

New voices in cultural relations

Coloniality, neo-orientalism, culture, and death

Why it is time to move away from
the 'war on terror' narrative

Joe Murphy

Foreword

I am delighted to present the first edition of our new series New voices in cultural relations. In much of the British Council's research portfolio, we focus on the views of young people and bringing to the fore voices that are not often heard in decision making circles. Like the Cultural Relations Collection, from which this new series evolved, the central aim here is to showcase fresh perspectives and innovative thinking, fostering a platform for emerging scholars from the UK and beyond.

I'm especially pleased that we brought this collection to life in partnership with BISA, the British International Studies Association. Given the complex and uncertain times in which we live, the field of international studies is more important than ever, helping us to explore and understand the intricacies of global interactions.

This series of essays was gathered through a competitive process. It asked course leaders in the international relations discipline to put forward outstanding Masters-level dissertations that made an original contribution to their field, either through providing new scholarly insight or offering a new policy direction.

The diversity of the contributors to this series is another aspect we celebrate. Our postgraduate authors come from varied cultural and academic backgrounds, each bringing a distinct perspective to their research. This underscores the idea that international relations is not a monolithic field, but one that thrives on diversity and inclusivity.

I must first congratulate our winner, Louise Sherry, for her dissertation reflecting on the state of climate justice and COP27. The judging panel noted that 'not only does the dissertation tackle a subject of crucial global importance, it has the clear potential to transform thinking on this topic, and, one would hope, policy.' In that regard, it is a worthy winner of our prize.

The remaining essays, each commended by the judging panel, cover topics as varied as the role of information warfare in the global system; the resistance movement in Myanmar; a critique of the 'war on terror'; and an approach to inclusion and anti-discrimination in the EU drawn from interviews with Black politicians in Europe.

I would invite you to engage with the essays with an open mind. The ideas presented here are thought provoking and you may disagree with what you read. But it is in that spirit of engagement and dialogue that we hope that New voices in cultural relations will inspire you. And that it will also inspire not only current scholars and practitioners, but also future generations of international relations students, to continue exploring and contributing to this ever-evolving field.

I would like to thank our partners, BISA, for their constructive and energetic approach to this work. Thanks also to my colleagues Reesha Alvi and Purti Kohli for their excellent project management from start to finish. I'm grateful to my colleagues Amanda Alves, James Carey, Dr Lisdey Espinoza, Michael Peak and Devika Purandare for their thoughtful evaluations of the first round of submissions, and to the academic panel – Dr Nancy Annan, Dr Yoav Galai, Dr Victoria Hudson and chair Prof Kyle Grayson – for making the difficult decision of selecting the winner and commended essays.

Lastly, I extend my thanks to all the students who submitted to the competition, and my congratulations to our winner and to the runners-up. It was a pleasure to read your work, albeit a challenge to make judgments on such a diverse range of scholarship, but it is clear that the future of international relations is in good hands.

Christine Wilson
Director Research and Insight
British Council

Introduction

About New voices in cultural relations prize

The British Council works to support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through a range of cultural relations activities which aim to create greater mutual understanding, deeper relationships, and enhance sustainable dialogue between people and cultures.

In this spirit, the British Council in partnership with BISA (The British International Studies Association) have created the New voices in cultural relations Prize for Master's students writing a dissertation in the area of international relations.

The objective is to provide new scholarly insights or propose new policy directions that contribute significantly to the field of international relations. The prize recognizes and promotes exceptional academic achievements that have the potential to influence attitudes, practices, or policies in international relations.

Universities were invited to put forward the strongest Master's dissertation in the field of international relations. Entries were assessed by an international committee within the British Council and then by a panel of judges convened by BISA.

The publication of this essay is reward for this being one of the shortlisted entries. All shortlisted authors also received 12 month's BISA membership.

About the essay

Coloniality, neo-orientalism, culture, and death: Why it is time to move away from the 'war on terror' narrative

Through this dissertation Joe Murphy critically examines and challenges the dominant narrative of the West's 'War on Terror' as framed through the concept of 'new terrorism' and the portrayal of an omnipresent radical Islamic threat. This dissertation finds that there is a need to move away from the West's narrative of a 'War on Terror' as it is not inclusive of the discourses which it purposely subjugates.

The judging panel noted:

'The dissertation provides a compelling critique of the "war on terror", uncovering Western Orientalist discourse and expressing rightful frustration at its impacts. It reveals the dark side of self and other dynamics and how these connect to violence. It delivers a strong argument with impactful potential.'



Abstract

This dissertation challenges the West's 'War on Terror' as a trope understood and justified through 'new terrorism' presentations of an omnipresent and imminent radical Islamic threat by highlighting discourses that have been subsequently subjugated. Discussing Western knowledge production and power (re)construction through the lens of underpinnings (neo)Orientalism and coloniality, this dissertation uses subjugated perspectives to move away from this dominant narrative. Considering the importance of culture, I identify the securitisations of radical Islam and in-direct securitisation of Islam as security threats to the West through dominant discourse. Understanding the application of the 'savage-victim-saviour' trope I find that core knowledge, including Western feminism, presents Western 'civilisation' as superior to justify interference in the lives of the 'other.' Subsequently Muslim men are presented as uncontrollably violent and Muslim women as helpless victims in need of saving by the West.

This similarly justifies violence, especially against military-aged Muslim men. Employing Foucault's 'biopower' and Mbembe's 'necropolitics' to the proliferation of drone warfare, I find that Islamic populations that live below their influence are suspended in 'death worlds,' with the equivalent status of 'living dead.' Racialised targeting influenced by neo-Orientalism and the continuity of colonial hierarchies have served as legitimisers for the death of the 'other' without prior intelligence. Thus, this dissertation finds that there is a need to move away from the West's narrative of a 'War on Terror' as it is not inclusive of the discourses which it purposely subjugates. Epistemologically shifting focus onto these alternative perspectives allows for a deeper understanding of Western knowledge production and power over the past two decades creates a space to move beyond the 'War on Terror' and the racialised biases that underlie its existence.



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Introduction

Moving Away from the 'War on Terror' Narrative

“Beyond Afghanistan, we must define our effort not as a boundless “global war on terror”

(Obama, 2013, n.pag)

Since September 2001, dominant discourse within international relations (IR) and terrorism studies have followed leading Western presentations of a phenomena known as the 'War on Terror'. Since then, it is undeniable that it has taken many forms which affected the lives of billions across the globe in varying degrees and ways. Causing an epistemic shift, the 'War on Terror' has, and continues to, cause a disproportionate subjugation of many communities and knowledges which have been disregarded as 'irrational' and 'invalid' (Jackson, 2012) while promoting attention towards anxiety-provoking hypotheticals and scapegoats (Gentry, 2015). Indeed, most commonly these messages are ushered by Western-centric sources of knowledge and power with very little respect for the 'irrational' knowledges which may contrast with dominant and core presentations. In this sense, a Western-centric account provides too limited a scope to account for the genuine lived experiences of the 'War on Terror,' maintaining a purposeful ignorance to the voices which do not portray an unvaried understanding.

Over recent years, this has led to vociferations aimed towards the IR and critical terrorism studies communities to better acknowledge the impact that dominant Western-centric and policy-based epistemologies have had, to challenge such perspectives. Khan (2021) calls for the consideration of the colonial, racialised, and gendered reasons behind the continuation of the “Islam-terrorism nexus” which has tied Islam to terrorism and aided “the Western

project of colonial-modernity” (p.499). With great consideration towards the lasting legacy of colonial power structures, Khan's calls mean recognising the neo-Orientalist nature of the connection of Islam to terrorism within dominant discourse. Indeed, this means expanding epistemological boundaries to decolonise studies in such a way that understands the 'War on Terror' beyond 9/11. Qureshi (2020) shares this concern, highlighting the importance of centring the lived experiences of those impacted by the 'War “of” Terror' over continuing to study it as a matter of policy. He finds that “many narratives from the perspective of terrorism studies refuse to see the human impact of policies” (Qureshi, 2020, p.487), thus substantiating calls to re-centre scholars to the violence experienced and the ways harm can and has occurred.

It is by considering this continuation of neo-Orientalist informed power relations and how these affect the lived experiences of subjugated communities during the 'War on Terror,' scholarship can recognise the need to re-centre and re-evaluate how we think about this phenomenon. By respecting these subjugated communities and discourses that IR and terrorism studies can progress towards a more rounded and inclusive account of the 'War on Terror' which does not rely solely on Western-centric knowledge production. This is where my dissertation is concerned.

Using a post-colonial analysis, I will make the case for a more complete holistic understanding of the 'War on Terror' to expose the importance in moving away from this incomplete narrative. To achieve this, I utilise discourses and theory which are commonly disregarded by dominant Western-centric discourse. Post-colonial theory emphasises the consequences and continued effects of past colonial rule over societies and cultures outside of European/Western states. Despite the imperialist domination and colonisation of territories across the globe by a small concentration of nation-states formally coming to an end during the mid-20th century, Said (1994) views imperialism as entrenched in European culture. This has been expanded into theories of coloniality which explain the continued subordination of certain races as the product of a colonial mindset which greatly influences Western thought to this date (Quijano, 2000; 2007). Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism works very close with this idea by explaining how the Western producers of knowledge present cultures of Eastern descent as inherently 'backwards' and 'exotic.' Importantly, Orientalism acts as justification for this subordination of 'others' and thus informs coloniality, (re)producing inequalities.

These theories of coloniality and Orientalism forge the core theoretical basis of my dissertation. Taking this literary approach, I will interrogate the 'War on Terror' and its main assumptions with these theories to expose the need to understand the realities that have been experienced consequentially due of its ideological roots and resulting actions. I will answer this dissertation's research question of "*is it time to move away from the Western narrative of a 'War on Terror?'*" with the aim to; 1) provide a critical post-colonial analysis of the West's 'War on Terror' to understand how coloniality and Orientalism have, and continue to, influence Western intent and actions which have been subjugated as discourse; 2) promote the importance of recognising alternative non- Western lived experiences of the 'War on Terror'; 3) make a case for moving away from the Western-centric 'War on Terror' narrative. Making a case for the acknowledgement of these subjugated discourses can invite new thought and approaches in counterinsurgency in the future which works on the underlying biases in Western (imperial?) power with a more humanitarian basis.

I do this by first discussing the Western conceptualisation of the 'War on Terror' and these core assumptions. By conceptualising the Western presentation of the 'War on Terror' I explore four key assumptions that are commonly made about terrorism now being more lethal, religiously driven, and with the capacity to occur at any time. Identifying the conflict between Jihad and Western modernity which occurs both on the physical and virtual battlefield which is used to justify more extreme countermeasures. With this in

place I introduce the theories of coloniality and (neo)Orientalism as subjugated knowledge with the critical capacity to encourage a less Western-centric discussion of the 'War on Terror.' These theories will provide the basis of discussion for the rest of this dissertation, placing it within critical terrorism and security studies within IR.

The second chapter considers the notion of a 'war on culture' applying securitisation theory with the three-dimensional 'savage-victim-saviour' trope. Understanding how this trope has been (re)constructed and applied to Muslim men (savage), Muslim women (victim), and European/Western white men (saviour) in Western discourse I identify how (neo)Orientalism have instituted Islamic culture a 'security threat.' Building discourse on a coloniality of knowledge which permits the right to be suspicious of Muslim-looking men has assisted in justifying the mistreatment of populations throughout the 'War on Terror' while Western modernity as an alternative has been allocated as superior. Finally, I will consider Qureshi's (2020) idea of a 'War "of" Terror' by identifying the harms of violence committed by Western forces over the past two decades. Focusing specifically on the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), I understand such violent counterinsurgency measures through biopower and necropolitics where racialised populations live under terror in 'death worlds' with a status equivalent to 'living dead.' Respecting the 'War 'of' Terror' narrative as an important critical counter-discourse thus allows a much greater recognition for the lived realities of many which have suffered as a result of the mechanisms of power and knowledge over the past two decades.

I conclude by uniting this dissertation's discussion to confirm that a different conceptualisation of the 'War on Terror' is indeed achievable. Working with subjugated discourses provides a space for paradigmatic shift from dominant Western-centric discourse, which purposefully underreport the harms that continue to manifest from racialised colonial-esque knowledges and power relations. Through the reduction of the existential status of massive populations (particularly Muslim or Muslim-looking) to less-than-worthy of life and additionally demonising them in dominant rhetoric to justify violence, the 'War on Terror' consistently (re)constructs racialised biases in a way which best fits the agenda of Western modernity. Recognising (neo)Orientalist thought and how coloniality negatively affects and suppress massive populations means valuing subjected discourses from alternative lived experiences. A new understanding of contemporary power relations can be achieved, and cultural relativity/respect should be a central focus of progressive counter-discourse. This is in the hope that a more humanitarian approach towards counterinsurgency/terrorism may be adopted in the future to allow cultural wounds to be addressed and healed.



Chapter 1

Towards a Post-Colonial Understanding of the 'War on Terror'

The 'War on Terror,' since its original utterance in 2001, has been analysed, reconstructed, and discussed in many different forms by countless influential groups and individuals. It would be near impossible to give each voice significant attention, thus this chapter is concerned with those voices which I understand as having formed the dominant presentation. To understand this dominant presentation however, it must be first understood as Western in origin. I base my discussion of 'the West' throughout my dissertation similarly to Said's (1978) association to Europe. Where I differ however, is in an extension and more specific focus to the 'West' as being located within Western Europe and North America. Other nation-states, such as those in the Oceania, have been placed under the same classification of 'the West,' though for the purpose of this dissertation I sway from this region. Thus, 'the West' as I have located it, amounts to much more than a geographical location; it is a collaboration of knowledge producing and power (re)constructing institutions such as the political elite, military, academia, and mass media that inform the minds, values, and beliefs of many around the world. As such it is surrounded with associations of free-market capitalism, modernity, liberalism,

and democracy. While there is much more to be said about 'the West,' I do not aim to solve this conundrum within my dissertation. Rather, this idea of the West serves purpose to *this* discussion surrounding its knowledge, power, and actions throughout this dissertation. This chapter conceptualises the 'War on Terror' as a Western construct by identifying the key assumptions that have been laid out by dominant discourse. With these considered, I discuss this discourse's ability to subjugate others, devaluing this knowledge. With this focus, I employ Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and further ideas surrounding coloniality as basis for discussion throughout the rest of this dissertation. By highlighting and respecting these discourses, I find that a post-colonial analyses of the 'War on Terror' can be achieved through such non-Western ideas, making space for a conceptualisation more inclusive of alternative discourse.



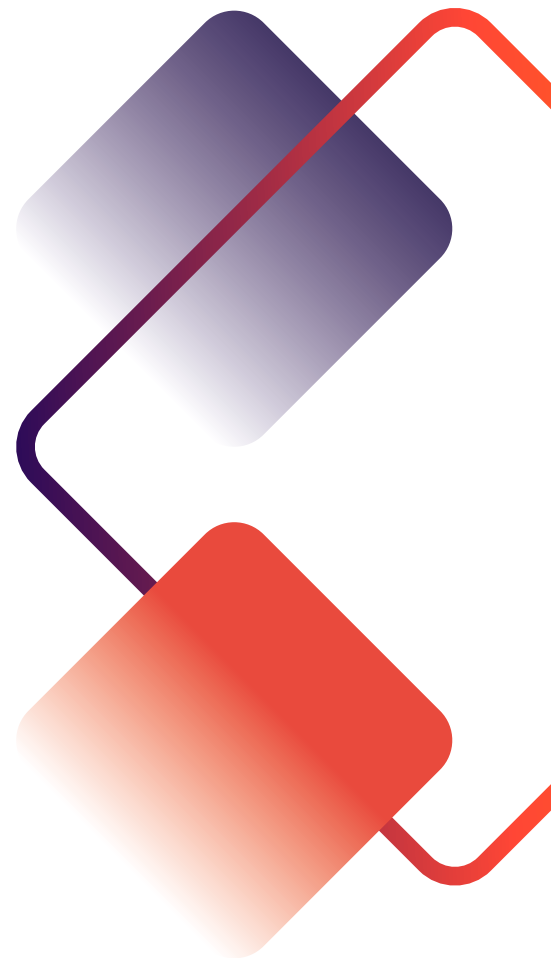
Through Western Eyes

The 'War on Terror' has taken many forms and interpretations within various cultures, populations, and states. This dissertation, however, is primarily concerned with the Western perspective's key assumptions (overt and underlying), characteristics, and the post-colonial counter-discourses that exist due to this epistemological, and methodological basis. If we are to take former President Bush Jr.'s (2001a) words at face value, it seeks the "destruction and defeat of the global terror network" of "evil" (n.pag), a very simplistic insight into the aspirations and constructions of the 'War on Terror' by Western states. Indeed, such discourse restricts discussions towards the consideration that there is a conflict concerning a 'good' entity which strives as if it is moral duty to defeat a 'bad' entity. This binary description of 'good versus bad' is, as I have suggested, basic but key to identifying the core assumptions of the West's approach to terrorism post-9/11.

Esch (2010) discusses that 'myths' of *American exceptionalism* and *civilisation v. barbarism* drive the ideas of Western superiority as this ideology. American exceptionalism relies on the assumption that "America represents the forces of good against evil" (Esch, 2010, p.368), and thus their actions and beliefs represent the "triumph of civilisation" (Judis, 2005, p.56). At this level, the US present themselves a "responsibility to history" as a force of good to "rid the world of evil" (Bush, 2001b, n.pag). I find that this can be extended further to represent *Western exceptionalism* as US and European forces regularly combine against this 'evil' as has been evident through militarised and ideological support that I will discuss through this dissertation. Subsequently, this exceptionalism is the key characteristic of *civilisation v. barbarism* which is synonymous with the 'us versus them' and 'good versus evil' narratives (Jackson, 2005). These binary oppositions provide clear standpoints that place Western states as 'good' and, within the context of the 'War on Terror,' the terrorist as 'bad.'

This has been identified in political speech acts such as proclamations that the fight against terrorism was "civilisation's fight," a fight between "liberty" (good) and "terror" (evil) (Bush, 2001a, n.pag). Speeches of such stature feed Western outrage, relying on the population feeling threatened to coerce reaction (Croft, 2006).

Importantly, the 'us versus them' binary narrative gives populations another conflicting or contrasting population to mutually oppose and fear. This allowed for an increase in the popularity of new assumptions towards what terrorism is and looks like. Prior to the 9/11 attacks there was a growing literature base that identified a "new" terrorism which has adapted away from the "traditional" roots and forms of terrorism that had previously been observed (Laqueur, 1999).



Within the RAND Corporation's *Countering the New Terrorism*, Hoffman (1999) discusses this shift through what he identifies as a trend of more discriminate attacks by less identifiable organisations with more religious motivations with increased lethality. He blames this increased lethality on attention being more difficult to gain from states and target audiences, groups being more adept to killing, an increase in state sponsorship, and a proliferation of 'amateurs' conducting attacks. Others within the 'new terrorism' field such as Laqueur (1999) have developed this paradigm by placing a particular emphasis on 'new terrorism's' access to more advanced technologies and weapons which allow them to carry out larger-scale attacks on any population. This perspective has greatly influenced political perspectives on terrorism, forming a "hegemonic effect" as 'embedded experts' assist in shaping policy and control narratives (Burnett and Whyte, 2005, p.14). With such influence, conceptualisations of terrorism are now at an official level considered to be more lethal, unpredictable and an omnipresent 'imminent threat.'

This idea of imminence during 'War on Terror' is a formulation of "anticipatory reason," meaning the future serves an "inexhaustible source of unknowns that is leveraged to smuggle in truths, beliefs, claims, that might be too speculative, too unfounded, to circulate by regular means" (Hong and Szpunar, 2019, p.314). Therefore, the justification of lethal action by Western forces against 'terrorists' finds basis in hypothetical scenarios, as if an existential threat is consistently looming, permitting more extreme actions as "anticipatory self-defence" (Badalič, 2021, p.185). The demand for a "broader concept of imminence" due to the "threat posed by al-Qaida and its associated forces" (US Department of Justice, 2011, p.7) has materialised from this 'new' belief of a more lethal and unpredictable terrorism. However, this shift also proves problematic as counterterrorism becomes formulated primarily around hypothetical threats, situating a "paranoid logic" (Jackson, 2015, p.35). By constructing a vision of a 'terrorist' that is more deadly, less identifiable, and continuously looming, Western responses are stuck with an epistemological base with no 'concrete' foundation other than the idea that they should always be alert. This pre-emptive anxiety is prevalent within the response to this 'terrorist' threat.

Betz (2008) considers the West's 'War on Terror' as being fought under two forms, the "field of battle" and the "virtual" (p.510); considering the former dimension, terrorism and counterterrorism may be discussed as warfare. Militarised responses to 'terrorists' have been a major characteristic of Western counterterrorism, finding justification because "we were attacked on 9/11." (Obama, 2013, n.pag). Bush (2003) claimed that "the terrorists have declared war on every free nation and all our citizens" (n.pag), from which subsequent conflicts have been dubbed "the 9/11 wars" (Burke, 2012). As a result of military interventions by Western states, most notably in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, and Yemen. These conflicts

have cost the US an estimated \$8-trillion and universally cost over 900,000 lives (Brown University, 2021) under the flag of ‘combating’ terrorism and states which “harbour” purveyors of terror. Indeed, the physical dimension of the ‘War on Terror’ is undeniably more overtly visible by providing bullets and bloodshed in ‘boots on the ground’ and aerial interventions globally, though it does not present a complete picture.

For, an important characteristic of the ‘War on Terror’ is its ability to not be constrained by “when” and “where,” rather, it locates (Quasim, 2020, p.491). The ‘virtual’ dimension is therefore concerned with ideas and narratives, which Betz (2008) clarifies as a continuous hostility conducted by non-military means in a “war of ideas” where, while it is true to say there is a war against Jihad in a field of battle, he finds “we [the West] are at war with the idea of Jihad” (p.514). It is the assumption that Jihad is inherently ‘evil,’ and therefore the task of Western states as a force of ‘good’ to bring its ‘defeat.’ The idea falls into a similar vein as Huntington’s (1996) *Clash of Civilisations*, which predicts culture and religion to be the main source of conflict in the post-Cold War era. The ‘War on Terror’ may therefore be understood as such a clash due to the stark contrasts and conflict between ‘Western’ and ‘Jihad’ synonymous with the ‘good versus bad’ and ‘us versus them’ divisions, to place ‘them’ as a threat to Western civilisation’s way of life (Godden, 2006; Podvornaia, 2013).

Consequently, the US Department of State (2006) has recognised the ‘battle of ideas’ meaning a move beyond a battle of arms to “promote freedom and human dignity as alternatives to the terrorists’ perverse vision of oppression and totalitarian rule” (n.pag). Effectively meaning assuring Muslims across the globe that Western values correspond with Islam due to the fear of an increased popularity of Jihad (Thrall and Goepner, 2017). Thus, a ‘virtual’ or ‘psychological’ battlefield where ideas are just as hostile and important as actions is imperative and can help to understand the intentions of any ‘civilisation.’

To sum up, this dissertation understands the West’s conceptualisation of the ‘War on Terror’ through their four key assumptions: 1) Western states are a force of ‘good’ fighting against an ‘evil’ other (identified as Jihad), 2) terrorism is now more lethal, its organisations are harder to identify, and they loom as an omnipresent threat to Western civilisation motivated by religion, 3) as terrorism is more ‘lethal’ it suffices more ‘extreme’ responses, 4) the ‘War on Terror’ is fought by both on battlefields and in minds. This dominant discourse has provided the West with much of its justification for the actions and longevity of this campaign against ‘terror’ over the past two decades. By understanding how Western states understand the ‘War on Terror’ I can now identify and analyse the deeply problematic nature of such assumptions.

The Coloniality of Power and Knowledge

While Western discourse has maintained dominant influence in popular perspectives of the 'War on Terror,' how it should be conducted, and how we should consider the 'other,' it would be naïve to accept this as objective truth. Jackson (2012) considers there to be an entire side of terrorism studies which remains masked by “‘experts’ [who] will suppress and exclude knowledge and meaning which would challenge the proper objects, boundaries, and authorised speakers of the field” (p.16). Thus, dominant discourses of the 'War on Terror' are often tied to governments' counterterrorism policies (Schuurman, 2019). Jackson employs Foucault's (2020a) concept of subjugated discourse, by which he means “blocks of historical knowledges that were present... but were masked” and “a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges” (p.7). With this understanding, some discourses therefore become subjugated to the advantage of powerful states to promote the ideas and events that work most towards their goals and fruition; therefore, by discrediting the perspectives of those that have experienced the direct effects of counterterrorism policy (Jackson, 2012).

In this vein, I understand post-colonial perspectives as 'subjugated discourse' is greatly helpful in building an understanding of the 'War on Terror' and its various forms which have existed to this day. For, there are a verity of knowledges that are 'known' within international relations studies into terrorism, yet also actively 'unknown' within core literature, that is, ignored and discredited (Jackson, 2012). Core IR texts and theories regularly suffer from an epistemologically universalistic Eurocentric standpoint with objective approaches (Cabral, 1974; Grosfoguel, 2007; Seth, 2011; Noda, 2020) which fail to appropriately consider the voices of those which experience the world in contrasting ways (Darby and Paolini, 1994; Shani, 2008). This notion has resulted in the use of “categories and conceptual systems which depend on a Western epistemological order” (Mudimbe, 1998, p.10) while remaining ignorant to perspectives of alternative epistemic standpoints and conclusions. Understanding and acknowledging this, my dissertation applies these subjugated knowledges and theories to provide a less Western-centric approach towards a better understanding and well-rounded conceptualisation of the 'War on Terror' as it has been experienced over the past twenty-one years.

This disparity and inequality of discourse may be best understood through the concept of coloniality, and its influence on both *power* and *knowledge*. The coloniality of power refers to the structures of racialised power and control that replicate those experienced under colonial rule (Quijano, 2000). Under these structures people were classified according to European perceptions of racial superiority, making some less 'human' than others; an idea greatly associated with justifying imperialism, something Said (1994) believes to be inherent within European culture. As such, the colonial legacy of discrimination continues to be prevalent in modern social orders despite an ending

to the formal colonial era (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2017). Considering this, the process of modernisation (and therefore modernity) can be understood as synonymous with coloniality. Due to the structures of racial subjugation in the modern era maintained by Western powers over the 'third world,' coloniality represents the continuation of such beliefs in mindsets and practices to date (Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2007).

Importantly, coloniality is characterised by underlying negative perceptions of populations and cultures which may contrast with popular Western culture and norms. Said's (1978) *Orientalism* identifies this clash between the West (Occident) and the 'other' (of Eastern decent, known as the Orient) in his discussions of Western scholarship, art, and ideology. He uncovers how through such mediums, the Occident projects an image of the Orient as 'uncivilised, backwards, and exotic,' in binary contrast to the Occident's 'civil' society and cultures. The 'other' is therefore associated with 'savagery' and 'barbarism,' a force which threatens the very structures of 'civil' society, and thus amount to a 'less than human' status (Mutua, 2001).

Said (1978) continues this thought when considering the Occident's response to the Orient's 'backwards' nature by attempting to 'civilise the savages.' During the colonial era, this was characterised by imperialist invasions and occupations alongside religious missionaries with the implementation of Western-style structures, to effectively 'civilise' Oriental cultures by making them more 'Western.' However, this

is not exclusive to the colonial era. This thought has been evident throughout the 20th Century via Westernised models of development such as Rostow's (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth* which ultimately places the Western society as the pinnacle of modernity, and thus to aspire to become. Such teleological models have been used to remove Oriental societies from their 'traditional' "primitive" and "archaic" nature (Parsons, 1964, p.339) to a Westernised culture. This therefore promotes Westernised knowledges as superior to the 'primitive' knowledges of the traditional Orient.

Understanding Western states' coloniality which discriminates and portrays the 'other' in a demeaning manor, knowledge can be comprehended within the same context. Considering knowledge and power as intrinsically linked (Foucault, 2020a), colonial forces have greatly influenced who and what is considered 'rational' and 'valid' knowledge. Coloniality maintains the standpoint that 'others' do not think, they cannot produce the same standard of knowledge, so "misanthropic scepticism and racism work together with ontological exclusion" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.253). Thus, a monopoly on understanding is claimed by Western modes of reason (Fregoso Bailón and De Lissovoy, 2019). In this vein, coloniality and modernity can be regarded as synonymous, for, modernity is "about the historical construction of a specific position of historical enunciation and address" (Bhabha, 1994, p.201). Hence, knowledges are actively disregarded and reconstructed to fit a narrative most suiting

the presentations of dominant 'modern' (Western) culture. Under coloniality, modernity *is* rationality as only those with power can produce knowledge while only the powerful can be modern (Quijano, 2007). To this extent, only Western powers sustain the power to dictate what is 'valid' knowledge and consequently means that this knowledge can 'justify' the mistreatment of any group targeted, (re)producing colonial power relationships (Latour, 1999; Quijano, 2007).

In the near-50 years since Orientalism was released however, it has been met with some important criticisms, some of which Said (1985) readdressed himself. Varisco (2007) notes that Said, while discrediting the binary thinking of Western thought, also intellectually promotes it by dividing the world into the 'Orient' and 'Occident.' Indeed, while Said does intend to highlight the power of Occidental knowledge in creating such binary, he has been considered similarly guilty of continuing such narratives that engage an "us' versus/and the 'other'" context. Aside from this, Orientalism's great attention and praise from Western scholars may also prove problematic since if Orientalism, as supposed by Said, was so deeply entrenched in Western knowledge it has been argued that it surely would have been vilified and exiled from Western literature. Warraq (2007) considers this popularity due to a surge in what he deems as 'anti-Western' scholarship at the time of release, making it more normative to discuss out-of-favour of Western knowledge and power. While I do not completely agree with this critique, I do respect that Orientalism, just like any other theory, is not flawless.

Thus, even after four decades and despite its critics, I employ Orientalism because I find that it still bares great importance during in understanding the events and attitudes

that have proven prevalent during the 'War on Terror.' Since original conceptualisation, claims have come from academic spaces that we have shifted into an era 'beyond' Orientalism as globalisation has grown in influence, changing international politics, economics, and therefore inter-state/cultural relations (Dallmayr, 1996). While I agree to some extent, I hesitate at the idea of having moved 'beyond'. It would be naïve to believe we do not live under systems of knowledge and power that are no longer affected by Orientalist discourse, especially when considered alongside the continued

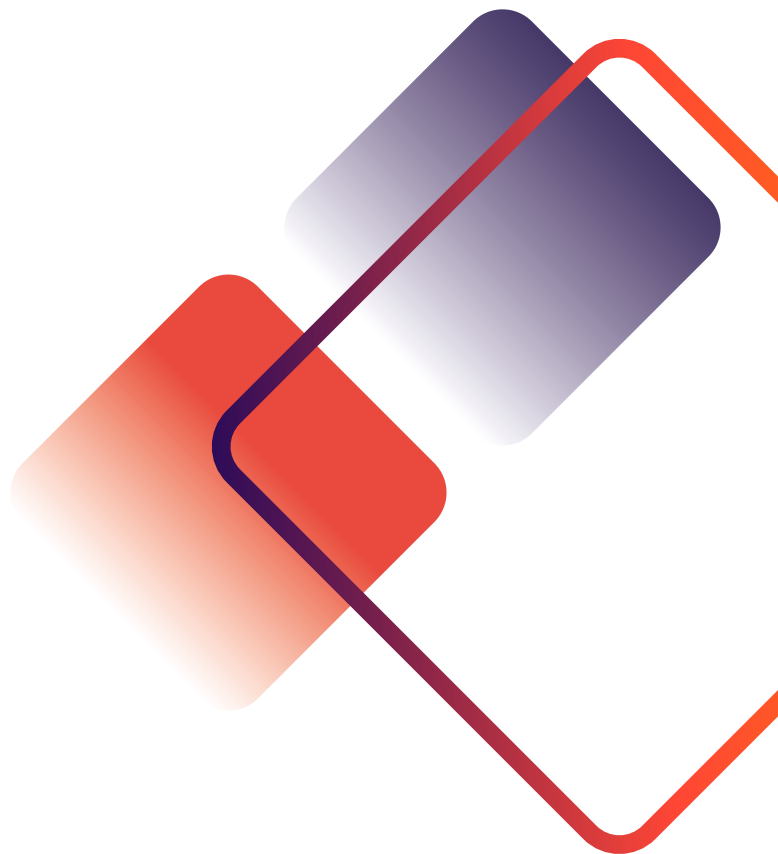


legacy of coloniality. Indeed, while much has changed in relations between Western nation-states and the 'Islamic world' from which, newer schools are discussing 'neo-Orientalism.' Samiei (2010) identifies two emerging academic trends; that there is a tendency to view Orientalism as a bygone ideology, and that many preconditions responsible for Orientalist discourse have been removed. Tuastad (2003) uses the 'new barbarism thesis' with neo-Orientalism when analysing explanations of political violence which blame traits embedded in 'peripheralised' cultures. He finds that both 'new barbarism' and neo-Orientalism mindsets serve as hegemonic strategies to legitimise continuous colonial projects which Hellmich (2008) discusses as responsible for the portrayal of a "homogeneous Islamic terrorist enemy" (p.113). Such discourse has greatly informed dominant perspectives of the 'other' during the 'War on Terror'. Thus, neo-Orientalism "serves the political hegemony and neo-colonial interests of people who are aware of the need to produce images of aggression and terrorism on the targeted nation" (Altwaiji, 2014).

To this extent, neo-Orientalism is a part of coloniality which serves to portray a barbarous hegemonized 'other,' using Islam, and is therefore a valuable tool when discussing and analysing the 'War on Terror.' Orientalist thought has not gone away, rather it has been continuously reconstructed as international relations have changed and globalisation has occurred. It remains therefore, that neo-Orientalism discourse has been subjugated by contemporary discourse while racialised rhetoric that targets and devalues the lives of Islamic populations proliferates. This continues to problematise attempts at inclusive discussions on the 'War on Terror.'

Subjugated Discourses of the 'War on Terror'

Understanding the epistemological influence of coloniality on existing dominant power structures and knowledge which is informed by a (neo)Orientalist bias, the 'War on Terror' begins to take a new light aside from its core presentations and assumptions. Indeed, identifying Islam (or most specifically Jihad) as the 'other,' dominant discourse has assisted in popularising an 'Orientalist fear' of Muslims (Semmerling, 2008). Islam through Western eyes has become homogenised as a singular culture where "anyone who 'looks Muslim' may be dangerous" (Love, 2017, p.7), especially 'military- aged men' (Espinoza, 2018). The popular formulation of anxiety towards terrorism, and therefore association with Islam, through 'new terrorism' has caused a focus on the "what if?" to sustain neo-Orientalist fear of the 'unknown' other (Gentry, 2016). As such, a paradigmatic shift is amplifying a binary 'us versus them' schema informing social Islamophobia (Kerboua, 2016; Sa'di, 2020) with a need to 'save' Western identity (Nayak, 2006) through modes of colonial continuity (Khoshnevis, 2019).



Using Said's work as a theoretical framework alongside understandings of coloniality and the growing scholarly work into neo-Orientalism this dissertation employs that Islam, from a homogenised Western standpoint, is identified as the 'other.' Consequently, Muslims across the globe are actively considered 'dangerous' and 'irrational,' (re)producing colonial-esque power relationships that maintain Western dominance over power and knowledge. As the 'irrational other,' Muslim experiences of Western malevolence throughout the 'War on Terror' have been actively disregarded as invalid knowledge. Equally, Western aggression and intervention, especially in the Middle East, has found some justification as a 'necessity' to fight against an 'evil' that haunts and threatens 'civil' society. Understanding these underlying biases and thought from Western powers over the past twenty-one years a post-colonial analysis of the 'War on Terror' exposes the subjugation of the counter-discourses that contrast with dominant presentations.

Post-colonial theory in IR is therefore necessary to delink from Western narratives and decolonise knowledge (Mignolo; 2007; Mignolo, 2017). By recognising the subjugated nature of genuine lived experience and suppressed non-Western discourses during the 'War on Terror' the rest of this dissertation will focus on such knowledges. In an effort to decolonise IR and terrorism studies of its Western roots and bias, I will use subjugated knowledges to formulate an argument for the reconceptualisation and transgressional shift in the common understanding of the 'War on Terror.' This chapter has laid out the theoretical framework that I will use throughout the rest of this dissertation, with the key assumptions of dominant Western discourse and the theory which allows space to counter this.

Coloniality, Neo-Orientalism, Culture, and Death

This chapter has introduced the key literature, perspectives, and assumptions of which the rest of this dissertation will refer to. I have directed attention towards the influence of 'new terrorism' scholarship and how it has informed dominant Western assumptions of the 'War on Terror' and with this considered, discussed how these assumptions have been consistently (re)constructed in core discourse. Understanding that these assumptions have subjugated postcolonial perspectives, moving them aside and denying them as 'invalid' opens discussions of their importance and questions of *why* they have been rejected in this fashion. In response, the theories of coloniality and neo-Orientalism run concurrently throughout this dissertation. I will apply them to theories such as securitisation and necropolitics later in this dissertation as the underlying bias which informs the actions, processes, and thoughts that have run over the past two decades. By introducing their significance in this chapter, I have emphasised their role in Western-centric knowledge production and the (re)construction of power relations, to the extent that they are still an unshakable influence within the West. These theories show how the 'other' has been constructed by Western knowledge during the 'War on Terror' and has sustained racialised hierarchy of being. With this established I employ the literature from this chapter to encourage the importance of moving away from the dominant Western 'War on Terror' narrative.

Chapter 2

The War on Culture

“Taking the problem of racism seriously in the field of IR means viewing it not merely as an issue of stereotypes or cultural insensitivities, but as a colonial technology of life and premature death built on ideologies of whiteness and white supremacy”

(Rutazibwa, 2020, n.pag)

The ‘War on Terror,’ just as any war, has placed particular significance on the roles of rhetoric and securitisation to justify the presentation of particular ideologies as ‘truth.’ Regularly, this has reproduced images of a Muslim ‘evil’ which threatens ‘civil’ Western society, leading to the demonisation of Islam to justify international intervention within nation-states deemed as dangerous. Indeed, these attempts have regularly been characterised as an effort to ‘Westernise the savages’; that is, enforcing Western culture and values upon ‘others.’ As I discussed previously, coloniality develops binary distinctions between Western modernity and neo-Orientalist presentations of the ‘other,’ maintaining a continued consensus of those outside the Western cultural paradigm as lesser humans. With this considered, this chapter focuses on how monolithic presentations of Islamic cultures in dominant discourse throughout the ‘War on Terror,’ have demonised such populations and led to a label of ‘security threat.’ I apply Mutua’s (2001) ‘savages, victims, and saviours’ metaphor to the Copenhagen School’s securitisation theory, to discuss how Western discourse has comprehensively used culture as justification for key interventions over the past two decades. By considering this ‘virtual’ aspect of the ‘War on Terror,’ I identify several securitisations that are

built on neo-Orientalist reconstructions of colonial-esque perceptions of ‘other’ cultures which I subsequently label a ‘war on culture.’

Savages, Victims, and Saviours

Rhetoric is regularly directed and informed by the tropes and knowledges that dominant discourses dictate. As a result, rhetoric can regularly be fed by ideological platforms with underlying biases.

Mutua (2001) finds dominant (Western) human rights movements and narrators regularly employ by a three-dimensional ‘savages-victims-saviours’ metaphor. He exposes this metaphor to call for human rights advocates to be more self-critical and move away from the belief of Western-led governance can come from a “higher morality” (Mutua, 2001, p.202). The ‘savages’ dimension evokes images of barbarism, an entity that represents sheer disregard for ‘civil society’ and humanity. The ‘savage’ can be understood as a group of mutual identity, or nation-state which has choked off and ousted civil society, becoming ‘evil’ insofar as it is illiberal, anti-democratic, or authoritarian. Regularly, this dimension is greatly influenced as an opposition to the cultural foundations of the ‘other’ population, this being, contrasting with those applying the ‘savages’ metaphor, alas resulting in a demeaning focus on culture.



Second, Mutua's 'victims' dimension refers to a "powerless, helpless innocent" population (Mutua, 2001, p.203) whose dignity and worth has been violated by the 'savage'. The 'victim's' characteristic of powerlessness is particularly emphasised as it renders them unable to defend themselves against this 'savage' state or culture at a point of desperation, finding themselves a great distance from the 'fruits' of modernity. It is therefore unsurprising that Mutua's third dimension, the 'saviour', is conceptualised as a redeemer which "protects, vindicates, civilises, restrains, and safeguards" (Mutua, 2001, p.204). The 'saviour' promises freedom from tyranny, tradition, and oppressive culture to provide a 'better' society as an entity of culturally based norms aligned with 'liberal' thought. Importantly, the saviour is fundamentally Euro-centric which Mutua places as a historical continuum of the Euro-centric colonial project, casting some as superior, and subordinating others.

The 'savage-victim-saviour' trope has continued to be reconstructed and utilised in Western discourse. The inherent coloniality of which allows a space to undermine non-Western cultures as 'irrational' and 'barbarous,' in need of intervention and change. Consequently, this belief has fed popular fear of 'othered' cultures, justifying intervention which can take many forms to align and transform non-Western cultures into the shape of Western values and ideals. Importantly, this holds great significance within the 'War on Terror'. Understanding Mutua's observations as an exposé of rhetoric which is deeply influenced by a coloniality informed by neo-Orientalist thought, allows for a detailed interrogation of how and why such rhetoric has been used over the previous two decades. Here I will identify the conceptions of 'savage-victim-saviour' in the West's 'War on Terror' to further discuss how securitising actors utilise them for ideological benefit in the next section.

First, considering the 'savages' dimension through the 'War on Terror' we are able to see how an outrage focused on Jihad has stirred a sentiment which proactively demonises Muslim men. Indeed, Mishra's (2007) analysis of *The New York Times'* publications discovered that Muslim men were established as "fanatics who needed to be controlled," (p.23) while being primarily discussed in context to terrorism, militancy, and illegal immigration. It is such presentations and tropes in popular mediums which have caused Muslim men to be perceived as a monolithically barbaric, misogynist, and violent group (Cainkar and Selod, 2018). As the 'savage,' Muslim men victimise the helpless in line with descriptions of "evil" found in US Presidential speeches surrounding the topics of terrorism and Islam. Indeed, Bush's (2002) state of union address focused on an "axis of evil" (n.pag) and continued under Obama that declared smaller terrorist groups and ISIL as "evil" (Obama, 2014, n.pag). Furthermore, Trump (2017) remained synonymous with this idea, declaring the fight against terrorism as a "battle between good and evil" (n.pag).

Thus, the 'savage' label, when applied, represents a continuum of a neo-Orientalist informed coloniality as Islamic men, in their Western monolithic perception, are deemed as 'crazy madmen' (Samiei, 2010). This proves problematic because it assists in blinding Western understandings of Islam with a confusing mould of extreme behaviour. Muslim men have specifically been demonised in the context of Afghanistan, where they have been placed by Western narrative as the repressive body which victimise women. I will consider this further in the context of securitisation in the next section.

Second, the Muslim woman 'victim' spans from Western narratives of the male 'savage.' Muslim women are represented as victims of oppressive cultures, thus banished from free expression and movement in the public and private sphere (Jacobsen and Stenvoll, 2010). This universally presents Muslim women as "helpless" and "passive" victims of their own oppression, as if they willingly accept their own subordination and need "saving" (Rich, 2014, n.pag). Such narratives proliferate the case of incorporating a 'universal victimhood' of all Muslim women and has been utilised by Western discourses to permit violence during the 'War on Terror.' This is despite the potential homogenising effect such discourse has on Muslim women while maintaining static representations which do not appropriately respect historical context (Rahbari et al, 2021). I will consider this "need to liberate brown women from the atrocities of brown men" (Grosfoguel and Mielants, 2006, p.5) through securitisation later.

Finally, the 'saviour' is the 'moral' white European/Western man. As I have discussed in the context of coloniality, the White Western man considers oneself as the epistemic centre of rational knowledge. This is projected through dominant discourse

and the subsequent subjugation of other discourses. As the purveyor of rationality, and therefore modernity, Western culture is thought of as something all should aspire to achieve. This is an attempt to entrench racial superiority as outlined by continued colonial power relations inspired by neo-Orientalist thought, while presenting the West as exceptional from any abuses or 'savage' behaviour that can be associated with Muslim men.



Therefore, as it is also the 'saviour' that dictates *who* the 'savage' and the 'victim' are, it is unsurprising that within the West's 'War on Terror' these roles are fulfilled by Muslim men and women. The projected conflict of culture makes for a successful scapegoat to place an Orientalist fear on. Thus, comes two epistemological tenets summed up by Gentry as: "(1) that those in the West are and must continue to be the saviours of brown women; and (2) that saviours cannot be savages and, therefore, there cannot be a problem with violence against women in the West" (Gentry, 2015, p.376). Such tropes preserve the West's ultimate presentation of 'super' or 'heroic' masculinity, not as a savage, but as a dominant force for good in charge of global order and in mediation of the "uncontrolled masculinity of the Other" (Khalid, 2011, p.25). In the next section I will discuss how

this three-dimensional rhetoric, inspired by coloniality informed by neo-Orientalism, has been utilised by securitising actors in the 'War on Terror' and their consequences.

The Securitisation of Islamic Extremism

The 'savage-victim-saviour' rhetoric has been used to assist justifying interventions in societies and cultures across the globe. In the 'War on Terror' context, the rhetoric has been used by securitisation to justify both military and social intervention within the Middle East over the past two decades.

When I discuss 'securitisation,' I refer to the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of the process initiated when a "particular referent object is threatened in its existence" (Taureck, 2006, p.54) and therefore establishes this 'existential threat' as a security issue (Buzan et al, 1998). This claim of 'existential threat' which establishes an entity/object as a security issue is driven by a 'securitising actor' of relatively high power and influence such as a politician who declares this threat to an audience using a speech act/move. This act and/or move is imperative for once the intended audience accept this narrative, it can be used to justify extraordinary measures which go above established normative rules to 'deal' with the perceived threat.

Under this idea of securitisation "it is by labelling something a security issue that it becomes one" (Wæver, 2004, p.13). What is important about securitisation is the use and formulation of fear, for it is the fear of the 'security threat' which legitimises the resulting responses in policy and discourse. The largest securitisation of the 'War on Terror' can certainly be considered as the Western identification of threat from radical Islam (Jihad). Indeed, George W. Bush's first national address post- 9/11 cited



“evil”, “terror”, and “chaos” (Bush, 2001a, n.pag), followed by a speech to Congress announcing the “War on Terror” and naming “Islamic extremism” as the enemy (Bush, 2001b, n.pag). This collective speech act, while over two decades ago, established the foundation for the ‘forever wars’ that remain to this date.

What came from these speech acts was a securitisation of Jihad which used and sustained the prepositioned descriptions laid out by ‘new terrorism’ scholarship. In this fashion, securitisation is an important concept to study when discussing moving away from the ‘War on Terror’ narrative because it can expose great biases and cultural/contextual neglect in the search for ‘security’. This securitisation has focused on the imminent threat of a deadly religiously fanatic Jihadi attack on Western soil, in the same ‘new terrorism’ epistemological vein. Basing the ‘enemy’ within a space of consistent anticipatory anxiety allows securitising actors to maintain arguments for more stringent ‘counterterrorism’ policy, without having to substantiate their claims as efficiently as otherwise.

What has been regarded as the ‘Bush doctrine’ is a ‘textbook’ example of this as a regime of preventative measures (most notably war), against the imminent threat from terrorists and the ‘rogue states’ that may support them (Jervis, 2003; Buckley and Singh, 2006). Feeding a narrative of ‘us or them,’ the ‘Bush doctrine’ placed Jihad as a ‘savage’ culture needing to be destroyed with continued influence. Under this Western perception of the Jihad as monolithically “dangerous brown men” (Bhattacharyya, 2009, p.1), securitisation over the past two decades has influenced many different responses to this ‘threat.’

The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the aim to destroy of the Taliban and al Qaeda, the exposé of Abu Ghraib, the extended use of military drones, the rise of Islamic State, military intervention in Syria and Libya, and beyond have all resulted from this successful securitisation of ‘Islamic extremism’. In continuum, the Obama Administration has been discussed similarly, having justified the use of force as anticipatory ‘self-defence’ for an ‘inevitable’ attack, particularly using this reasoning as justification for the extension of the targeted killings program (Erakat, 2014; Enemark, 2020). Thus, norms shifted in wake of this new threat and as such, anticipatory action as a notion for ‘self-defence’ became a major characteristic of Western security and counterterrorism policy of the past two decades.

However, this securitisation proves problematic in more ways. First, by shifting discourse towards associating terrorism exclusively with Jihad, no space remains to consider other forms of terrorism or violence (physical, social, or political) that exist within the West. Jackson (2012) highlights how some knowledges within terrorism studies as being ‘known’ while others are ‘unknown,’ though not in the literal sense. Thus, knowledge of other forms of terrorism within



Western borders alongside knowledge of the ill-doings and harms performed by Western powers is consciously 'unknown' by core scholars and social leaders. By purposefully 'unknowing' such knowledges, it remains unimportant and subjugated, allowing dominant and better preferred narratives to continue to steer policy and public opinion.

Understanding Jackson's critical contributions provides space to understand how through dominant association, 'dangerous brown men' are *the* 'savage' and, as such, sustains 'barbarism' as an exclusive characteristic of othered non-Western cultures. As such, 'unknown' knowledge is deeply rooted with coloniality because it allows Western 'civilisation' to present itself as superior to the 'religiously fanatic' Muslim man who threatens national security. This actively neglects knowledge of societal ills within Western societies, placing Western standards as above that of the 'other' while maintaining that Western powers do not enact unjust violence.

While not the exact purpose of this dissertation, such can be understood when recognising that while Jihadist terrorism remains the more prevalent in Europe as a whole (Europol, 2022), in the US 49% of terrorist attacks and plots were conducted by white supremacists and likeminded individuals in 2021 (CSIS, 2022). Similarly, in the UK 24% of the prison population for terrorism-connected offences are categorised as holding 'extreme right-

wing ideologies' and 46% of terrorism-related arrests were those of white ethnic appearance between March 2021–22, down 6% from the year before (Home Office, 2022). This falls simultaneous with 45% of UK hate crime between 2020–21 being Islamophobic (Allen and Zayed, 2021), while hate speech has been noted as increasing in Europe (Europol, 2022). What is important about statistics such as these is that it proves that issues of violence that are placed exclusively as the behaviour of the 'savage' are wide-spread and ever-present within Western states also. Indeed, such statistics are evidence that the 'saviour,' as a representation of Western modernity, also conducts acts that are largely passed by dominant terrorism narratives.

Back within the 'War on Terror' context, the securitisation of Islamic extremists assists in maintaining an ahistorical perspective of Jihad as though impaired by amnesia. During the Soviet- Afghan War between 1979–89 the CIA supported the mujahideen, a group of Islamic fundamentalist 'holy warriors' (best known as Jihad) with arms and financing during the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR. When the USSR showed support for the Najibullah regime under the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Western forces jumped to support the mujahideen. Branded 'Operation Cyclone', this was a pivotal move during the latter part of the Cold War in the US' attempt to stem the spread of communism and Soviet influence, as shown by the channelling of at least \$3billion into

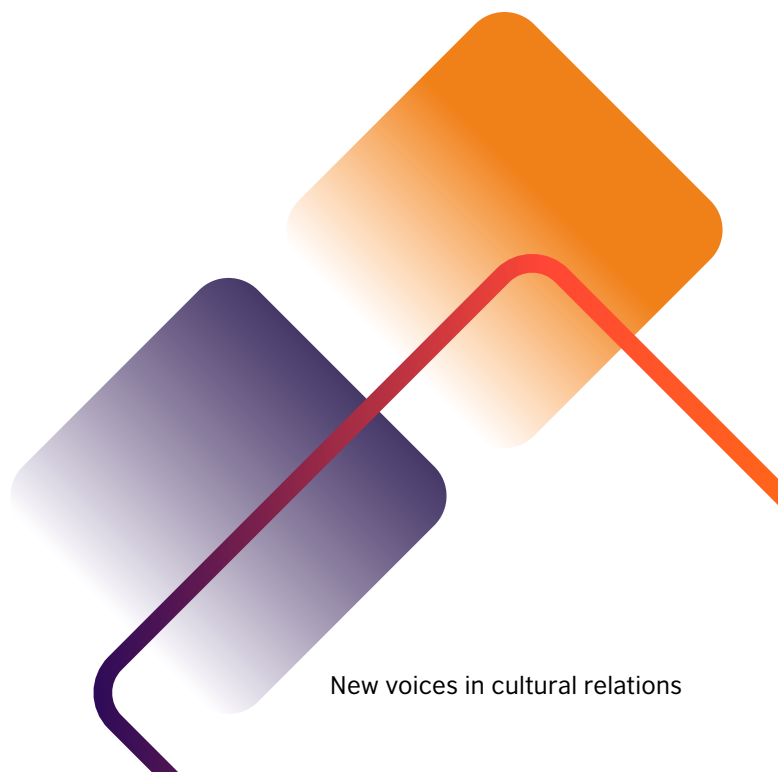


supporting mujahideen factions fighting against pro-Soviet forces (Parenti, 2001). Western-based personal interest became very evident however when the US pulled support for the mujahideen fighters at the dawn of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, despite the impending Afghan Civil War (Coll, 2004). The rise of the radical Islamist Jihad, as understood in Western discourse today, has been considered a product of this Western neglect of Afghanistan after the fall of the USSR, giving way to the rise of the Taliban to power in 1996 (Hughes, 2008). From this time, anti-Western sentiment was strong as the Taliban allowed Afghanistan to become a safer space for Islamic fundamentalists and extremists alike including Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda organisation.

Much of this discourse, however, appears to have been 'unknown' within core IR and dominant discourses. Significantly, this notion has generated an ahistorical stance towards the securitisation of Jihad which purposely neglects any claim that Jihad may have ever been considered as anything other than an 'evil' enemy. To this extent, Jihad served a purpose for Western powers and as soon as it became unprofitable/unnecessary (out of personal interest) to continue supporting the mujahideen, the opportunity was taken to withdraw without contextual thought of the mounting situation. By 'unknowing' such discourse it allows the tropes which maintain 'savagery' as exclusive to 'other' cultures that never intersects with Western modernity. When discussed in addition to the Western data I presented above, it is not difficult to observe how dominant perspectives purposely shun such unsatisfactory and conflicting information from their discussions, to maintain the appearance that 'we' are not like 'them.' These presentations commit to a coloniality of knowledge by allowing the directing of discourse into the most profitable position for Western modernity/civilisation, at the expense of the 'savage other'. Having the power to actively maintain this knowledge and subjugate others that may contrast in view show this

clear influence of neo- Orientalist colonial thought.

Therefore, understanding this subjugation of the 'savage' Islamic extremist during 'War on Terror' provides a space to consider this Western-led discourse in a new light. Rather than a focus on the threat of 'terrorism' and violence as phenomena, dominant discourse singles out one specific version under the light of Islamic extremism and portrays it to the audience as inexcusably violent, imminent, omnipresent, and performed by the most inhuman individuals on the planet. The 'War on Terror' may therefore constitute a 'war on culture,' something with the potential to disenfranchise dominant discourses from validity. Thus, moving away from these dominant narratives means recognising the importance of a vast body of subjugated 'unknown' knowledges; only then will discourse be truly inclusive and fulfilled. Continuing to cast Orientalist inspired knowledge as if full objective truth will continue to promote a colonial- esque segregation of cultures and power hierarchies. This securitisation of Islamic extremism, as I have discussed in this section, has ramifications which have snowballed into a greater securitisation of Islam as a monolith. In the next section I will describe how this has happened alongside what this has meant for Muslim-looking populations and the women of Afghanistan.



The Indirect Securitisation of Islam

The securitisation of ‘dangerous brown men’ fighting as Islamic extremists greatly influenced many popular perceptions of what terrorism has looked like since 9/11. However, this discourse has also influenced additional indirect securitisations. Eroukhmanoff (2018) recognises ‘indirect securitisations’ by securitising actors since 2001 have allowed elite speakers to ‘deny plausibility’ and claim not to be securitising. Employing the work of John Searle (1975) she explains how ‘indirect speech acts’ hidden in ‘speaker meaning’ move beyond ‘literal utterance meaning’ of speech. She explains this as “while the speaker means what she/he says (‘Islam is not a threat’), she/he means something more (‘but the only way to tackle the threat of terrorism is to securitise the Muslim population’)” (Eroukhmanoff, 2018, p.14). Thus, though the literal speech may appear to negotiate one message, the speaker’s meaning prompts a more disillusioned thought of underlying messaging.

The ability to speak in such a way is found in the speeches of several highly important securitising actors throughout the ‘War on Terror’. Previous Presidencies under Bush Jr. and Obama swayed towards formulating a division between the existence ‘good’ Muslims (discussed as law abiding members of the community) and ‘bad’ Muslims (disillusioned radicals who have perverted Islam) without explicit direct utterance (Jackson, 2005; Bosco, 2014). While seemingly attempting to divide perspectives into showcasing that that while every Muslim has the capacity to be ‘good’ and represent Western modernity, every Muslim also has the capacity to be the ‘evil terrorist’ that has been securitised since 2001. This displays religious extremism as a quarrel in the minds of Muslims everywhere, thus feeding the perspective that any Muslim-looking individual may in fact become (if they are not already) anti-Western ‘savages.’ More

recently, under the Donald Trump Presidency, such was seen in the ‘Muslim ban,’ an executive order banning the travel of seven predominantly Islamic states from entering the US. This securitising move placed the ban into the realm of ‘exceptional politics,’ rendering it a genuine security issue, without explicitly say that he was ‘banning Muslims’ to avoid accountability for what could be deemed a racist indirect securitisation of Islam. Albeit considered, “speakers and audience are also prevented from feeling that they are part of a securitisation and remain comfortable in the idea that they are ‘not racist’” (Eroukhmanoff, 2018, p.22).



Therefore, a monolithic presentation of Islam (a non-Western culture) can be understood as a threat to Western security without explicit utterance. Both these direct (Islamic extremism) and indirect (Western-conceptualised Islamic culture) securitisations keep the 'savage-victim-saviour' narrative alive in dominant discourse. As such, presentations of this non-Western culture are informed by this same neo-Orientalist 'barbarous' and 'helpless' identifications, as if exclusive to non-Western cultures. From this, I direct attention towards Rita Floyd's discussion of the background ascendancy of 'functional actors.' Building on the works of Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998) she focuses on 'functional actors' to create several observations. Important for this discussion I focus on her summary that 'functional actors' are: 1) "individuals or groups that seek to influence the trajectory of securitisation positively or negatively" 2) able to "veto/endorse securitisations they are not the referent object of" 3) "comment on existing securitisation processes" (Floyd, 2021, p.89). Thus, to sum up Floyd's observations, 'functional actors' are individuals/groups that are considered the audience or referent object of a securitisation able to influence pre-existing securitisations.

I consider Floyd's observations within the context of Western feminist groups which grew in influence during the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, engraving the SVS rhetoric of 'savage' Muslim men and female Muslim 'victims.' During the US invasion and early years of occupation, comments within core Western discourse turned towards 'saving' the women of Afghanistan from this life of 'oppression' and 'neglect.' I direct attention here primarily to the Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) and their role as functional actors in the Afghanistan conflict. FMF launched their campaign *Stop Gender Apartheid* in the late-1990s, bringing attention towards the abuses of the Taliban regime against women and subsequent condemnation from over 110 human rights and women's organisations (FMF, 2022). The organisation became particularly influential however post-9/11. At this time, the critical narrative of an 'oppressive' Taliban regime became of use to the US' foreign policy interests very early into the 'War on Terror' and invasion of Afghanistan. The US executive was seeking any justification for extending military intervention within the region and maintaining its presence, thus FMF's work was able to greatly influence the US executive's securitisation of radical Islam, usefully adding to the narrative of needing to 'save' the women of Afghanistan.

Indeed, by November 2001, functional actors had influenced politicians (securitising actors) including First Lady Laura Bush (2001) who, via radio address normally delivered by the President, discussed "the brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists" describing Afghan men as "repressive" and women as facing "beatings for laughing out loud" (n.pag). As 'victims,' such discourse came at a convenience to Western narrative to assist in justifying Western intervention in Afghanistan despite knowledge about the abuses of the Taliban regime prior to 9/11, only now did it become of great urgency to act upon (Berry, 2003). As previously 'unknown' (ignored) knowledge by dominant knowledge producers, the FMF were able to, as functional actors, raise their

message of feminine struggle in Afghanistan. Proclaiming that “civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror” (Bush, 2001, n.pag), Western protagonists were neglecting considerations of ‘civilisation’ from any individual within Afghanistan and, by association, Muslims.

Soon, Western modernity became evident as something that the West believed Afghan populations should aspire to mirror and become akin to (Ayotte and Husain, 2005), forming space to steer narratives to appeal to Western powers to respond to such abuses as the ‘saviours’ of Afghan women. However, this proved problematic. The issue of Western focus on this topic is not the attention to the ostracization of women’s rights in Afghanistan, but rather the incapacity to accept the agency of Afghan women alongside a lack of attention to their specific contextual needs. By presuming “dominance and universal fitness for purpose of white Western ways of knowing, being, and doing” (Shepherd, 2022, p.10), Western sources jumped to the conclusion that only the white Western men that could ‘save’ Afghan women. Thus, FMF’s narrative became tied with US state interest, described as hegemonic and imperialist, while evading accountability for the consequences of US militarism (Russo, 2006). Very soon, FMF came under great scrutiny and criticism from other international feminist organisations such as the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), delimiting transnational solidarity for their close intersectional rhetoric with dominant sources (Stevenson, 2018). With this considered, dominant discourse and controversy surrounding the burqa can be seen as a product of the role of feminist organisations such as FMF as functional actors to steer securitisation towards their needs.

The burqa refers to a religious garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions which covers the body and face. Western dominant discourse however depicted this religious wear used by women in Afghanistan as oppressive. As Khalid (2011) observes, the image of the ‘veiled oppressed Muslim women’ has been used in Western-centric discourse as a visible symbol to justify ‘lifting the veil’ to spread just cause for ‘salvation’ in the hands of the West. She notes influential media such as *Time* magazine referring to Western intervention in Afghanistan as ‘*liberation: women in Kabul showed their faces in public for the first time in years*’ in the same vein as many political and media commentaries with this particular focus on the ‘liberation’ of women in the symbolic move of ‘lifting the veil.’



These dominant narratives, however, fall under Mohanty's (2003) criticism of Western feminism's issue of viewing women of the Global South as a monolith, criticising such discourse for viewing non-Western women as 'internalising their own oppression.' Functional actors may therefore silence the voices of non-Western women while sustaining the concept of "the imperilled Muslim woman and the dangerous Muslim man, ideas that install the civilized European" (Ruzack, 2007, p.4). By viewing the Afghan women under this monolithic consensus, Western knowledge-producers remove the agency of these women, rendering them little other than 'gendered slaves' in need of saving (Ayotte and Husain, 2005; Mustafa, 2020). Functional actors continued to construct Afghan society as 'primitive' and 'patriarchal' to make Western freedoms as something Afghan women should aspire to. What is problematic however is that Western knowledge producers do not seek to effectively contextualise any abuse to understand any of its causes or encourage positive responses (Fernandes, 2017).

This can be understood within RAWA's criticisms of Western intervention in Afghanistan for causing innocent bloodshed, calling instead for an Afghan uprising against the Taliban rather than Western intervention (RAWA, 2001). In a more recent publication after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Kolhatkar (2021) reaffirms these early criticisms, pointing out that "Afghan feminists told us war wouldn't free them" (n.pag). Many women's voices that challenged official justifications for conflict in Afghanistan were silenced and accused of supporting terrorism (Hunt, 2015). Rather, Western powers interfered with something of a 'saviour' complex yet no effective plan; the burqa narrative is evidence of this. While Western discourse was focused on removing the veil to end oppression of women, it was hugely ignorant to the desires of Muslim women in Europe (most notably France) who were fighting for the right to wear them in public (Spohn, 2013).

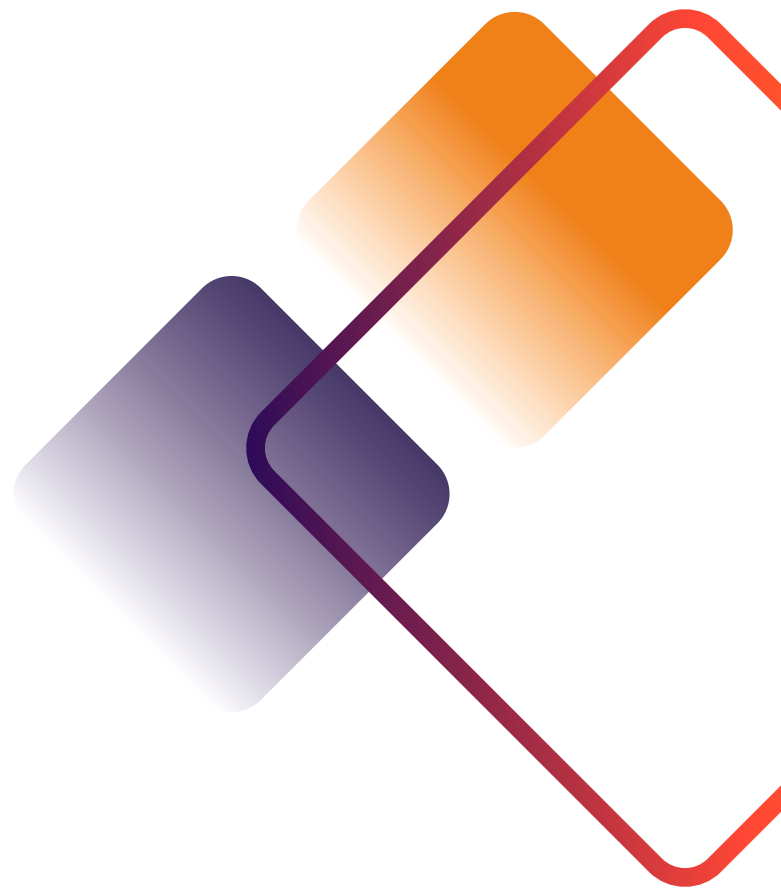
Realistically therefore, functional actors' fantasies of 'liberating' women, whether this is by removing the burqa or any other discussion of Afghan women's oppression, does not address systemically rooted issues. Rather, it plays to a continuum of not effectively listening to women and their specific contextual needs to establish their long-term security. Even when Muslim women break the gendered norms of 'victim' in the combat context, Western knowledge producers shape discourse to ensure they maintain their 'normative' appearance. Martini's (2018) research into main British broadsheet news-outlets found that even in the phenomena of when women join the ISIS Jihadi cause, these outlets ensured that they were portrayed as 'Jihadi brides,' as if forced into marriage and serfdom under 'savage' ISIS combatants.

Equally, such commentary neglects any notion that symmetric abuses also exist within Western societies, as though all Western women are liberated and do not suffer under the same patriarchal regimes as their Afghan 'sisters' (Hunt, 2015). Discourse

that Muslim men are oppressive and violent towards women are also problematic considering that it is estimated around 5.5% of the 16–74 British population encountered domestic abuse between March 2019–20 (ONS, 2021). Additionally, data points to 1 in 5 women in the US having experienced sexual and/or physical abuse from a partner (CDC, 2021), however, it is not only physical violence that women have been greatly subjected to in Western states. Financially, Western women are undercompensated and often neglected as a working force. On average, women in EU member states earn 13% less hourly than their male counterparts (European Commission, 2021), with US women commonly earning 84% of what men earn for the same job (Pew Research Center, 2021). Gendered inequality and violence, therefore, is also not exclusive to non-Western populations. Rather, oppressive culture may be considered as an excuse for intervention to achieve a much larger goal out of deeper personal interest. For, it can be assumed that if Western states were to truly care about the equality of populations outside of their borders, they would surely have first addressed the issues that I have discussed above and the many others I have not mentioned.

Dominant discourse's diversion of attention from the gendered inequalities and abuses that exist within Western societies works to demonise 'other' culture (in this case Islamic) to maintain the appearance of cultural and racial superiority. Such is a continuity of colonial power relations which establishes a racialised hierarchy while remaining myopic towards the faults of one's own shortcomings. Indeed, by exclusively considering Muslim women as 'victims' of

abuse at the hands of the 'savage' Muslim man, a narrative largely built on neo-Orientalist and colonial logic, Muslim culture is subordinated. Western 'civilisation,' by considering itself as the only 'saving' force and simultaneously superior, thus declares virtual 'war' on the values, ideas, and traditions of Islamic culture.



War on Culture?

In this chapter I have applied Mutua's observation of the three-dimensional 'savages-victims-saviours' trope to Muslim men and women, and white Western 'civilisation.' Through this I have identified Western knowledge producer's construction of the 'dangerous brown man' who acts oppressively as a 'savage,' victimising the helpless Muslim woman who can only be 'saved' by Western intervention. Such tropes have been played out in discourse in successive securitisations that have justified the subordination of Islamic culture as if it exclusively breeds extremist and violent behaviours which cause deep patriarchal inequalities within Islamic societies. As such, Western 'civilisation' is promoted as superior, and justification can be made for any intervention into the 'savage's' life. So, why is it important to recognise what I have named the 'war on culture' paradigm?

Viewing the 'War on Terror' through this lens permits an insight which broadens the scope of securitisation analyses. Investigating the discussions I have presented in this chapter invites a perspective of the West's securitisations as realistically not being about the threat of 'terrorism' and its potential damage to Western security, rather, these securitisations were about the threat from the 'other's' culture. Colonial continuities in Western knowledge production insist on maintaining Western 'civilisation's' superiority over all other races and culture. The 9/11 attacks and discourse from Islamic 'terrorists' made Western 'civilisation' appear weak and in doing so has resulted in a need to re-establish colonial superiority beliefs. In this chapter's case, this has been done through rhetoric by stripping Muslim men of humanity and stripping Muslim women of their agency.

Therefore, it is important to recognise this and move beyond the narrative of the 'War on Terror' because, as I have discussed through gendered relations and securitisation, discourse on Islamic culture during this period has focused on its demonisation

and subordination. The promotion of Western norms has been expressed through securitisation and surrounding rhetoric, with a lack of consideration for the genuine contextual concerns of those they were 'aiming' to protect due to a myopic ideological concern of Western 'civilisation.' The promotion of Western ideals played a crude role in the securitisation of Islam by adjusting Western public perceptions of gendered Muslim culture built on a coloniality of knowledge which permitted the right to be suspicious of Muslim-looking men. Recognising academic and other non-state influences in securitisation allows a space to problematise the continued ill-treatment of Muslims and Muslim-looking racialised populations conducted under Western-led knowledge production during the 'War on Terror' (Amin-Khan, 2012). In the next chapter I will discuss how violence against this 'savage,' who is considered as a great threat to Western security, is therefore found not only permissible but has been regularly preferable during the 'War on Terror.'



Chapter 3

A Global War ‘of’ Terror

“How can one demand that ordinary and innocent Muslims answer in the name of those who, at any rate, are scarcely concerned with their lives and, in a pinch, want them dead?”

(Mbembe, 2019, p.33)

Dominant discourse surrounding the ‘War on Terror’ has greatly focused on terrorism as an ideology and physical manifestation against Western nation-states. However, this has shielded Western powers from any relevant discussions of terror themselves. By presenting the ‘other’ population as a threat to the security of every individual within the West with ties to a ‘more lethal and spontaneous’ form of terrorism, Western-centric discourse has neglected the genuine lived experiences of millions which experience violence by Western powers. This proves problematic because it makes those effected by this violence invisible, removing them from academic and popular discourse.

This chapter therefore invites a consideration towards Qureshi’s (2020) idea of a ‘War ‘of’ Terror’ which is more inclusive of the subjugated voices of those which experience the ‘War on Terror’ in a violent way that contrasts with the claims of dominant discourse. I first employ Michel Foucault’s (2020b) theory of biopower to invite thought towards the sovereign’s ability to single out populations as being more worthy of death in accordance with race. Considering this, I use Mbembe’s (2003; 2019) necropolitics, building on biopower, to discuss the violent nature of military drones. Discussing drones as creators of ‘death worlds’ which render civilians below as equivalent to the ‘living dead,’ I consider the testimony of the populations which live under the continuous surveillance of drones. Acknowledging the (in)direct mental and physical hardship that comes with this harsh reality of drone warfare I observe how “racial hierarchy resolves the tensions between illiberal methods and liberal discourse” (Khalili, 2013, p.4). Understanding drones within the context of biopower and necropolitics and how this has been informed by coloniality and Orientalism creates a genuine space to discuss the ‘War on Terror’ as a ‘War of Terror’.

Power Over Life and Death

The sovereign power and the politics of life and death have been largely contested topics in social sciences for centuries, yet this dissertation directs attention towards *biopower*. As conceptualised by philosopher Michel Foucault (2020b), biopower originates and finds justification from traditional sovereign power to objectify humans. This objectification is established through the sovereign’s exclusive ability to dictate what is rational and preferable behaviour to establish shaped societal norms enforced using institutional instruments of knowledge production. Such institutions reward

sovereign-desired normative behaviours and punish any behaviour which does not. This influential form of disciplinary power embeds routine and only encourages one route of thought (Foucault, 2020b;2020c). As knowledge and power are understood as intrinsically linked, the sovereign is the producer of dominant knowledge as they have the power to do so, and it is therefore understood that this knowledge produces power. Thus, biopower can mould future decisions, actions, and conceptions while constraining other ideas and actions to benefit the desires of sovereign power.

In the modern era, Foucault finds that biopower is more concerned with life and death. With the rise of industry with capitalism, it has become concerned especially with the protection and growth of a population; or most importantly, the 'right' population. This is the working population which generate profit and therefore allow for the improvement of life. As such, societal undesirables and outcasts who do not fit the sovereign's normative mould become evident as threats just as other populations can also become viewed as a threat to the growth and health of the population. In such circumstance, war and violence continues simply to improve the lives of the 'desirable' population, for, only the death of the other undesirable population removes threat. Thus, "the power to expose a whole population to death is the underside of the power to guarantee an individual's continued existence" (Foucault, 2020b, p.137); this holds great importance to linking biopower with racism.

Later works by Foucault (2020a) on biopower identified racism as one of "the mechanisms of the state" (p.254) and while he was not concerned with international relations, biopower allows for a better understanding into the actions and decisions of states to inflict violence on others. Placing racism as "the precondition that makes killing acceptable" (Foucault, 2020a, p.256), modern states inevitably become involved in racism by fragmenting populations into 'subspecies' listings under a hierarchy of "good" and "inferior" (p.255). The resulting 'biological' division of populations forges the understanding that "if you want to live, the other must die" (p.255), for if the 'inferior' die then the 'good' species will be stronger and grow. It is once this biopolitical mode of governance is active "racism alone can justify the murderous function of the state" (p.256). Thus, wars are still waged but in the name



of improving the life of an entire people, death removes anything that threatens the population. This “murderous function” includes not only direct killing, but indirect murder such as increasing risk of death, political death, and rejection. As I will concur later in this chapter, Western biopower has justified racist killing throughout this regime’s use of military power and indefinite detention. First however, I would like to note that while Foucault as a Western producer of knowledge may be considered as a synonymous part of the coloniality of knowledge, I invite a consideration into the importance of his work as a part of a post-colonial analysis. First, Foucault’s conceptualisation of biopower proves an important tool when incorporated with Said’s Orientalism. That be, respecting Said’s understanding of Occidental perception and oppressive regimes over the Orient in the promotion of racial supremacy. Therefore, considering biopower as a Western notion for maintaining Occidental superiority over knowledge and power is not difficult to imagine, nor is it difficult to then observe during the ‘War on Terror’. Second, Foucault’s work has been developed by post/de-colonial scholars such as Achille Mbembe.

Mbembe’s (2003; 2019) *necropolitics* considers the effects of historic colonial and contemporary racialised practices on the politics of life. He develops on Foucault’s biopower by reviewing the sovereign’s right over death, and subjugation of life, through the creation of racialised ‘enemies.’ At its basis, necropolitical power grants vast populations as status equivaling to the “living dead” through ideas of race, embedding an ‘us versus them’ mentality, deployed in social relations to stigmatise ‘other’ populations, permitting their subjugation and/or death (Mbembe, 2019, p.92). As such, necropolitical power creates ‘death worlds’ where the permitted provision of the minimum resources to survive are delegated to this ‘other,’ or death. Under this consideration, “necropolitical power proceeds by a sort of inversion between life and death, as if life was merely death’s medium” (Mbembe, 2019, p.38).

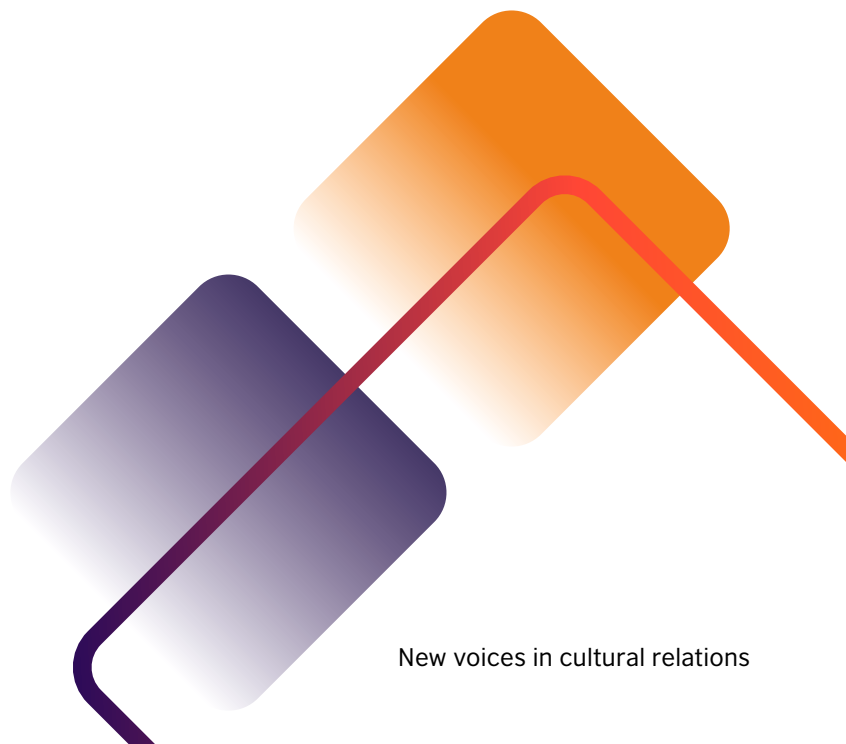
Furthermore, Mbembe (2019) invites thought towards ‘terror,’ which he defines as the practice of “squandering life” (p.34). He recognises the historical strategy of dominant states as having consisted of spatialising and discharging terror “by confining its most extreme manifestations in some racially stigmatised third place,” which he locates within ‘sites of terror’ (Mbembe, 2019, p.34). He places these sites in colonial locations such as the plantation, colony, camps, and ghettos which allow the exercise of consignment, occupation, segregation, and destruction. Terror, in such form, is justified “by the desire to eradicate” corrupted existing tyrannies; however, this ‘counter- tyrannical’ power “is infinitely more brutal than under the authoritarian period” (p.36). Under this conceptualisation, “racism is the driver of the necropolitical principle insofar as it stands for organised destruction” (p.38); therefore, it becomes evident that the politics of life are concerned greatly with the practice of supremacy through terror and death as informed by coloniality and neo- Orientalism.

Importantly, Mbembe (2019) draws close comparisons from these colonial sites of terror with the existing 'War on Terror,' understanding terror's existence through a 'state of exception' where the sovereign works above the rule of law in a "war of eradication, indefinite, absolute, that claims the right to cruelty, torture, and indefinite detention" (p.38). Therefore, understanding necropolitics as the reduction of some human life to equating a status of the 'living dead' in 'death worlds' based on discrimination, terror, and violence is no longer a perverted imaginary, but a reality. Such, as I will argue, is applicable to populations that have lived under drones. This means comprehending the 'War on Terror' as the (Western) sovereign's self-legitimation to transcend the rule of law against a racialised enemy 'other' (Islam) with the means and purpose to reduce quality of life *and* cause early death. Indeed, necropolitical power can be traced throughout this past 21-year period.

If this is the case, I find that the 'War on Terror,' as discussed alternatively as a 'War 'of' Terror' may provide a more cutthroat and genuine insight into the regime of violence that has been consistently self-legitimised by Western powers against Muslim-looking populations. Thus, a further study is required of the real-life experiences of those which have been victimised and targeted by this regime. Through the rest of this chapter, I will focus on biopower and necropolitics as mechanisms of Western power that are informed by coloniality and neo-Orientalism by considering acts such as drone strikes, airstrikes, and torture that have caused mass, purposeful violence, and suffering.

The Necropolitical Drone

Dominant discourse surrounding drone strikes have regularly focused on a specific rhetoric which evades accountability for the harms caused by drones. Such is evident in US Senate committee hearings to this date which remain filled with proclamations that "drone strikes can be carried out with a high degree of precision and target discrimination" (Sales, 2022, p.4). Discussions of 'precision' and labelling strikes as 'targeted killings' allow a space to justify the proliferation of military drones as if they are objectively moral and remove only the threats that they are in place to do so. In the words of assistant for homeland security and counterterrorism to the Obama Administration, John Brennan, drones maintain "surgical precision... with laser-like focus to eliminate the cancerous tumour called an al-Qaida terrorist, while limiting damage to the tissue around it" (2012, n.pag). Analysing this "biomedical rhetoric" where the precision of drones is likened to medical procedures with associations of health and vitality, such discourse directs positive thought towards the roles and effects of drones (Rowland, 2015, p.613). Drones may thus be considered as 'objective killers' which only take out the 'bad guys,' forming an understanding that the role of drones during the 'War on Terror' is that of indiscriminate precision where strikes only effect their 'terrorist' targets.



There is therefore the assumption that drones are necessary in the fight against 'terrorism,' inviting the notion that the death that they cause are keeping Western 'civilisation' safe from the ever- looming terrorist threat. In this sense, the death of the 'other' is justified through ideas of necropolitical security and leaves the 'good' populations at home feeling safer. However, such discourse adds to the West's coloniality of knowledge, where Western necropolitical performances are scraped from public view. While drones may be discussed as an asset to Western 'counterterrorism' strategy, such discourses tend to under-report or altogether ignore their harms.

Paradoxically, the reality of drone warfare is one of suffering. Emery and Brunstetter (2015) invite the conceptualisation of drone warfare as "aerial occupation" which operate indiscriminately, meaning all (including civilians) are impacted by their presence. Civilian status and protections in the presence of drones has therefore been regularly undermined in the name of military necessity (Gupta, 2021). Indeed, such claims are substantiated by the research findings outlined in the *Living Under Drones* report which investigated the effects of drone presence and attacks on civilian populations in Northwest Pakistan. The report found that strikes cause "considerable and under-accounted-for harm to the daily lives of ordinary citizens" with drones operating over populations for as long as 24 hours at a time

(IHRCRC and GJC, 2012, p.vii). Interviews with community members found a rise in anxiety and psychological trauma with symptoms of sleep and appetite loss leaving civilians feeling powerless and vulnerable under this 'aerial occupation'. Such is evident that while strikes have killed alleged combatants and disrupted their networks, discourse has distorted dominant eyes away from the human harm that has been subsequently occurring simultaneously.



While I respect that the report was published a decade ago, it remains ever important in analyses of drone strikes conducted while ‘fighting against terrorism.’ It is undoubtable that unmanned military technology will only continue to grow and develop as it changes the landscape of contemporary warfare, whether aerial naval, or territorial. Such is evident in more in-depth analyses of the US defence budget by Gettinger (2018) which found that the 2019 proposal alone requested a 26% increase in drone spending over the previous fiscal year, with the Department of Defence requesting approximately \$9.39 billion for unmanned systems and associated technologies. With this growth, drones will continue to stretch definitions of the battlefield into regions which are not necessarily active warzones. Drones have, and continue to, exert influence in regions of the world such as Pakistan and Somalia in covert missions outside of active battlefields. These ‘borderless battlefields’ (Williams, 2011), or the ‘global battlefield’ where the entire planet appears to be subject to the application of laws on armed conflict due to the spreading influence of drones occupy a cloudy and ever-evolving legality. Described as ‘outside areas of active hostilities,’ a seemingly quasi-legal term, Brookman-Byrne’s (2017) assessment concludes that strike areas should have international humanitarian law applied to strikes to limit damage and relieve the effected population who are not being appropriately protected.

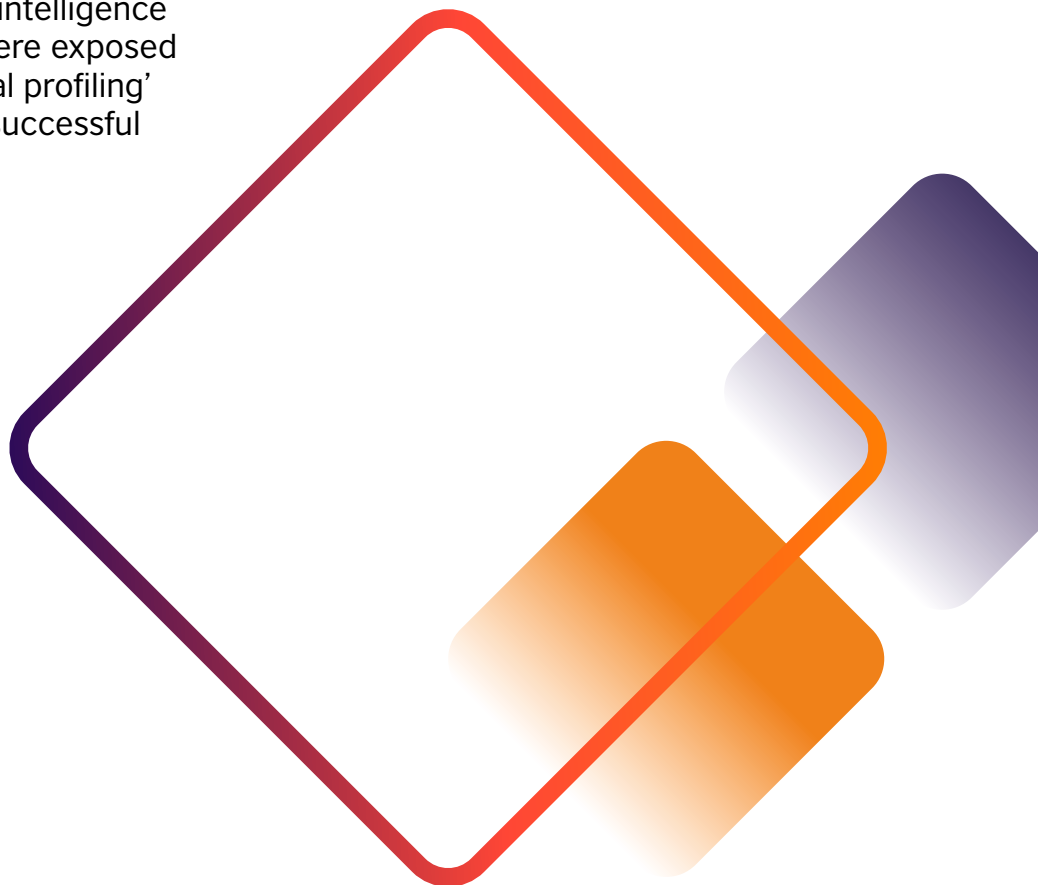
However, by continuing to occupy this quasi-legal space, drone strikes can argue legality as they have previously regardless of the crude impact they can cause. It is not naïve or extraordinary to consider how the formal withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan does not mean the withdrawal of drones. They remain omnipresent as a pivotal tool in US operations within the region to ‘take out’ high-level targets and other militants as observed in August-2022 when leader of Al Qaeda Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed in a US drone strike in Afghanistan. Naming him a “vicious and determined killer,” President Biden (2022) declared that the US “will always remain vigilant, and we will act” (n.pag) against anyone that seeks to cause them harm. Despite Afghanistan ceasing to be a formal ‘battlefield’ with the withdrawal, the US has shown that drones remain active and will continue to in the region as they do so in the surrounding area.

Realistically, the use of drones in asymmetrical warfare (as in the ‘War on Terror’) is only likely to continue to proliferate, intensify, and be problematic for the populations that live beneath. To this date statistics collected by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (2021) suggest that between 2002–2020 drone strikes in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia caused between 8,858–16,901 deaths, of which 910–2,200 were civilians. Such information is made more damning in estimates made by Airwars (2022) that allege between 19,177–29,756 civilians have been killed by US-led Coalition air strikes in Iraq and Syria since August 2014. The proliferated use of drones does not therefore mean ‘surgical precision’ that lacks civilian casualties. Recognising this reality of not only death but living precariously below instruments capable of death means understanding it as a product of necropolitical and biopower racism.

Those living under drones can be understood as existing in Mbembe's conceptualised 'death worlds' within which conditions reduce specific populations to the status of 'walking corpses' (Ahmed, 2018, p.384). The 'indiscriminate' and 'objective' way in which drones operate leaves open the assessment that any individual or group within this 'death world' can be considered as a threat at any moment in time. I argue that this plays a greater role as necropolitical terror where racialised targeting informed by neo-Orientalism suspends populations into the precarious state Mbembe discusses.

'Signature strikes' are perhaps the greatest exemplification of this racialised targeting. These are strikes which occur on individuals or groups because their appearance or behaviour is associated with that of insurgents, meaning they do not require prior intelligence of their identities (Heller, 2013). They have established a precedent allowing drones to operate in areas outside of recognised conflicts (Byrne, 2018), and have been legally contested for contrasting international human rights law as they arbitrarily deprive individuals of the right to life without significant prior intelligence (Heller, 2013). These attacks were exposed for being based on 'behavioural profiling' which, in some cases, proved successful

and useful in quick, effective action against more obvious insurgent behaviour such as groups ambushing US forces. However, they have also caused great civilian harm when interpreting the murky idea of what constitutes 'suspicious behaviour' (Chamayou, 2015). For example, in 2011 a signature strike killed a jirga of 4 Pakistani Taliban fighters and 38 civilian and tribal police who had met to resolve a mining dispute because they were believed to be acting "in a manner consistent with al Qaeda-linked militants" (HRCCLS and CCC, 2012, p.33). Human Rights Watch (2014) also identified a wedding procession in rural Yemen that had been mis-identified as a convoy of insurgents, killing at least 12 civilians and wounding 15 others. These are not isolated incidents, there is further evidence from unclassified Department of Defense (2018) papers and the New York Times (2022) civilian casualty files investigations that point towards civilians being actively targeted in counterterrorism operations.



The mere existence of signature strikes therefore subjects civilian populations to an omnipresent necropolitical terror through continuous drone presence and fear of death. Considering drones as “terror weapons” (Gusterson, 2019, p.585), existing precariously within the drone’s death world alters the behaviours of mass populations. Dominant discourse’s neglect the notion of subjectivity in drone operation wipes the human factor of their existence. Drones are operated not only by their pilots but the many officials and high-ranking individuals that oversee their actions. Espinoza (2018) understands the subjective human influence on drones and how Orientalism is inherent to their targeting and surveillance practices. She discusses their specific targeting of military-aged males (as I have discussed as the ‘savage’) as intentionally discriminate against those racially presented as a homogenous ‘threat’ worthy of death. As a population regarded as ‘backwards’ and ‘uncivilised,’ contrasting with Western modernity, Orientalist racism is the driving signifier which dictates Muslim- looking men as unworthy of life.

In this fashion, the roots of drone power can be traced within colonial thinking and practice. British Empire air power was previously used to terrorise Iraqi colonised populations and suppress their attempts for supporting independence movements (Omissi, 1990), inspiring other European imperial powers when policing colonies and US air power throughout the 20th Century (Blakeley, 2018). While dominant discourse fails to recognise this history and the colonial consistencies of imperial air power, it is important not to neglect this idea in discussions on the use of drones. Rather, by recognising such truths, state terrorism can be understood as having, and continuing to be, a major tool in suppressing, controlling, and pacifying populations (Afxentiou, 2018; Cachelin, 2022).

Recognising Neocleous’ (2013) conceptualisation of air power as police power which has continued from colonial bombing campaigns to drones, studies can move to recognise the impact of coloniality and the consistency in logic and thought surrounding contemporary campaigns.

This Orientalist-informed biopolitical racism therefore plays an important role in purveying disciplinary power over the ‘other’ (savage) population to keep such populations lucid with the continuous reminder that they are the ‘living dead.’ Thus, drone presence is necropolitical power derived from biopower which manipulates behaviour and maintain Western ‘civilisation’/‘modernity’s’ superiority with an ‘us versus them’ mentality. For, the dominant Western discourse which attempts to legitimise such counterterrorism policies colludes and image that the death of the ‘other’ is better than the death of ‘us.’ Considering colonial racialised hierarchies which ran on a scale of privilege

as simultaneous with 'whiteness,' the inherent discriminate targeting of drones is intentional. Hence, when drone strikes kill civilians there is a lack of compassion since their lives have already been devalued to the point that their existence is equivalent to death alongside a racialised bias which declares them as 'savages' and probable 'terrorists' regardless. The drone has the biopower and necropolitical power to kill Muslim-looking populations insofar as they remain a 'threat' to Western populations (Allinson, 2015). Moving away from the 'War on Terror' narrative, therefore, invites in these subjugated discourses for a greater understanding of the terror that is regularly performed by Western powers.

War of Terror

Despite ignorance from dominant discourse, drone strikes have caused great terror and suffering both directly and indirectly towards civilians. As is well summed-up by Rohde (2012), civilians in locations such as Afghanistan and Pakistan find themselves "trapped between the deranged Taliban and ruthless American technology" (n.pag). Indeed, this chapter has encouraged a renewed attention towards the living (and fatal) testimony of drone strikes from those that live beneath them rather than the narrow myopic presentation that is popularly encouraged in Western discourse. It is important to understand the genuine lived experiences of individuals under unmanned aircraft because their experience tells a completely different story to that of dominant Western discourse which is greatly directed by coloniality and Orientalism. Understanding the psychological and physical toll of the terror that has been produced should encourage attention to the problematic roots and practices that have existed throughout the 'War on Terror.'

By applying the theories of biopower and necropolitics to drone strikes I have evidenced their racialised nature of strikes with roots within colonial thought and performativity. Their colonial legacy of racialised targeting continues to be problematic and actively ignored within dominant discourse. Understanding drones therefore as discriminate killers and purveyors of terror allows space for subjugated discourses to have greater influence and assist in providing a case for moving away from the 'War on Terror' narrative. Indeed, counter-discourse such as Qureshi's 'War 'of' Terror' are vital in helping recognise the alternative realities that exist. Though I did not discuss it here, this conversation can be extended into instances of physical torture, rendition, and systematic violence against Muslim-looking individuals throughout the 'War on Terror'; this is something that I would like to readdress at a later date.



Conclusion

Subjugated Discourse, Lived Experience, and the Epistemic Challenge

This dissertation has provided a critical postcolonial analysis of the West's 'War on Terror' by highlighting the voices, research, and literature of subjugated discourses which contrast with the dominant messages portrayed over the past two decades. By understanding the 'War on Terror' as a construction of Western-centric knowledge production, which is based around the West's perception of 'new terrorism,' I have emphasised the promoted identification of the 'War on Terror' as a 'necessary' means of retaliation this form of terrorism. Subsequently, this has generated calls for more extreme countermeasures as a response to an imminent and omnipresent 'terrorist threat.' This is a battle fought both virtually and on the physical battlefield. It is by recognising this construction of the 'War on Terror' that I have conducted a critical non-western post-colonial analysis with counter-discourse that has actively been subjugated as if irrelevant and unimportant.

What is most important about this notion, however, is that it self-problematizes this very construction. The Western epistemological and ontological position neglects and negates any influence that may exist from (neo)Orientalist bias and its resulting influence of coloniality on knowledge production and power structures. Indeed, this proves problematic as the dogma laid out by Western powers not only lacks recognition of personal racialised biases but has completely unacknowledged that anything of the sort may exist. Regardless, I have evidenced that (neo)Orientalism and coloniality are in fact the mechanisms which power Western knowledge production during the 'War on Terror.'

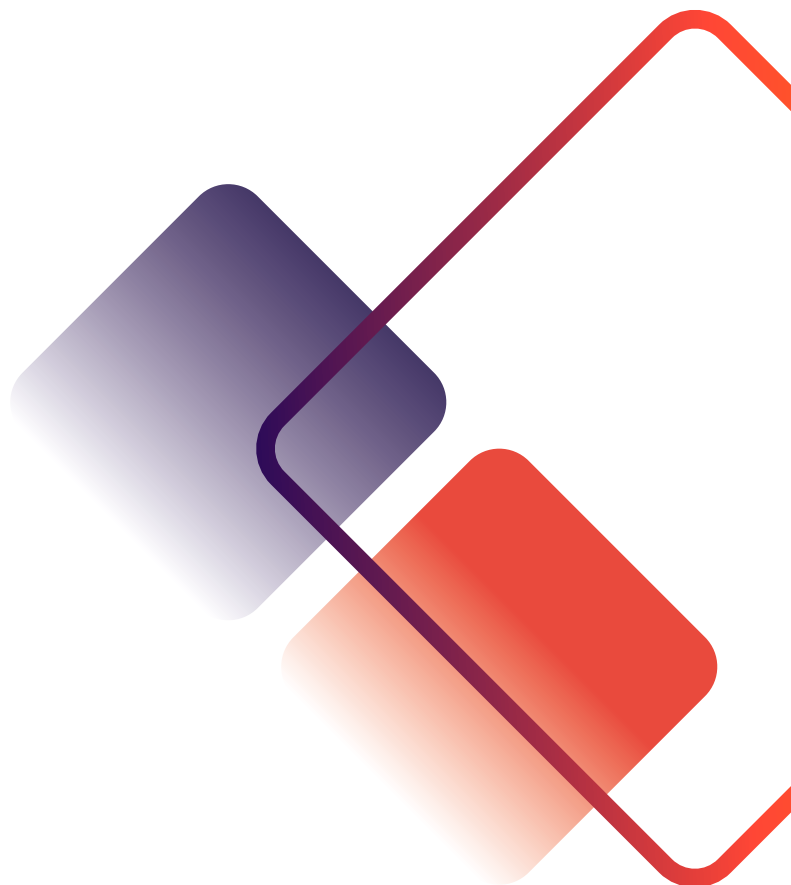
Presenting the counter-discourse 'War on Culture' paradigm, I focused on Matua's three-dimensional trope 'savages-victims-saviours.' Considering this, I identified Western dominant discourse's focus on vilifying the 'savage' and repressive Muslim man; a jihadist culturally symbolising a capacity for great sporadic violent tendencies towards Western 'civilisation.' This 'savage' presentation is further expressed by the discussion of Muslim women as passive 'victims' who are helpless against their own oppression and therefore must be 'saved' by civilised White Western men. This trope represents a clash between the cultural perception and performativity of Western modernity as that of the civilised against the 'other' violent Islamic culture which supposedly stands against the very values the West claims to enjoy and is greatly informed by (neo)Orientalism. This monolithic presentation of Islam has been essential within Western securitisation to justify intervention into the lives of the 'other.' I discussed this intervention specifically when considering the role of Western feminist 'functional actors' in highlighting

the 'passive' women of Afghanistan who had 'internalised their oppression' and needed saving from the 'savage' Taliban (Muslim man). Such securitising moves against Islamic culture have resulted in interventions in the lives of greater populations during the 'War on Terror.' With this presentation in mind and respecting it has (neo)Orientalist roots, the alternative depiction of a 'War on Culture' becomes a more valuable critical tool for analyses.

These ideas which oppose the 'other' culture have led to the eventual justification and fruition of the use of targeted terror. The consistent presentation of the 'savage' as a threat to Western values and security has assisted a rise in necropolitical power, as conceptualised by Mbembe, to reduce select populations as status equivalent to the 'living dead'. I have expressed this in application to the context of military drones, which I argue subjects the 'other' population which live below them to an existence within a 'death world' of drone occupation. The physical, psychological, and social harms of existing precariously has been evidenced by reports such as *Living Under Drones* and further investigations into civilian casualties caused by drones, casting a spotlight on the lived experience of those actively neglected to a point of being less-than-worthy of life. Understanding the racialised nature of targeting and permitting the death of the 'other' as necessary and acceptable in the name of Western security, means exposing the underlying (neo)Orientalist biases and coloniality which make this preferable in the first place. Accounts from living under drones are important evidence of terror extracted by Western power which bares a stark resemblance as legacy of colonial air power over the past 100 years. Thus, considering the existence of a 'War 'of' Terror' once again opens new directions to broaden a conceptualisation of the West's 'War on Terror' to include the lived experiences of those that have lived at the hands of Western terror. By discussing the execution of terror as nonexclusive to the Jihadists that are profiled by 'new terrorism' discourse,

the importance of alternative subjugated experiences becomes ever more prevalent in combating dominant assumptions where the Western nation-state is the 'good' that only fights 'evil.'

Therefore, it is time to move away from the Western narrative of a 'War on Terror' because it does not accurately represent the genuine lived realities of those which have been most affected by its reach. Western dominant discourse has subjugated the discourse of most non-Western knowledge producers at all levels in an effort to maintain the 'good (West) versus bad (Other/radical Islam)' trope which promotes the superiority of Western modernity and culture. Such discourse has neglected the notion of an unacknowledged bias informed by (neo) Orientalism sustains a coloniality that infects both knowledge production and the power structures that interlock with everyday life. Western discourse consciously underreports the harms that have been caused by violence from international interventions, failing to represent a genuine and balanced presentation of what has been named the 'War on Terror' over the past two decades.



Each chapter in this dissertation intersect insofar as Orientalism and coloniality provide the conditions for the justified and intentional treatment of the 'other' Muslim population as being worth less than White Westerners. Discourse fails to represent the effect of colonial legacies on knowledge and power that are manifested within the 'War on Terror' to a point where they have justified the 'other' as being less worthy of life in the name of 'security.' By subjecting populations to a precarious existence in continuous states of terror, the 'War on Terror' narrative must be left behind for the Western nation-state to be brought into studies of state violence and terror.

Understanding Western nation-states as being just as capable (if not more) of terror as those they claim to combat, petitions an epistemological shift towards a more inclusive conceptualisation that promotes a more humanitarian approach where the Western state has opted for violence.

I have exhibited this need to move away from Western discourse by fulfilling the aims of this dissertation. Firstly, throughout I have critically analysed, using postcolonial theory and perspectives, the influence of coloniality and Orientalism on Western knowledge production and power. This was done by first identifying the importance of subjugated counter-discourse, providing discussions on the influence of tropes and securitisation on demonising the 'other' Islamic population as a security threat, and finally with discussions on the devaluing of such populations lives to the point of 'living dead' status. Second, I have promoted the importance of protecting the agency and utilising the value of subjugated voices and knowledge producers with experiences of the 'War on Terror' that contrast with dominant narrative. Specifically considering the agency of Afghan women, it is important to not promote the Westernised monolithic presentation of Muslim women to respect their genuine struggles alongside what their true needs are. In addition, by investigating the instances of psychological harm alongside the underreporting of

civilian casualties caused by drones, I have offered an alternative account of machines previously deemed 'surgically precise.' Finally, by presenting alternative discursive options of a 'War 'of' Terror' and a 'War on Culture' I have offered a direction for further research to continue with.

Therefore, this dissertation has contributed to the growing critical studies on terrorism and security literature within IR. I have answered to the calls from Qureshi (2020) for studies to have a greater consideration into the human impact of policy conducted throughout the 'War 'of' Terror' to bring the violence and harms experienced by civilian populations. In addition, I have worked towards Khan's (2021) call to encourage more research into the effect of colonial, racialised, and gendered relations on the demonisation and association to terrorism of Islam in Western discourse. This is a current and important body of study that is being recognised as a challenge by individuals at the highest official positions within Western states. As right-wing populist politics resumes within Western states this critical counter-discourse proves ever important while government leaders such as British Prime Minister Liz Truss (2021) declare it as "fashionable" to be "ashamed of our history" (n.pag); yet this is not the point or aim of the discourse I display in this dissertation.

Rather, by answering to these calls, I have progressed recognition for the discourses that have been subjugated and devalued for their alternative perspective built on their own personal experience and victimisation. As far as my research has led me, this is an area greatly missing from more mainstream academic media outlets, and especially within political discourse; the underreporting of civilian casualties has proven this alone. Decolonising and challenging the epistemological and ontological positions that formulate the assumptions which have fuelled most influential decisions, over the past two decades, represents the beginning of a more inclusive study environment in IR which can hope to eventually influence future approaches to counterterrorism/insurgency. This dissertation is therefore a part of a paradigm shift within studies surrounding the 'War on Terror,' leading the way in promoting discourse which counters the dominant Western narrative to evidence that an alternative understanding is possible. This shift is not an attempt to wipe history or promote public shame, rather it is an attempt to build a greater recognition for the harms that have existed and how they influence discourse, behaviour, and actions to this date. Understanding the 'War on Terror' within a postcolonial context extends beyond the limitations of dominant terrorism discourse and encourages positive change established from epistemic challenge. However, I do recognise that this dissertation it is not without shortcomings and limitations. While I have established this work to be a postcolonial critical analysis of Western knowledge and power, I also recognise my own bias as a Western knowledge producer. Although this may be an unavoidable bias, I have worked to ensure that I do not underrepresent the discourses of the already subjugated and rather aimed to elevate their importance. Moreover, new, and recent data is needed to further cement the claims of this dissertation. While the *Living Under Drones* report is indeed greatly valuable, my research failed to discover a report as substantial on the same

topic from a more recent source. Research into the effects of more recent events such as the 2021 US forces withdrawal from Afghanistan and further Western-led targeted killings are still in their early stages and have been hindered especially since 2020 due to the restrictions set in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, there is far more to be discussed that I was unable to discuss as there is a potentially incomprehensible range of greatly relevant topics that could have been discussed under the research question posed in this dissertation. However, I did not want to risk undervaluing information or increase the probability of lacking sufficient depth in my analyses and thus chose to focus on the topics I included in greater detail.

Considering these limitations, future research should investigate the effects of violence produced by the 'War on Terror' on the populations that I have discussed as the 'living dead.' With the correct time, funding, and resources, I would hope to have used a mixed methods approach to create a space for their accounts to be heard qualitatively on how violence, whether systemic, psychological, or physical, has affected their way of living. Using this alongside quantitative data from instances of violence that are evident both within societies and from Western-led military attacks can highlight the issues large, subjugated populations face. This will allow the basis for new research and analyses to be conducted much in the same vein as this dissertation, spotlighting the importance of alternative perspectives. Epistemologically placing research with these populations will represent a significant paradigm shift that will continue to raise the importance of theories such as (neo)Orientalism, coloniality, and necropolitics into more mainstream outlets. This research direction will allow researchers and policy makers to realise the potential of moving away from the West's 'War on Terror' narrative and towards a more humanitarian approach.

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