of the

representative of standard neoliberal economic doctrine composed of massive privatization, free trade, and dramatically downsizing the government. In reaction to the economic shock therapy, Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi, the Interim Trade Minister for Iraq, said he and other Iraqis were "sick and tired of being the subjects of experiments. There have been enough shocks to the system, so we don't need this shock therapy in the economy" (Crampton 2003). While many Iraqis were not in favor of these economic changes, they had larger concerns: "While Iraqis were consumed with daily emergencies, the country could be auctioned off discreetly" (Klein 2007, p. 326). Living in an active warzone where infrastructure has been destroyed, access to basic resources for survival is severely limited, and there has been a massive disruption to general day to day life, the average person is more concerned about simply having water to drink for survival than about whether or not the water system is being privatized and sold to multinational corporations (Klein 2007).

While many critiqued the war as a ploy to secure Western access to oil, many understandings of the war didn't go beyond that. Many people didn't view the war as the result of rational policy choices. Even amongst many leftists in the West "there was little interest in the idea that war was a rational policy choice, that the architects of the invasion had unleashed ferocious violence because they could not crack open the closed economies of the Middle East by peaceful means" (Klein 2007, p. 327). In Iraq, "the process deceptively called "reconstruction" began with finishing the job of the original disaster by erasing what was left of the public sphere and rooted communities" (p. 8). The ability of people to join together freely to discuss problems and forms of

---

Interim government were appointed by the United Nations Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi. His choices were made with significant input from and influence of several U.S. officials including the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority Paul Bremer III, Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (Otterman, 2005).

structuring economic and political life was undermined by the United States in several ways. Firstly, there were 1,000 U.S. civilian employees in Iraq trying to rebuild the Iraqi government in the interest of the United States. (Fischell 2006). Additionally, the violence inflicted through the aerial bombing campaign made leaving the house to organize and rebuild their nation—especially if they appeared to be organizing against the involvement of the United States—very dangerous. The processes of post conflict reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, and international aid have also been increasingly integrated within the neoliberal model (Fluri 2009).

Many intellectual proponents for the war employed the "model" theory in their justification and rationalization of going to war with Iraq. Many pundits in favor of this theory, most of whom identified as neoconservatives, argued that terrorism was coming from the Arab and Muslim world only. They qualified the entire region as a blocked space for potential terrorist activity and advancement (Klein 2007). It was their argument that this region of the world produced terrorism and held anti U.S. sentiments not because of the actions or policies of the U.S., but because the region was lacking in free-market democracy. Because the entire region could not be confronted and transformed all at once, Iraq was chosen as the catalyst. The United States invaded Iraq and attempted to completely reconstruct the space according to a neoliberal model favorable to the west and neoliberal capitalism. According to the logic of model theory, a fight against terrorism, the spread of neoliberal capitalism, and holding elections that were meant to be democratic in image only, were all interconnected parts of one project.

Invading Iraq was justified by a series of lies about Saddam Hussein possessing weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration assured people in the West that once President Hussein was overthrown, "we would be greeted by the people of Iraq with flowers and hailed as liberators rather than occupiers" (Fischel 2006, p. 298). This proposition again rests on the

administration's refusal to humanize the people of Iraq. The Bush administration did not ostensibly conceive of Iraqis as a people with their own individual and collective wills, with plans and desires for their country that exist outside of what the United States wishes to impose there. As was the case with Afghanistan, there was never any real interest in the wellbeing of Iraqis. Choosing to see and present Afghans and Iraqis as people who could not solve their own problems or organize and rebuild their societies for themselves, was a strategy which sought to normalize and justify intervention by the United States. According to Fischel (2006), the Bush administration chose to invade Iraq for geopolitical and geo-economic reasons. For example, it was believed that if Iraq was pro-U.S., this would allow the United States to build a military base there, so we could move troops "from an increasingly unstable Saudi Arabia, and create stability for the flow of oil to the West" (p. 278). Iraq has the world's fifth largest known oil reserves[5], and because at that time the world economy was increasingly dependent on oil, securing access to oil under a neoliberal model was central to the vision the United States had about what a pro-U.S. Iraq would look like.

Furthermore, because Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator and used chemical weapons against his own people, he was an easy target to demonize and vilify. In Robin Cook's resignation speech to the British Parliament over the United Kingdom's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, he noted that while Saddam Hussein most likely did not have weapons of mass destruction, he did have biological and chemical weapons. Cook said, Iraq has had these weapons "since the 1980s when the US sold Saddam the anthrax agents and the then British companies built his chemical and munitions factories" (Cook 2003). Under the Reagan administration from 1981 to 1989, the groundwork was laid for corporations in the United States to sell the inorganic material to Iraq

---

[5] As of 2017, Iraq has 142,500,000,000 proven crude oil reserves in barrels making it the fifth largest concentration of oil in the World behind Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and Iran (The CIA World Factbook).

which Saddam Hussein then used to produce chemical weapons including mustard and Sarin gases which were used on Kurdish villages (McKiernan 2006).

In the village of Halabja in March 1988 it is reported that thousands of Kurdish civilians died from these chemical weapons (Bretton-Gordon 2007). Because the inorganic material came from U.S. corporations, it is reasonable to assume that the administration of the United States would be concerned with its use. However, "at no time did President Reagan or Vice President Bush speak out in condemnation of Iraqi Chemical Weapon use, or in any way indicate that Washington opposed such actions" (Klare 2003, p.19). Additionally, in its report *Human Rights in Iraq,* Middle East Watch (1990, p. 101) records a long and detailed history of abuses committed by Saddam Hussein's regime and stated that "the Reagan and Bush administrations have paid scant attention to human rights in their dealings with Iraq. Both have put nurturing of newly friendly relations with President Saddam Hussein well ahead of addressing the violent and repressive nature of his regime" (p. 101). Up until Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Bush Senior pursued and supported policy that maintained a relationship of appeasement toward Iraq (McKiernan, 2006; Klare, 2003; Lando, 2007).

The hypocrisy is blatant. The United States had no interest in remediating the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, and they had no interest in listening to and working with Iraqis to improve living conditions under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. The 2003 invasion led by Bush Junior was strategic, as it was believed that it would "set off a series of democratic/neoliberal waves throughout the region" (Klein 2007, p. 328). Many of the claims that were meant to legitimize a pre-emptive military engagement in Iraq, including a relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda and President Hussein possessing weapons of mass destruction, were proven false. When

the truth came out, President Bush tried to appeal to the idea of liberating and bringing freedom to Iraq as "adequate justification for war" (Harvey 2005, p. 6).

A key advisor to the Bush administration described the War on Terror as a "war to remake the world" (Bremer 2006, p. 93). After the initial invasion, Paul Bremer, who was in charge of the Coalition Provisional Authority, issued four orders to liberalize Iraq's economy. These include the 'full privatization of public enterprises, full ownership rights by foreign firms of Iraqi businesses, the opening of Iraq's banks to foreign control, national treatment for foreign companies, and the elimination of nearly all trade barriers' (Juhasz 2004). In the neoliberal model, these are the changes that were understood as catalysts of individual freedom. However, these changes have eased foreign economic exploitation and decreased the control that ordinary Iraqis have over their local and national economies. Here, the constellations of global power, knowledge, and geography can be analyzed through a postcolonial lens as continuing to colonize lives all over the world, as they are "not confined to the legatees of empires old or new, formal or informal" but instead are deeply entrenched in Western consciousness (Gregory 2004, p. xv). The Bush Administration demonstrated an inability and/or refusal to humanize and understand the 'other', which is in this case the 'terrorist', in a way that comprehensively addressed the anti-U.S. sentiments amongst them. This dehumanization is indicative of the fact that his administration, and the Obama administration which followed, continue to "think and act in ways that are dyed in the colors of colonial power" (p. xv). People from the East are not seen as human agents in the way that Westerners see themselves, and the result of this orientalism has been devastating for millions of innocent civilians.

The War on Terror, by design, has radically transformed spaces in order to enact new forms of social and economic organization that are more favorable to the West. The history of colonialism

which has been "forced upon the peoples it subjugated, and the way in which it withdrew from them the right to make their own history, ensuring that they did so emphatically not under conditions of their own choosing" is still being carried out today through the War on Terror (Gregory 2004, p. 10). The United States has imposed economic liberalization through mass strategic violence. Multinational corporations have increasing access to land and resources in these spaces. With U.S. imperial presence and the daily realities of war, Afghans and Iraqis have less and less of a say in how to organize their social, political, and economic lives.

President Obama's Continuation of the War on Terror

The policies which so deeply entrenched militarism with neoliberal capitalism ignited under the Bush administration continued without much significant change under the Obama administration. In direct response to the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi announced that the Sunni militant group which was first known as al Qaeda in Iraq, was to be renamed the Islamic State of Iraq, or ISI in 2006. This would later resurface as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as Daesh (Bennis 2015). Within the first year of his presidency, Obama dramatically escalated the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, sending an additional 50,000 troops. In addition, throughout his presidency he escalated drone strikes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen and as Bennis (2015) notes, Bush's version of the War on Terror "never really ended" (p. 63). It was instead continued and expanded under the Obama administration as anti-U.S. sentiment grew stronger. In some significant ways, the War on Terror as it was carried out under President Obama was different. For example, he increasingly used drone strikes to minimize the physical presence of troops on the ground. He also "rejected Bush's phraseology" that the War on Terror would reshape the United States' role in the world, though he

"continued the global war on terror in practice" (p. 64). In addition, neoconservatives were no longer in top positions in the White House so the explicit ideological commitment to utilize warfare and impose strategic shock and awe violence to expand and secure U.S. hegemony was absent. However, the groundwork had already been laid and the neocolonial policies continued to be implemented through the continuation and expansion of the War on Terror under the Obama administration. What can be seen is that "regardless of who was in the White House, the war has clearly never succeeded in any of its ostensible goals, whether ending the threat of terrorism of bringing pro-American stability" (p. 64).

There seems to be an inability or refusal to think beyond the current mechanisms that we are using, which have failed at actually eradicating terrorism. Furthermore, the actions of the United States' military and private defense contractors have been widely cited as terrorist actions themselves (Chomsky 2016). There also seems to be an inability to think concretely about the role that the U.S. should be playing in these situations. Islamic terrorism is disproportionately affecting the people who are living within geographical proximity to it. The people of Iraq, for example, have a right to decide for themselves as a nation how they want to address radical groups. These groups have declared themselves in opposition to Western imposition, and our continued imperial presence is exacerbating an already volatile situation.

These wars have not been debated by congress in any serious way since the Authorization of Use of Military Force (AUMF) was passed in 2001. Three days after the terror attacks on September 11th, Congress passed the AUMF which authorized the president to use military force against al Qaeda and the Taliban both within and outside of Afghanistan. As seen in figure 1, the Bush and Obama administrations interpreted the AUMF in a much broader way, as it has been used by the both administrations to authorize more than 37 military actions in 14 countries around

the world, according to a report by the Congressional Research Service (Weed 2016, p. 2). It has been used to authorize military campaigns against groups including al Shabaab and ISIS, which did not exist when the piece of legislation was adopted. The Constitution of the United States in Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 grants Congress the power to declare war. Through Article II, Section 2, the President is named the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and therefore has the power to direct the military after a congressional declaration of war (Legal Information Institute: War Powers). However, the AUMF has allowed both President Trump and President Obama to circumvent congressional approval for expanding the War on Terror. The Congress of the United States not debating these wars or facilitating public discourse about the War on Terror and potential exit strategies. They are not being held accountable to the laws proscribed in the constitution nor the will of the people in the United States who oppose endless war. Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA13) who offered an amendment in the House Appropriations Committee in June 2017 that would repeal the AUMF stated that over "the last 16 years it has become increasingly clear that this AUMF has essentially provided the president, any president, the authority to wage war in perpetuity" (Bender and Scholtes 2017, quoting Representative Lee).
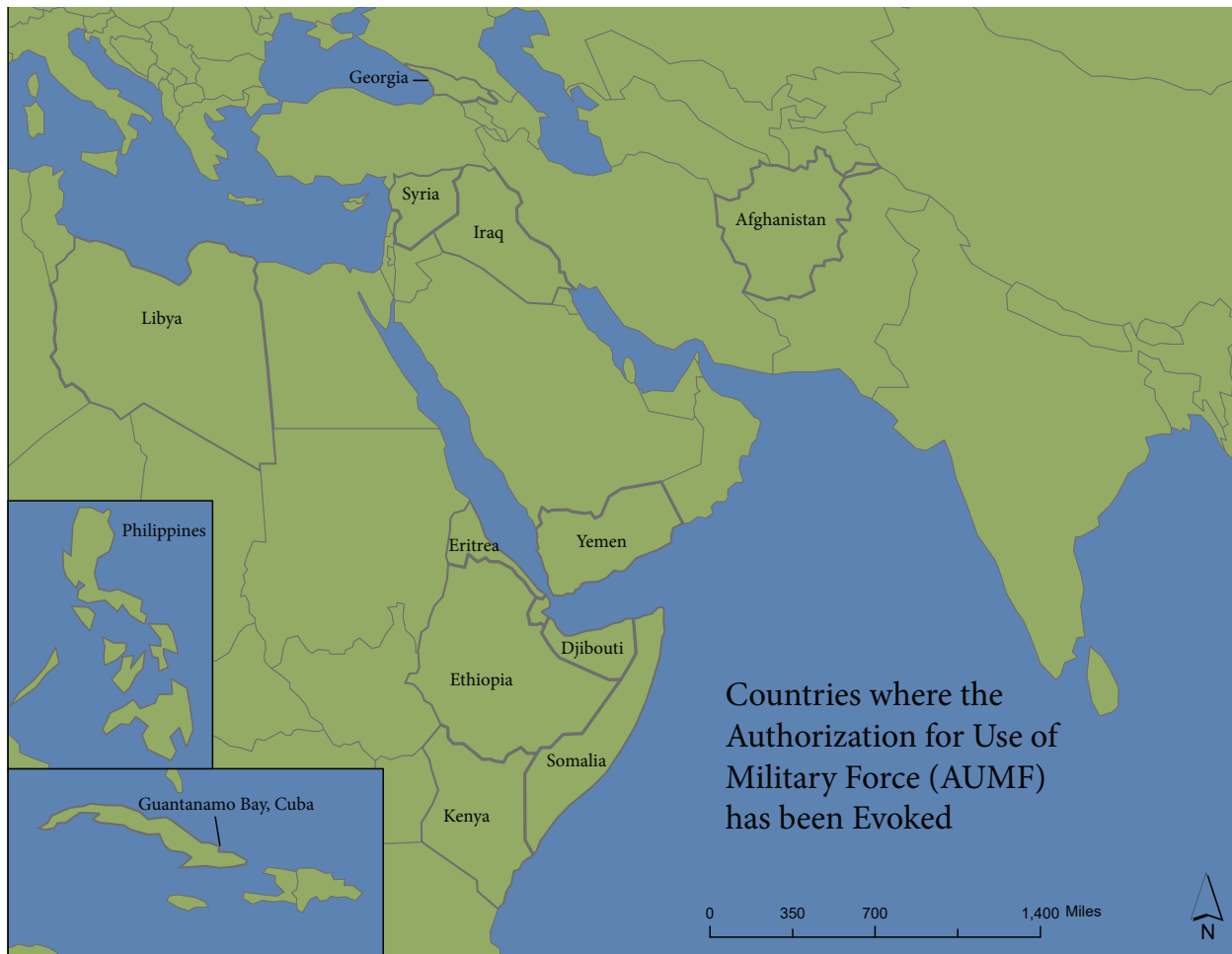
Figure 1. (Emilie Beck, Department of Global Studies and Geography).

Furthermore, the first time Congress ever met with or heard testimony from civilian victims of drone strikes in Pakistan, only 5 out of 535 congressmen were in attendance (McVeigh 2013). This is yet another example of the ways in which the lived experiences and suffering caused by the War on Terror are ignored and devalued within the United States. The grounded and embodied experiences of people living in these warzones would contradict the narrative of salvation, so they are ignored and buried.

Making Space for Embodied Experiences and Resistance: Testimonials from Civil Society Organizations in Afghanistan and Iraq

As postcultural theorists recognize, all knowledge is partial as it comes from and is produced through a particular vantage point in space which exists within social structures and power relationships that are constantly changing (Kobayashi 2009). Therefore, situated knowledges are "epistemic positions that are partial, embodied, and localized" (Kobayashi 2009, p. 138). All geographic knowledge is mediated through the spaces we exist in and the interactions we have with other people. An understanding of the War on Terror in the United States which is informed primarily through the media is entirely different from that of an Afghan living in Kabul. Furthermore, there is no one homogenous or correct understanding of the War on Terror amongst those who live in the war zones. However, the situated knowledges produced within the war zones of the War on Terror should be heard and privileged as their experiences are directly mediated through conflict, violence, and the destruction of spaces.

The situated knowledges and embodied experiences of the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq have been rendered, for the most part, invisible in the mainstream discourses and images that are presented in the United States. Mainstream news outlets do not privilege voices from the conflict zones of Afghanistan and Iraq when discussing the War on Terror because to do so would undermine and disrupt the carefully constructed image space and hegemonic imaginative geography that the U.S. government, military and media have constructed. It would reveal several unpleasant and abhorrent truths, including the lack of success the war has had at eradicating terrorism, the large number of civilians who have been killed, and the spaces which have been disrupted and destroyed. Furthermore, it would reveal the vast amount of relentless resistance to imperialism. This resistance has taken many forms, both violent and non-violent. Since the inception of the War on Terror, there has been anti-American sentiment and resistance to

imperialism that has been organized and executed peacefully—through means of non-violent civil disobedience, protest, and community organizing. These actions are, for the most part, given no platform to be recognized and comprehensively understood within the context of the United States mainstream media apparatus.

The War on Terror has not been successful at eradicating terrorism. In fact, many argue that it has done the opposite—it has fueled terrorism and in many ways justified anti-American sentiment around the world. As Catherine Lutz argues, the presence of Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan "naturally generates a self-fulfilling loop of resistance" to this imperial occupation which is responsible for the increase in anti-U.S. fighters (Lutz 2017). There is an inability or refusal to think beyond the military mechanisms that the United States has employed in the War on Terror, which disproportionately harm and kill civilians. Ideological justification for the War on Terror also lies on colonial assumptions that the United States has a right to engage with Iraq and Afghanistan in this way where the U.S. is, supposedly, the sole creator and purveyor of freedom and democracy. Contrarily, the people of Afghanistan and Iraq have a right to decide for themselves as communities and nations how they want to address acts of terror and the violence inflicted upon them. Despite the fact that in the past 17 years, the presence and actions of the United States have created more resistance and terrorists than there were when the War on Terror first started, the tactics the U.S. has employed to allegedly fight terrorism have not changed. The strategy has not been modified to be successful in eradicating the underlying forces that lead people to resort to terrorist and extremist behavior and has, on the other hand, been regarded as the future of U.S. military policy (Devereaux 2015).

When one looks into what civil society organizations from Afghanistan and Iraq have reported on their lives under the War on Terror, it can be clearly seen that the War on Terror is

largely understood as an imperial project seeking to justify and naturalize U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. Examining the ways that the citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq understand the War on Terror, terrorism itself, and anti-U.S. sentiment shows a very different version of reality than that which is presented in the West. The people of Afghanistan and Iraq naturally have ideas about the future of their countries, and they have a right to autonomy and to contribute to the reproduction and co-construction of these spaces. When the United States devalues and disregards the local people's experiences of the conflict and also their own plans for their future, resistance is inevitable. By making these understandings absent from mainstream coverage and narratives in the U.S., the U.S. is continuing to devalue the experiences, opinions, hopes and dreams of the people it is claiming to liberate and bring freedom to.

The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), is an organization in Afghanistan which works for a secular and democratic government that incorporates principles of gender equity. RAWA has been described by Fluri (2008) as an "effective political movement that intersects feminist and nationalist politics, where women are active, rather than symbolic, participants [...] and help to shape an ideological construction of the Afghan nation" (p. 34.) RAWA is the oldest civil society organization in Afghanistan that works for the liberation and empowerment of women. Through documenting the atrocities committed by the Mujahedeen, the Taliban, and the United States, as well as organizing protests, demonstrations and other events, RAWA works for a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan (Faryal 2001).

RAWA released a statement on September 14, 2001 addressing the terror attacks in New York and Washington. They stated that they were horrified by the violent attacks on the United States, and expressed sorrow and condemnation for the acts of terror. They argued that the United States played a role in creating the anti-U.S. sentiment which prompted the attacks when the

government of the U.S. supported Pakistani dictator Zia-ul Haq in the creation of religious schools from which Islamic fundamentalists arose, including many members of the Taliban. They also understood Osama bin Laden to be the "blue-eyed boy of CIA" and noted with regret and pain that U.S. politicians have not learned from their history of promoting "fundamentalist policies in our country and are still supporting" fundamentalism within Afghanistan which has systematically undermined values of democracy, women's rights and human rights (RAWA, September 14 2001). In their statement, they urge the United States to consider the root causes of the terror attacks on September 11. On September 14, 2001, they questioned:

> Now that the Taliban and Osama are the prime suspects by the US officials after the criminal attacks, will the US subject Afghanistan to a military attack similar to the one in 1998 and kill thousands of innocent Afghans for the crimes committed by the Taliban and Osama? Does the US think that through such attacks, with thousands of deprived, poor and innocent people of Afghanistan as its victims, will be able to wipe out the root-cause of terrorism, or will it spread terrorism even to a larger scale? (RAWA, September 14, 2001)

Very early on they, and many others, questioned the United States' true intentions and beliefs about what a War on Terror could possibly accomplish. RAWA, along with many other civil society groups, were working for decades to establish a democratic government in Afghanistan. One of the main obstacles to attaining this general will of the people—people who want to be free and live in peace—has been the United States' imperial presence in and relationship with Afghanistan for decades. While RAWA and many people throughout the country wanted to see the Taliban fall, they believed that it should have been overthrown by "the uprising of [the] Afghan nation" and not by the hands of the United States (RAWA October 11 2001). They argue that despite its stated intentions, the United States' involvement with Afghanistan does not pay "the least attention to the fate of democracy" (RAWA October 11, 2001). Furthermore, they have argued that if the U.S. were to continue its attacks and increase the number of civilian casualties,

this would "not only give an excuse to the Taliban, but also will cause the empowering of the fundamentalist forces in the region and even in the world" (RAWA October 11, 2001). The imperial presence of the United States in Afghanistan and its detrimental effects to innocent civilians in the country naturally generates resistance and increases the prevalence of anti-U.S. terrorism.

On October 31, 2001 Tahmeena Faryal gave testimony before the Subcommittee of the U.S. House on International Operations and Human Rights regarding 'Afghan People vs. the Taliban' and their struggle for freedom on behalf of RAWA. She said that "the people's voices are rarely heard, and are at risk of being drowned out entirely by the horrific crash of war and global geo-politics" (Faryal 2001). She also said that Afghanistan would not "tolerate external control, and even starving Afghans will resist foreign domination" (Faryal 2001). This resistance to imperialism and the determination of people to choose their future and the future of their country for themselves is a strong force. The United States has not been able to eradicate the Afghan people's belief in self-determination and true freedom. RAWA also recognizes the inability of the United States to bring or create a state of freedom in any space outside of the U.S. itself, because "the freedom of a nation is to be achieved by itself—similarly the real emancipation of women can be realized only by themselves. If that freedom is bestowed by others, it may be seized and violated at any time" (RAWA, March 8 2004).

Furthermore, in December of 2007 RAWA released a statement noting that the United States and its allies attempted to legitimize the military occupation of Afghanistan under the guise of spreading freedom and democracy to Afghanistan, but for the past three decades Afghanistan had experienced first-hand the reality that the "U.S. government first of all considers her own political and economic interests and has empowered and equipped the most traitorous, anti-

democratic, misogynist and corrupt fundamentalist gangs in Afghanistan" (RAWA December 10, 2007). It is apparent to civil society organizations in Afghanistan that the freedom and wellbeing of the people of Afghanistan is not the prime interest of the government of the United States. The values of the people of Afghanistan have been disregarded in the United States' attempt to rebuild the country in its own interest.

Another organization, the Afghan Peace Volunteers (APV) which is located in Kabul works to reorganize society within Afghanistan to promote nonviolent relationships between people and to build a world without war. Their opposition to the War on Terror and the United States occupation is similar to that of RAWA. On October 31, 2017, APV organized a meeting for mothers in their Borderfree Center in Kabul. Thirty mothers sat in a circle and expressed their pain and fears. Though these women all have different experiences of the conflict, "much of the suffering voiced was common: most of the women had to support their families as they moved from house to house, not being able to come up with the rent for a more permanent space, and many women experienced severe body pains, often a result of chronic stress" (Kelly 2017). The War on Terror in Afghanistan has not eradicated terrorism or brought economic prosperity and freedom to the average person, and it has caused an indescribable amount of pain and suffering amongst innocent civilians.

The Taliban and other armed groups have officially stated that they will not back down and stop fighting until the United States ends its occupation of Afghan land. RAWA states that their people have "found by experience in the past few years that the U.S. doesn't want to defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda, because then they will have no excuse to stay in Afghanistan and work towards the realization of its economic, political and strategic interests in the region" (RAWA December 10 2007). They believe that the War on Terror has been a mechanism through which

the United States has been able to secure their economic interests through the integration militarism and neoliberal capitalism. This economic exploitation of shock, terror and violence has been carried out under the Obama and Trump administrations as well. In 2017 President Trump announced there would be an increase in troops deployed to Afghanistan, and exit strategies have not been debated in Congress. Mothers of Afghanistan and other civil society groups continue to be disregarded by the government of the United States.

In 2003 RAWA made a statement regarding the government of the United States' intention of invading Iraq where they noted that while the U.S. government wants war, the people of the U.S. and the world want peace. They stated that:

> While a war against terrorism in the name of democracy is the excuse for the attack, the people of Afghanistan, at least, know well the hidden nature of these claims and excuses. The Iraqi people have suffered and been pushed to the limit by the crimes of Saddam's regime but this has never meant that they ask the US and its allies to save them with military intervention. The change of government in each country is the prerogative of the people of that country, otherwise the result will be neither stable nor sustainable for the long term. (RAWA February 24, 2003)

Iraq also has strong civil society organizations which are opposed to the U.S. occupation of their country and in favor of a democratic Iraq. The Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) was created out of the worldwide coalition which organized the largest mobilization of people in history on February 15, 2003 in opposition to the United States' imminent invasion of Iraq. The advocacy initiative in Iraq works to build links and promote solidarity between Iraqi civil society organizations and supports and promotes projects which work for "human rights, a just peace, and all efforts to oppose sectarian conflict, corruption and violence in Iraq" (ICSSI, May 8, 2015). Since its inception, ICSSI has worked to protest and end the foreign occupation of Iraq by the United States.

ICSSI has a campaign to 'stop private military companies.' The first publication under this campaign is titled 'What Justice for Iraqi Victims of Private Military and Security Companies' and was written in May of 2012. The report chronicles events in the years between 2003-2012 where there has been a "dramatic increase in the use of private military and security companies [PMSCs] in places of armed conflict" by the United States and the United Kingdom (ICSSI, May 20, 2012). They note that these companies have been "implicated in illegal use of force, the killing of civilians, torture, sexual assault, and other human rights abuses" but despite this, they are rarely investigated or charged for the crimes they commit and therefore, the victims get no justice (ICSSI, May 20, 2012). ICSSI understands the increased prevalence of private defense companies and the extreme use of violence they commit against the people of Iraq to be a "private war" that has been ongoing since 2003. They argue that the private army of those who work for the defense contractors that are implicated in the crimes they describe "simply don't respect human lives" in Iraq (ICSSI October 7, 2012).

The disregard for human life is apparent. In the past 17 years in Afghanistan and 15 in Iraq, the United States has spent or pledged to spend 5.6 trillion dollars on the War on Terror (Brown University's Costs of War project, 2017). RAWA has stated the results of the War on Terror have left Afghanistan "poor, corrupt, insecure, hungry, and crippled with tribal, linguistic, and sectarian divisions. There is no security; our people did not find food and prosperity; the occupiers have demolished the idea of democracy" (RAWA July 10, 2014). The War on Terror has been expanded to affect 76 countries through air and drone strikes, combat troops, the presence of U.S. military bases, and training in counterterrorism (Brown University's Costs of War project, 2017). Unfortunately, we do not know with any degree of certainty how many casualties, both military and civilian, there have been in Afghanistan and Iraq. According to General Tommy Franks, the

man who was in charge of the initial invasion of Iraq, "we don't do body counts" (Broder 2003). Though there are no official numbers, there are many estimates about the human toll that this War has taken. Brown University's Costs of War Project states that in Afghanistan and Iraq 370,000 people have died directly from war violence, and at least 800,000 have died from the conflict indirectly. Iraq Body Count, a widely watched database reports that they have been able to document 180,807 civilian deaths from the War (Iraq Body Count). Contrastingly, a survey conducted by Opinion Research Business (ORB) which interviewed 2,414 adults in Iraq in 15 of Iraq's 18 provinces found much higher numbers. Using the information gathered from the interviews and analyzing population data in Iraq, they estimate that between 946,258 and 1.12 million people have been killed directly and indirectly from the war in Iraq alone. This survey was conducted in 2007, so the numbers have undoubtedly risen (Baker 2008). These numbers are inconclusive.

The unwillingness of the United States to keep a record of the effects and toll the War on Terror has had on human life in Afghanistan and Iraq is striking, though not surprising. It is in line with the general mentality that dehumanizes the people who live in these spaces through a series of racialized and colonial generalizations. Additionally, as members of RAWA stated above, the killing of civilians and continued presence of the United States adds fuel to the fire of those radical groups the United States claims it is attempting to eradicate. The War on Terror is a neocolonial project which operates according to a neoliberal economic model and has generated billions of dollars for many multinational corporations in the defense, security, and construction industries. By rendering the lived experiences of those most affected by the War on Terror, and refusing to count and acknowledge their deaths, the United States and its allies in this war have systematically disregarded Afghan and Iraqi lives. Given the realities of the War on Terror and the reports from

Afghan and Iraqi civil society, it is hard to imagine that the true intention of the United States is to eradicate terrorism and establish democracy.

Conclusion

As Thrift (2003) argued, spaces are slowly provided with the means to be rendered sustainable and to continue functioning in the way that they are. It is often said that there was 'no plan' for the War on Terror, specifically in terms of rebuilding the nations involved post-conflict (Chandrasekeran 2007; Packer 2005). The Bush administration is often painted as naive, at times to the point of negligence, by critics on the left and right of the political spectrum in the United States. Additionally, most rhetoric that does suppose there was a plan does not go beyond the interest in securing U.S. access to oil. Oil is a valued resource and did play a role in the United States' decision to invade and occupy Iraq. However, it is difficult to believe that the Bush administration had no idea what they were doing when they launched a privatized and perpetual war seventeen years ago. These analyses of the War on Terror and the Bush administration which assume that they didn't know what they were doing or what the consequences would be are a way of excusing what they did and are responsible for.

A series of strategic political decisions were made that have resulted in a perpetual war that is being carried out for profit. The Bush administration carefully constructed a monolithic identity of the terrorist through discourses and images, while also producing gendered and racialized imaginative geographies of Afghanistan and Iraq. The West has a long history of colonialism and racism as it relates to the East. Colonialism is as much a political process as it is a system through which power and knowledge are concentrated. It is, in part, through the colonial nexus of control over knowledge production that "the 'Orient' has emerged as a place" and moreover, the 'Middle East' has been constructed "as a product of Orientalism and a site of violence that can be mapped

through a cartography of difference produced under an orientalist gaze from colonial times until the present" (Kobayashi 2009, p. 141). The Bush administration, and later the Obama administration, manufactured consent for the War on Terror through perpetuating colonial narratives and using camouflaged language to discuss the spaces and the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. The War on Terror was ideologically supported by colonial narratives of salvation and liberation. The narratives relied heavily on the dehumanization and weaponization of bodies in these spaces. Launching the War on Terror had foreseeable consequences which were pointed out by human rights and peace organizations around the world, including RAWA. The War on Terror is not so far out of line with the ways in which the United States has interacted with other parts of the world throughout its history.

While there certainly does not seem to have been any plan for the ways in which the United States would rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq politically as lasting and durable democracies, any such plan would be inherently contradictory and fail. As RAWA stated, freedom and democracy cannot be imposed—they cannot be bestowed by a foreign nation. Freedom and democracy must be built and secured from within. However, it is clear to many in the West and most in Afghanistan and Iraq that there was an economic plan for the War on Terror. The Bush administration wanted access to oil but also access to Afghan and Iraqi economies at a more fundamental level—access and control to change their economies to integrate them further into the global market under a neoliberal model. This economic shock therapy that was so violently imposed on Afghans and Iraqis in the name of the War on Terror and bringing freedom and democracy has not, and cannot, been rendered sustainable. Though billions of dollars have been made for defense, security, and construction companies from the War on Terror, the stated goals of the war to eradicate terrorism

and establish a stable and pro-U.S. Afghanistan and Iraq have not been met. In fact, the War on Terror has created, and conducted, terrorism.

It is contradictory, that a nation which is regarded by many around the world as the largest purveyor of terror globally, could conduct and lead a war against terrorism (Chomsky 2016). A war cannot be fought on something like terrorism, an ideology, in the same way that a war is fought against a nation-state. It is clear that in the past seventeen years this has failed. This is not because the methods the United States military employs are ineffective, but because at a much more fundamental level, the war generates a self-fulfilling feedback loop motivating more extremist behavior. If peace, freedom and democracy are to be attained, the first step that must be taken is to end the War on Terror. Afghanistan and Iraq are owed reparations for the damage, destruction, and chaos that the United States has caused in the name of their liberation. The racialized, gendered, and reductionist narratives that sought to justify and naturalize the United States' War on Terror have led to unquantifiable amounts of suffering. If the people of Afghanistan and Iraq are going to have a legitimate chance at building free and democratic spaces for themselves, the United States must end its neocolonial and extremely violent campaign against 'terror' as it has undermined every value it claims to promote. Furthermore, citizens of the United States who have access to the truths underlying the massive propaganda machine that the U.S. government operates to justify, camouflage, and perpetuate its imperial role in the world, cannot turn a blind eye. In doing so, we are complicit to the atrocities that are carried out in our name. Through the integration of neoliberal capitalism and militarism, the United States has carried out a privatized war that was built to have no end. The War on Terror has been disastrous for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, who have been dehumanized, vilified, and ignored in the U.S. as their lives have been rendered expendable for the sake of capital.

References

Baker, L. (2008, January 30). Iraq conflict has killed a million Iraqis: Survey. *Reuters.* Retrieved

from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-deaths-survey/iraq-conflict-has-killed-a-

million-iraqis-survey-idUSL3048857920080130

Barr, H. (2017, June 6). Women excluded again from Afghanistan's peace talks. *Human Rights*

Watch. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/06/women-excluded-again-

afghanistans-peace-talks

Beaumont, H. E., & Monahan, R. (2006, August 3). Big time security. *Forbes.* Retrieved from

https://www.forbes.com/forbes/welcome/?toURL=https://www.forbes.com/2006/08/02/homelan

d-security-contracts

Bender, B., & Scholtes, J. (2017, June 29). House panel votes to force new debate on terror war.

Politico. Retrieved from https://www.politico.com/story/2017/06/29/congress-vote-

authorize-war-islamic-state-240095

Bennis, P. (2015). *Understanding ISIS and the new global war on terror.* Northampton MA:

Olive Branch Press.

Berg, L. D. (2009). Discourse analysis. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *International*

encyclopedia of human geography (pp. 215-221). Elsevier.

Block, W., Crane, K., Foote, C., Gray, S. (2004). Economic policy and prospects in Iraq. *The*

Journal of Economic Perspectives, 18(3), 1-37. JSTOR. (Accession No. esdjsr.3216806).

Borger, J., & MacAskill, E. (2004, September 15). Iraq War Was Illegal and Breached UN

Charter, Says Annan. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq

Bremer III, P. (2006). *My year in Iraq: The struggle to build a future of hope.* New York: Simon

    Schuster.

Bretton-Gordon, H. (2016, March 16). Remembering Halabja chemical attack. *Al Jazeera.*

    Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/03/remembering-

    halabja-chemical-attack-160316061221074.html

Broder, J. M. (2003, April 2). A nation at war: The casualties; US military has no count of Iraqi

    dead. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from

    https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/02/world/nation-war-casualties-us-military-has-no-

    count-iraqi-dead-fighting.html

Buck-Morss, S. (2003). *Thinking past terror: Islamism and critical theory on the left.* London:

    Verso.

Buncombe, A. (2017, November 20). America has no idea how many innocent people it's killing

    in the Middle East. *The Independent.* Retrieved from

    https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/us-isis-air-strikes-civilian-deaths-syria-iraq-

    america-no-idea-how-many-dead-the-uncounted-a8066266.html

Bush, G. (2001a, September 11). *Remarks at Barksdale Air Base, Louisiana, on the terrorist*

    attacks. Retrieved from http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=58056

Bush, G. (2001b, September 11). *Address to the Nation on the terrorist attacks.* Retrieved from

    http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057

Bush, G. (2001c, September 20). *Address before a Joint Session of Congress on the United*

    States response to the terrorist attacks of September 11. Retrieved from

    http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64731

Bush, G. (2002a, January 29). *Address before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union.* Retrieved from

https://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html

Bush, G. (2003a, March 17). *Address to the Nation on Iraq.* Retrieved from

https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PPP-2003-book1/pdf/PPP-2003-book1-doc-pg277.pdf

Bush, G. (2003b, March 19). *Address to the Nation on Iraq.* Retrieved from

http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=63368

Chomsky, N. (2014, November 3). The long shameful history of American terrorism. *In These Times.* Retrieved from

http://inthesetimes.com/article/17311/noam_chomsky_the_worlds_greatest_terrorist_campaign

Chomsky, N. (2016). *Who rules the world?* New York: Picador.

Cook, R. (2003, March 4). Why I had to leave the Cabinet. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/mar/18/foreignpolicy.labour1

Cornell Law School. War Powers. Retrieved from https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/war_powers

Counterterrorism Center. (2006, April 7). Country reports on terrorism 2005, statistical annex. Retrieved from https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65489.pdf

Country comparison: crude oil – proved reserves. *The CIA world fact book.* Retrieved from

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2244rank.html

Crampton, T. (2003, October 14). Iraq official urges caution on imposing free market. *New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/14/business/iraqi-official-urges-caution-on-imposing-free-market.html

Dalby, S. (2003). Calling 911: Geopolitics, security, and America's new war. *Geopolitics. 8*(3),

61-88. Academic Search Complete. (Accession No. 12329670).

Devereaux, R. (2015, October 15). Manhunting in the Hindu Kush: civilian casualties and

strategic failures in America's longest war. *The Intercept.* Retrieved from

https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/manhunting-in-the-hindu-kush/

Escobar, A. (1992). Imagining a post-development era? Critical thought, development and social

movements. *Social Text. (31/32)*, 20-56. http://doi.org/10.2307/466217

Escobar, A. (1992). Planning. In Wolfgang Sachs (1st), *The development dictionary: A guide to

knowledge as power* (pp. 132-145). Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Esteva, G. (1992). Development. In Wolfgang Sachs (1st), *The development dictionary: A guide

to knowledge as power* (pp. 6-25). Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Fischel, J, R. (2006, March 22). The War in Iraq [Review of The Assassins' Gate: America in

Iraq]. *The Virginia Quarterly Review, 82*(2), 297. Academic OneFile. (Accession No.

edsglc.146336281).

Fluri, J. (2008). Feminist-nation building in Afghanistan: an examination of the Revolutionary

Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). *Feminist Review, 89*, 34-54. Francis

Archive. (Accession No. edsfra.20578384).

Fluri, J. (2009). Foreign passports only: geographies of (post)conflict work in Kabul,

Afghanistan. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *99*(5), 986–994.

JSTOR. (Accession No. edsjsr.20621268).

Fluri J. (2011). Bodies, bombs and barricades: geographies of conflict and civilian (in)security.

Transactions of The Institute of British Geographers, *36*(2), 280-296.

http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2010.00422.x

Fluri, J., & Lehr, R. (2017). *The carpetbaggers of Kabul and other American-Afghan*

entanglements: Intimate development, geopolitics, and the currency of gender and grief.
Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and freedom.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Glasmeier, A., & Jensen, K. (2010). Policy, research design and the socially situated researcher.
InLyser, D., Herbert, S., Aitken, S., Crang, M., & McDowell, L. *The Sage handbook of qualitative geography* (pp. 82-100). London; Thousand Oaks.

Gandhi, L. (1998). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Gee, J. P. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.* New York:
Routledge

Gregory D. (2004). *The colonial present: Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq.* Malden: MA:
Blackwell Pub.

Glanz, J., & Norris, F. (2006, October 28). Report says Iraq contractor is hiding data from U.S.
The New York Times. Retrieved from
https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/28/world/middleeast/28reconstruct.html?pagewanted=all

Hamilton, A., & Wadham, B. (2015). Unmasking militarism: hegemony, naturalization,
camouflage. In Elias, A., Harley, R., & Tsoutas, N. *Camouflage cultures: Beyond the art of disappearance* (pp. 159-169). Sydney University Press.

Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Hickey, N. (2002). Access denied: The Pentagon's war reporting rules are the toughest ever.
Columbia Journalism Review, 40(5) 26-31. Academic OneFile. (Accession No. edsgcl.82776373).

Human Rights Watch (1990, June 1). Human Rights in Iraq. Retrieved from

https://www.hrw.org/report/1990/06/01/human-rights-iraq

Iraq Body Count. Retrieved from https://www.iraqbodycount.org/

Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative. (2012, May 20). What justice for Iraqi victims of private

military and security companies? Retrieved from

http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/680

Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative. (2012, October 7). Private war is still ongoing in Iraq!

Retrieved from http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/890

Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative. (2015, May 8). Mission Statement: Solidarity in action.

Retrieved from http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/mission-statement

Juhasz, A. (2004) Ambitions of empire: The Bush administration economic plan for Iraq (and

Beyond). *Left Turn Magazine*, *12*, 27-32. Retrieved from

https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/168/34894.html

Kelly, K. (2017, October 31). Afghan women beg key question: what on earth has this war

accomplished? *Common Dreams*. Retrieved from

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/10/31/afghan-women-beg-key-question-

what-earth-has-war-accomplished

Kitchin, R., & Tate N. (2000). *Conducting research in human geography: Theory, methodology*

and practice. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Klare, M. T. (2003). Arms Transfers to Iran and Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 and

the Origins of the Gulf War. In Bacevich, A., & Inbar, E. *The Gulf War of 1991 revisited.*

(pp. 3-21). Portland Oregon: Frank Cass.

Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism.* Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada.

Kobayashi, A. (2009). Situated knowledges, reflexivity. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of human geography* (pp. 138-143). Elsevier.

Kolhatkar, S. (2002). The impact of U.S. intervention on Afghan women's rights. *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law, and Justice, 17*(1), 12-30. EBSCO. (Accession No. RN113613427).

LaMothe, R, W. (2011). A pastoral analysis of the three pillars of U.S. hegemony – "free market" capitalism, militarism, and exceptionalism. *Pastoral Psychology, 60*(1), 179-193. http://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-010-0302y

Lutz, C. (2017, September 6). The war in Afghanistan might not be effective – but for some it's profitable. *Pacific Standard Magazine.* Retrieved from https://psmag.com/news/the-war-in-afghanistan-profitable-for-some

McAdams POSC.MU. Eisenhower's farewell address to the nation. Retrieved from http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/ike.htm

Mechanic, J. (2017, June 16). With more civilian deaths reported each week, the war on terror continues to fail upward. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved from

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/with-more-civilian-deaths-reported-each-week-the-war_us_5943e11be4b024b7e0df4b19

Megret, F. (2002). 'War?' Legal semantics and the move to violence. *European Journal of International Law, 13*(2), 361-400. HeinOnline. (Accession No. hein.journals.eurint.13.29).

Messerschmidt, J. (2010). *Hegemonic masculinities and camouflaged politics: Unmasking the Bush dynasty and its war against Iraq.* Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

McKiernan, K. (2006). *The Kurds: A people in search of their homeland.* New York: St.

    Martin's Press.

McVeigh, K. (2013, October 29). Drone strikes: tears in Congress as Pakistani family tells of

    mother's death. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from

    https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/29/pakistan-family-drone-victim-

    testimony-congress

Milne, S. (2001, November 8). An imperial nightmare. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from

    https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/08/afghanistan.terrorism8

Mohanty, C. (1984). Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Boundary*

    2(12/13), 333-358. Francis Archive. (Accession No. edsfra.11842036).

Mohanty, C. (2003). "Under western eyes" Revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist

    struggles. *Signs, 28*(2), 499-535. http://doi.org/10.1086/342914

National Geographic. Roper Public Affairs 2006 Geographic Literacy Survey. Retrieved from

    https://media.nationalgeographic.org/assets/file/Roper-Poll-2006-Highlights.pdf

Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neocolonialism: The last stage of imperialism.* London: Thomas.

Otterman, S. (2005, February 2). Iraq: The interim government leaders. *Council on Foreign*

    Relations. Retrieved from https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-interim-government-

    leaders

Pathak, Z., Sengupta, S., Purkayastha, S. (1991). The prisonhouse of Orientalism. *Textual*

    Practice, 5(2), 195-218. http://doi.org/ 10.1080/09502369108582112

Pfaff, W. (2001, November 3). The War on Terror turns into a war on Afghanistan. *International*

    Herald Tribune.

Project for a New American Century. (1998, January 26). PNAC Letters sent to President Bill

Clinton. *Information Clearing House.* Retrieved from

http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5527.htm

Project for a New American Century. (2000, September). Rebuilding America's defenses:

Strategy, forces, and resources for a new century. *Information Clearing House.* Retrieved

from http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf

Rafferty, A. (2017, August 21). The war in Afghanistan: by the numbers. *NBC News.* Retrieved

from https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/war-afghanistan-numbers-

n794626

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2001, September 14). The people of

Afghanistan have nothing to do with Osama and his accomplices. Retrieved from

http://www.rawa.org/ny-attack.htm

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2001, October 11). Taliban should be

overthrown by the uprising of Afghan nation. Retrieved from http://www.rawa.org/us-

strikes.htm

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2001, October 31). Testimony of

Tahmeena Faryal representative of RAWA before the Subcommittee of the US House on

International Operations and Human Rights. Retrieved from

http://www.rawa.org/testiomny.html

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2002, September 11).

Fundamentalism is the enemy of all civilized humanity. Retrieved from

http://www.rawa.org/sep11-02.htm

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2003, February 24). The US

government wants war, the people of the US and the world want peace. Retrieved from

http://www.rawa.org/anti-war.html

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2004, March 8). Women's

emancipation is achievable only by themselves. Retrieved from

http://www.rawa.org/mar8-04e.htm

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2007, December 10). The US and her

fundamentalist stooges are the main human rights violators in Afghanistan. Retrieved

from http://www.rawa.org/events/dec10-07_e.htm

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. (2014, July 10). Let us drive away the

US and NATO occupiers with our unity. Retrieved from

http://www.rawa.org/rawa/2014/10/06/rawa-statement-on-us-invasion-oct-2014-

english.html

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism.* New York: Random House

SC/7664. (2003, February 14). Iraq cooperating with disarmament procedures, but many banned

weapons remain unaccounted for, inspectors tell Security Council. *United Nations*.

Retrieved from https://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sc7664.doc.htm

SC/7682. (2003, March 7). United Nations weapons inspectors report to Security Council on

progress in disarmament of Iraq. *United Nations.* Retrieved from

https://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sc7682.doc.htm

Thien, D. (2009). Feminist methodologies. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *International

encyclopedia of human geography* (pp. 71-78). Elsevier.

Thrift, T. (2003). Space: The fundamental stuff of human geography. In Holloway, S., Rice, S.,

    & Valentine, G. (1st), *Key concepts in geography* (pp. 95-107). London: Sage.

Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs. Costs of War. Brown University. Retrieved

    from http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/

Watts, M. (2009). Neocolonialism. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *International encyclopedia*

    of human geography (pp. 360- 364). Elsevier.

Weed, M. (2016, May 11). Memorandum: Presidential references to the 2001 Authorization for

    Use of Military Force in publicly available executive actions and reports to Congress.

    Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/pres-

    aumf.pdf

Wolfe, S. (2014, January 3). A new poll says these nations are the top 4 threats to world peace.

    Guess who's number one. *Public Radio International*. Retrieved from

    https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-01-03/new-poll-says-these-nations-are-top-4-threats-

    world-peace-guess-whos-number-one

Wright, J. (2016, May 30). Remembering those who wore the 'Boots on the Ground'. *The*

    Atlantic. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/boots-on-

    the-ground/484682/