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**Cities and the 'War on Terror'**

Graham S. [Cities and the 'War on Terror'](#). International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 2006,**30** 2 255-276.

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### **Abstract**

Programmes of organized, political violence have always been legitimized and sustained through complex imaginative geographies. These tend to be characterized by stark binaries of place attachment. This paper argues that the discursive construction of the Bush Administration's 'war on terror' since September 11th 2001 has been deeply marked by attempts to rework imaginative geographies separating the urban places of the US 'homeland' and those Arab cities purported to be the sources of 'terrorist' threats against US national interests. On the one hand, imaginative geographies of US cities have been reworked to construct them as 'homeland' spaces which must be reengineered to address supposed imperatives of 'national security'. On the other, Arab cities have been imaginatively constructed as little more than 'terrorist nest' targets to soak up US military firepower. Meanwhile, the paper shows how both 'homeland' and 'target' cities are increasingly being treated together as a single, integrated, 'battlespace' within post 9/11 US military doctrine and techno-science. The paper concludes with a discussion of the central roles of urban imaginative geographies, overlaid by transnational architectures of US military technology, in sustaining the colonial territorial configurations of a hyper-militarised US Empire.

### **Introduction: Urban Imaginative Geographies and the 'War on Terror'**

"The [...] separation of colony from metropolis, the systematic occultation of the colonial labour on which imperial prosperity is based, results in a situation in which [...] the truth of metropolitan existence is not visible in the metropolis itself" (Jameson, 2003, 5, cited in Kipfer and Goonewardena, 2005)

Programmes of organized, political violence have always been legitimized and sustained through complex imaginative geographies. This term – following the work of Edward

Said (1978) and Derek Gregory (1995) – denotes the ways in which imperialist societies tend to be constructed through normalizing, binary judgments about both ‘foreign’ and colonized territories and the ‘home’ spaces which sit at the ‘heart of empire’. Such imaginative geographies are crucial to what Kipfer and Goonewardena (2005) have called the “colonial splitting of reality” that sustains all empires. Edward Said (1978, 2003), for example, argues that imaginative geographies have long been crucial in sustaining Orientalist treatments of the Arab world as Other amongst western colonial powers. As Derek Gregory (2004, 18) puts it, such geographies function by “fold[ing] distance into difference through a series of spatializations.” They operate “by multiplying partitions and enclosures that serve to demarcate ‘the same’ from ‘the other’”. And, as “imaginations given substance”, or “architectures of enmity”, they do geopolitical work by designating the familiar space inhabited by a putative ‘us,’ and opposing it to the unfamiliar geographies inhabited by a putative Other -- the ‘them’ who become the legitimate target for military or colonial power (ibid.).

Imaginative geographies thus tend to be characterized by stark binaries of place attachment. Not surprisingly, these tend to be particularly powerful and uncompromising during times of war. As Ken Hewitt (1983: 258) has argued, “war [...] mobilizes the highly charged and dangerous dialectic of place attachment: the perceived antithesis of ‘our’ places or homeland and ‘theirs’”. Very often, such polarizations are manufactured and recycled discursively through racist and imperial state and military discourses and propaganda, backed up by popular cultural representations. Together, these work to produce “an unbridled sentimentalizing of one’s own while dehumanizing the enemy’s people and land” (ibid.). To Hewitt, such binaried constructions “seem an essential step in cultivating readiness to destroy the latter” (1983: 258).

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the Bush Administration’s ‘war on terror’ rests fundamentally on such two-sided constructions of (particularly urban) place. The paper argues that the discursive construction of the ‘war on terror’ since September 11th 2001 has been deeply marked by attempts to rework imaginative geographies separating the urban places of a putative US ‘homeland’ from those Arab cities purported to be the

sources of ‘terrorist’ threats against US national interests. Such reworkings of popular and political imaginative geographies have worked by projecting places, and particularly cities, into two mutually exclusive, mutually constitutive, classifications: those, in Bush’s famous phrase, who are by either “with us” or “against us” (see Graham, 2004).

Binaried portrayals suggesting an absolute separateness between ‘homeland’ cities and the Arab cities of the target Other are powerfully reinforced by neoconservative geopolitical ideologies (Roberts et al, 2003). These stress the supposed disconnection of countries deemed to be hotbeds of threats to US interests from normalized processes of neoliberal globalisation. Normatively, they emphasize the imperative of integrating such territories into processes of neoliberal globalisation, if necessary through the use of ‘pre-emptive’ acts of US military aggression such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Roberts et al, 2003). Thomas Barnett’s influential *Pentagon’s New Map* (2004) is one example of a range of neoliberal imaginary geopolitical renderings of the world seized upon by the Bush administration as supporting the ‘war on terror. Barnett’s global, binary, schema stresses the putative ‘disconnection’ of the US military’s target zones in the Middle East, Africa and Central America – or what he calls the “Non-Integrating gap” -- from the rest of the world -- a zone which is seen to be integrating benignly through processes of neoliberal capitalism to constitute what Barnett calls a “functioning core.”

In a world of intensifying transnational migration, transport, capital and media flows, however, such attempts at constructing a mutually exclusive binary – a securitized ‘inside’ enclosing the urban places of the US Empire’s ‘homeland,’ and an urbanizing ‘outside,’ where US military power can preemptively attack places deemed sources of ‘terrorist’ threats – are inevitably both ambivalent and ridden with contradictions. They rest alongside the ratcheting up of state surveillance and repression against Others targeted *within* US cities and society. They are paralleled, as we shall see later in this paper, by military strategies which increasingly treat the ‘inside’ spaces within the US and the ‘foreign’ ones in the rest of the world as a single, integrated, ‘battlespace’ prone to the rapid movements of ‘terrorist’ threats into the geographical and urban heartlands of US power at any instant. And they obscure the complex geographies and

political economies of ‘primitive accumulation’ which closely tie predatory post-war ‘reconstruction’ and oil contracts in Iraq, and homeland security contracts in US cities, to the same cartel of Bush-friendly oil companies and ‘private military corporations’ (Harvey, 2003, Boal et al, 2005, Chatterjee, 2004).

Whilst dramatic, the imaginative geographies underpinning the ‘war on terror’ are far from original (see Driver, 2001). In fact they revivify long-established colonial and Orientalist tropes to represent Middle Eastern culture as intrinsically barbaric, infantile, backward or threatening from the point of view of Western colonial powers (Gregory, 2004a). Arab cities, moreover, have long been represented by Western powers as dark, exotic, labyrinthine, and structureless places that need to be ‘unveiled’ for the production of ‘order’ through the ostensibly superior scientific, planning and military technologies of the occupying West. By burying “disturbing similarities between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in a discourse that systematically produces the Third World as Other”, such Orientalism deploys considerable ‘symbolic violence’ (Gusterson, 1999). This is done, crucially, in order to produce *both* “the Third World” and “the West” (ibid.).

The Bush Administration’s language of moral absolutism is, in particular, deeply Orientalist. It works by separating “the civilized world” – the ‘homeland’ cities which must be ‘defended’ – from the “dark forces”, the “axis of evil”, and the “terrorists nests” alleged to dwell in, and define, Arab cities, which allegedly sustain the ‘evildoers’ who threaten the health, prosperity, and democracy of the whole of the ‘free’ world (Tuastad, 2003). The result of such imaginative geographies is an ahistorical and essentialized projection of Arab urban civilization. This, as Edward Said remarked, just before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, is very easily worked so as to “recycle the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations to stir up ‘America’ against the foreign devil” (2003: vi). The Orientalist notions of racial worth that helped to shape the real and imagined geographies of Western colonialism are particularly important foundations for the ‘war on terror’ (Gregory, 2004a). As Paul Gilroy suggests, these:

“old, modern notions of racial difference appear once again to be active within the calculus [of the ‘war on terror’] that tacitly assigns

differential value to lives lost according to their locations and supposed racial origins or considers that some human bodies are more easily and appropriately humiliated, imprisoned, shackled, starved and destroyed than others” (2003: 263).

Discourses of ‘terrorism’ are crucially important in sustaining such differential values and binaried notions of human worth (Collins and Glover, 2002). Central here is the principle of the absolute externality of the ‘terrorist’ -- the inviolable inhumanity and shadowy, monster-like status of those deemed to be actual or dormant ‘terrorists’ or those sympathetic to them (Puar and Rai, 2002). The unbound diffusion of terrorist labeling within the rhetoric of the ‘war on terror’, moreover, works to allow virtually any political opposition to the sovereign power of the US and its allies to be condemned as ‘terrorist’. “Without defined shape, or determinate roots”, Derek Gregory writes that the mantle of ‘terrorism’ can now be “be cast over *any* form of resistance to sovereign power” (2003: 219, original emphasis). Those experiencing frequent ‘terrorist’ labeling by national governments or sympathetic media since 9/11 include anti-war dissenters, critical researchers, anti-globalisation protestors, anti-arms trade campaigners, ecological and freedom of speech lobbyists, and pro-independence campaigners within nations like Indonesia allied to the US. Protagonists of such a wide spectrum of opposition to transnational US dominance are thus all too easily dehumanized or demonized. Above all, they become radically *delegitimized*. Who, after all, will speak out in favor of ‘terrorists’ and their sympathizers?

Once achieved, this loose proliferation of ‘terrorist’ labeling works to legitimize ever-widening, emergency, and ‘anti-terrorist’ legislation. It sustains increasingly militarised civil and law and order policing. And it supports the construction of complex legal and geographical archipelagos operating through networked connections across many geographical scales. Within these, legal ‘states of exception’ are invoked, to suspend ‘normal’ legal proceedings, but these themselves increasingly sediment out to become normalised and apparently obdurate (Agamben, 2005).

In such a context, this paper explores the deep-rooted dialectics of place attachment, and the imaginative geographies of cities that fuel them, that are at the very heart of the 'war on terror'. To achieve this, the paper addresses three particularly important aspects of what I call the *urban* imaginative geographies which are crucial in sustaining the 'war on terror'. First, I address the reworking of imaginative geographies of US cities as 'homeland' cities which must be reimagined re-engineered to address supposed imperatives of 'national security'. Second, I explore the imaginative construction of Arab cities as little more than 'terrorist nest' targets to soak up US military firepower. Finally, the paper analyses the ways in which both 'homeland' and 'target' cities are treated as a single and increasingly integrated urbanizing 'battlespace' within contemporary US military doctrine and techno-science.

### **Re-imagining 'Homeland' Cities as National Security Spaces**

"Everything and everywhere is perceived as a border from which a potentially threatening Other can leap" (Hage, 2003: 86)

The first key element in the imaginative geographies of the 'war on terror' is an appeal by the Bush Administration to securitize the everyday urban spaces and technics of a newly 'rebordered' US national 'homeland' (Lutz, 2002). Here, all-pervasive discourses of 'homeland security,' emphasizing endless threats from an almost infinite range of people, places and technologies, are being used to justify a massive process of state building. Widespread efforts are being made by US political, military and media elites to spread what Jonathon Raban has called "generalized promiscuous anxiety through the American populace, a sense of imminent but inexact catastrophe" lurking just beneath the surface of normal, technologized, (sub)urbanized, everyday life in the US (Raban, 2004: 7). Despite the unavoidable and continuing interconnections between US cities and more or less distant elsewhere, "the rhetoric of 'insides' needing protection from external threats in the form of international organizations is pervasive" (Dalby, 2000: 5). This reimagining of 'homeland' cities involves at least four simultaneous processes.



The 'Domestic Front' in the "War on Terror"

First, the homeland security drive is being organized as a purported attempt to protect those 'insides' -- the bodies and everyday spaces of valued, non-threatening, legitimized, US citizens -- from demonized Others apparently lurking, armed with a wide range of threatening technologies and pathogens, both within and outside US national space. Fuelled by the larger mobilization of 'terrorist' discourses discussed above, and the blurring of the long established legal boundaries separating law enforcement from state military activity (Kraska, 2001), this process has "activate[d] a policing of points of vulnerability against an enemy who inheres within the space of the US" (Passavant and Dean, 2002, cited in Gregory, 2003). The 'enemy' here are constructed as dormant 'terrorists' and their sympathizers, a rhetoric that easily translates -- in the context of the wider portrayals of the 'homeland at war' against secretive and unknowable Others -- into an overall crackdown on criticism and dissent, or those simply deemed to be insufficiently patriotic. As a result, to put it mildly, "cosmopolitan estrangement and democracy-enriching dissent are not being prized as civic assets" in the US -- or the UK, for that matter -- in the early twenty first century (Gilroy, 2003: 266).

A 'domestic front' has thus been drawn in Bush's 'war on terror'. Sally Howell and Andrew Shryock (2003) call this a "cracking down on diaspora". This process involves deepening state surveillance, repression and violence against those seen to harbor 'terrorist threats,' combined with radically increased efforts to ensure the effective filtering power of starkly re-inscribed national, infrastructural, and urban borders. After decades where the business press and politicians endlessly celebrated the supposed collapse of boundaries (at least for mobile capital) through neoliberal globalization, "in both political debates and policy practice, borders are very much back in style" (Andreas, 2003: 1). Once again, Western nations and transnational blocs -- and the securitized cities now seen once again to sit hierarchically within their dominant territorial patronage -- are being normatively imagined as bounded, organized spaces with closely controlled, and filtered, relationships with the supposed terrors ready to destroy them at any instant from

the 'outside' world. In the US, for example, national immigration, border control, transportation, and social policy strategies have been remodeled since 9/11 in an:

"attempt to reconstitute the [United States] as a bounded area that can be fortified against outsiders and other global influences. In this imagining of nation, the US ceases to be a constellation of local, national, international, and global relations, experiences, and meanings that coalesce in places like New York City and Washington DC; rather, it is increasingly defined by a 'security perimeter' and the strict surveillance of borders" (Hyndman, 2003: 2).

### Securitising Everyday Spaces and Systems

Second, as well as further militarizing national territorial borders, the US homeland security drive is also attempting to reengineer the basic everyday systems and spaces of US urban life -- even if this is sometimes a stealthy and largely invisible process. As a result, urban public life is being saturated by 'intelligent' surveillance systems, checkpoints, 'defensive' urban design and planning strategies, and intensifying security (Johnson, 2002; Williams, 2003). In the wake of 9/11, and the Homeland Security drive, the design of buildings and streets, the management of traffic, the physical planning of cities, building zoning, migration and refugee policy, transportation policing, the design of social policies for ethnically diverse cities and neighborhoods, even the lending policies of neighborhood libraries, are being brought within the widening umbrella of US 'homeland security'.

In cities like Washington D.C., new 'urban design and security plans' have been brought in, backed by the American Institute of Architects (see NCPC, 2002). These emphasize that one of the most important objectives of public urban planning in such strategic centers is now the 'hardening' of possible terrorist targets, but in stealthy ways that integrate seamlessly into urban and landscapes design strategies. In addition, new Federal buildings are being designed with extra-wide 27 metre set-backs as defense against truck-bombs. And many government complexes in Washington DC are being

relocated beyond the city's beltway, to help them gain the anonymity that is seen by Department of Defense planners to come from a suburban location. Once again, it seems, geopolitical and strategic concerns are directly shaping the day-to-day practices of US urban professionals. Jonathan Raban, writing of everyday life in post 9-11 Seattle, captures the palpable effects of this militarization on urban everyday life and landscape:

“To live in America now, at least to live in a port city like Seattle -- is to be surrounded by the machinery and rhetoric of covert war, in which everyone must be treated as a potential enemy until they can prove themselves a friend. Surveillance and security devices are everywhere: the spreading epidemic of razor wire, the warnings in public libraries that the FBI can demand to know what books you're borrowing, the Humvee laden with troops in combat fatigues, the Coast Guard gun boats patrolling the bay, the pat-down searches and X-ray machines, the nondescript grey boxes equipped with radar antennae, that are meant to sniff pathogens in the air” (2004: 6).

#### US Cities Within Anti-Cosmopolitan Constructions of 'Homeland'

Third, this attempted reconstruction of national boundaries, as well as being sustained by material and technological investments in and around strategic urban spaces, relies on considerable linguistic work (Kaplan, 2003: 85). For example, during his tenure Tom Ridge, the United State's first Secretary of Homeland Security (2003-2005), widely invoked metaphors linking soil, turf or territoriality with some essentialized, idealized and implicitly homogeneous imagination of a national US community. On one occasion he pronounced that “the only turf is the turf we stand on” (cited in Kaplan, 2003: 85). This ‘rebordered’ discourse constructs an imaginary, domesticated, singular, and spatially fixed imagined community of US nationhood (Andreas and Biersteker, 2003). Such an imagined community -- tied intrinsically to some purported, familial, ‘turf’ -- centers on valorizing an exclusive, separated and privileged population. It therefore contrasts starkly with previous US state rhetoric which centered on notions of boundless mobility, assimilation, and the national ‘melting pot’ identity (Kaplan, 2003: 86).

Such discourses are central to reimagining the actual and normative geographies of what contemporary US urban life actually consists of or what it might become. Amy Kaplan, in a powerful analysis of the language of ‘Homeland Security’, detects a “decidedly antiurban and anticosmopolitan ring” to this upsurge of nationalism after 9/11 (2003: 88). Paul Gilroy goes further and suggests that the widespread invocation by the Bush Administration, following Huntingdon’s (1993) extremely influential idea of a ‘clash of civilizations,’ necessarily “*requires* that cosmopolitan consciousness is ridiculed” in the pronouncements of the US state and the mainstream media (2003: 266, emphasis added). Post 9/11, he diagnoses a pervasive “inability to conceptualize multicultural and postcolonial relations as anything other than ontological risk and ethnic jeopardy” (ibid. 261). To Deborah Natsios (2005), meanwhile, the ‘homeland’ discourse “invokes both moral order” and specifically normalizes suburban rather than central-metropolitan urban conditions.

The very term ‘homeland security’, in fact, serves to rework the imaginative geographies of contemporary US urbanism in important ways. It shifts the emphasis away from complex and mobile diasporic social formations, sustaining large metropolitan areas through complex transnational connections, towards a much clearer mapping which implies clear, essentialized geographies of entitlement and threat. At many scales -- from bodies in neighborhoods, through cities and nations to the transnational -- this separation works to inscribe definitions of those citizens who are deemed to warrant value and the full protection of citizenship, and those deemed threatening as real or potential sources of ‘terrorism’: the targets for the blossoming national security state.

As Amy Kaplan suggests (2003: 84), even the very word ‘homeland’ itself suggests some “inexorable connection to a place deeply rooted in the past”. It necessarily problematizes the complex and multiple diasporas that actually constitute the social fabric of contemporary US urbanism. Such language, she suggests, offers a “folksy rural quality, which combines a German romantic notion of the folk with the heartland of America to resurrect the rural myth of American identity” (ibid. 88). At the same time, Kaplan argues

that it precludes “an urban vision of America as multiple turfs with contested points of view and conflicting grounds upon which to stand” (ibid. 88).

Such a discourse is particularly problematic in ‘global’ cities like New York, constituted as they are by massive and unknowably complex constellations of diasporic social groups, tied intimately into the international (and interurban) divisions of labour sustaining neoliberal capitalism. “In what sense”, asks Kaplan (2003: 84), “would New Yorkers refer to their city as the homeland? Home, yes, but homeland. Not likely”. Ironically, even the grim casualty lists of 9/11 revealed the impossibility of separating some purportedly pure, ‘inside,’ or ‘homeland city,’ from the wider international flows and connections that now constitute global cities like New York -- even with massive state surveillance and violence. At least 44 nationalities were represented on that list. Many of these were ‘illegal’ residents in New York city. It follows that, “if it existed, any comfortable distinction between domestic and international, here and there, us and them, ceased to have meaning after that day” (Hyndman, 2003: 1). As Tim Watson writes:

"global labor migration patterns have [...] brought the world to lower Manhattan to service the corporate office blocks: the dishwashers, messengers, coffee-cart vendors, and office cleaners were Mexican, Bangladeshi, Jamaican and Palestinian. One of the tragedies of September 11th 2001 was that it took such an extraordinary event to reveal the everyday reality of life at the heart of the global city" (2003: 109).

Posthumously, however, mainstream US media have overwhelmingly represented the dead from 9/11 as though they were a relatively homogeneous body of patriotic US nationals. The cosmopolitanism of the dead have, increasingly, been obscured amidst the shrill, nationalist discourses, and imaginative geographies, of war. The complex ethnic geographies of a pre-eminently ‘global city’ -- as revealed in this grizzly snap-shot -- have thus faded from view since Hyndman and Watson wrote those words. The deep social and cultural connections between US cities and the cities in the Middle East that quickly emerged as the prime targets for US military and surveillance power after 9/11, have, similarly, been rendered largely invisible. In short, New York’s transnational

urbanism (Smith, 2001), revealed so starkly by the bodies of the dead after 9/11, seems to have submerged beneath the overwhelming and revived power of nationally-oriented state, military and media discourses.

The 'Homeland security' policies introduced since 9/11, whilst often criticized as ineffective against the threats of transnational terrorism (see for example, Ranum, 2003), have been associated with a considerable growth in state and non-state violence against immigrant and Arab American groups (Brezekinski, 2004). Indeed, "the notion of the homeland itself contributes to making the life of immigrants terribly insecure" (Kaplan, 2003: 87). Here the treatment of individual Arab Americans is quickly conflated to the wider representation of whole urban districts and neighborhoods as zones which undermine the simple binaries of the dominant imaginative geographies of 'us' and 'them', and so necessitate particularly intense mobilizations of state power.

Systematic state repression and mass incarceration have thus been brought to bear on Arab-American neighborhoods like Dearborn in Detroit -- the first place to have its own, local, office of Homeland Security (Howell and Shryock, 2003). Such Arab-American neighborhoods are now overwhelmingly portrayed in the US national media as "zones of threat". Arab Americans are widely represented as "clearly being in" their local cities and "with us", but the point is almost always stressed, as Howell and Shryock (2002: 444) put it, that "their hearts might still be over there, 'with them'". Thousands of US citizens have also effectively been stripped of any notion of value, to be thrown into extra or intra-territorial camps as suspect 'terrorists,' some for potentially indefinite periods of time, without trial. Such people face the constant threat of torture or 'rendition' in a covert CIA plane to a covert US base in a state friendly with the US where torture is common place. More than ever, then, the discourses and practices of the 'war on terror' work to make "'Arab' and 'American' all but antithetical adjectives" (Watson, 2003). As we shall see shortly, this situation is immutably bound up with the widespread demonization of Middle Eastern and Arab cities, and their inhabitants, more generally within the formal, and popular geopolitical, discourses sustaining the 'war on terror'.

### Everyday Sites and Spaces as Sources of (Terrorist) Fear

The final element of the homeland security drive is the production of permanent anxiety around everyday urban spaces, systems, and events that previously tended to be banalized, taken for granted, or largely ignored in US urban everyday life (Luke, 2004). This discourse exploits the fallout from the horrors of Al-Qaeda's New York, Madrid and London attacks, and the Anthrax mailings that followed 9/11 in US cities. With streams of vague warnings, omnipresent color-coded alerts, and saturation media coverage of purported threats to US urban life, everyday events, malfunctions or acts of violence in the city -- which would previously have been seen as the results of local social problems, individual pathologies, bureaucratic failings, or simple accidents -- are now widely assumed be the results of shadowy 'terrorist' action. Everyday technics and urban infrastructure systems are portrayed here as the 'Achilles heel' of technologized, US urban life (Luke, 2004). In the process, parked vans, delayed trains, envelopes with white powder, people with packages, 'Arab' looking people, colds and 'flu, low flying aircraft, electricity outages, stacks of shipping containers, computer glitches, IT viruses, and subway derailments, are now sources of mass anxiety.

The 'homeland' is thus cast in terms of a constant 'state of emergency' (Armitage, 2002). In this, the only things that can be guaranteed are new sources of fear, calls for further intensifications of extra-legal domestic scrutiny and surveillance, and oscillations on the often ridiculed color-coded threat monitor run by the Department of Homeland Security. In resonance with the McCarthyist witch-hunts of the 1950s, homeland security thus depends, ironically, on a radical and perpetual sense of *insecurity*. This fuels acceptance that the everyday sites and spaces of daily life within the continental US must now be viewed as battlegrounds – the key sites within a new, permanent, and boundless war, which Pentagon protagonists term 'netwar' (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001). Here, everyday urban/transnational infrastructures are reimagined as means to project political violence at a distance. Warfare, unbound from its traditional moorings within declared and defined times and spaces, emerges instead as a continuous, distanciated, event. This renders electricity systems, airline networks, computer communications grids, and other urban

technics as sites of more or less permanent militarization (Hardt and Negri, 2004, Graham, 2005a).

The Bush Administration has strongly invoked these new conceptions of war in its legitimization of the 'war on terror'. Vice President Dick Cheney has called this doctrine of permanent and boundless militarization, securitization, and continuous, pre-emptive, US military aggression "the New Normalcy." This doctrine was formally cemented as US military strategy in 2006 in the form of a 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report' centred on the notion of a 'Long war' targeting 'terrorists' both within US national space and in the target zones of the Middle East and North Africa (US Department of Defense, 2006).

Not surprisingly, given such doctrine and discourse, Cindi Katz (2004) notes a palpable "routinization of terror talk and the increasing ordinariness of its physical markers" within US cities since 9/11. She argues that such processes actually generate a radical ontological insecurity because they create pervasive feelings of vulnerability and threat through the material assemblages which necessarily underpin, saturate, and sustain everyday urban life in contemporary US metropolitan areas. In the process, such 'terror talk' helps to define reimagined communities of nationhood as well as normative imaginative geographies of 'homeland' and 'target' cities. As Giroux (2003: ix) suggests, "notions of community [in the US] are now organized not only around flag-waving displays of patriotism, but also around collective fears and ongoing militarization of visual culture and public space".

Ironically, however, as the Katrina disaster in New Orleans demonstrated so starkly, the endless fetishization of the need to 'securitize' everyday urban sites in US cities against the risks of 'terrorism' is being paralleled by a growing exposure of US urban citizens to non-terrorist risks such as floods, earthquakes, fires and hurricanes. Funding programmes addressing such 'natural' hazards have been cut to fund counter-terrorist strategies. Expertise has dwindled as emergency management personnel have become disillusioned with their new position -- subsumed within a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) behemoth that is almost completely terrorist-oriented. Worse still, emergency



management and mitigation leadership capabilities have collapsed, as Bush has appointed inexperienced cronies to key DHS posts (see Graham, 2006a).

### **‘Terror Cities’: Orientalist Constructions of Arab Urban Places as Military Targets**

Which leads us to the second focus of our discussion: an analysis of the way in which (selected) Arab cities are being overwhelmingly constructed within ‘war on terror’ discourses as targets for US military firepower. Far from being isolated from the securitization of US cities just discussed, this process is inseparable from it. As Edward Said (2003: xxiii) stressed just before his death, from the point of view of the discursive foundations of both US foreign policy and dominant portrayals of Arabs in the US media, the devaluation and dehumanization of people in the ‘target’ cities of the Arab world can not be separated from the purported securitization of the (re)imagined communities in ‘homeland’ ones. As the Iraq invasion was prepared, Said wrote that "without a well-organized sense that these people over there were not like ‘us’ and didn’t appreciate ‘our’ values -- the very core of the Orientalist dogma -- there would have been no war" in Iraq. Thus, crucially, a powerful relation exists “between securing the homeland against encroachment of foreign terrorists and enforcing [US] national power abroad. The homeland may contract borders around a fixed space of the nation and nativity, but it simultaneously also expands the capacity of the United States to move unilaterally across the borders of other nations” (Kaplan, 2003: 87). The discursive construction of selected Arab cities as targets for US military firepower occurs in at least four interrelated ways.

#### Vertical Representations of Arab Cities as Collections of Military Targets

First, the voyeuristic consumption by Western publics of the US and UK urban bombing campaigns -- a dominant feature of the ‘war on terror’ -- is itself based on mediated representations where cities are actually constructed as little more than physical spaces for receiving murderous ordnance. Verticalized web and newspaper maps in the US and UK, for example, have routinely displayed Iraqi cities as little more than impact points

where GPS-targeted bombs and missiles are either envisaged to land, or have landed, are grouped along flat, cartographic surfaces (Gregory, 2004a). Between 2003-2004, for example, *USA Today* offered an “interactive map of Downtown Baghdad” on the Web where viewers could click on bombing targets and view detailed satellite images of urban sites both before and after their destruction.

Meanwhile, the weapons’ actual impacts on the everyday life for the ordinary Iraqis or Afghanis, who are caught up in the bombing, as ‘collateral damage’, have been rendered almost invisible by a process of self censorship amongst mainstream western media, combined with US military action. This has happened as part of the US military’s elaborate doctrine of ‘psychological operations’ and ‘information warfare’. In April 2003, for example, such doctrine led US forces to bomb Al-Jazeera’s Baghdad offices because the TV station regularly transmitted street-level images of the dead civilians that resulted from the US aerial attacks on Iraqi cities. Through reducing the transnational diffusion of images of Iraqi civilian casualties – a process already limited by the decisions of an overwhelming majority of Western media editors not to display such material -- such campaigns operated to further back-up the dominant visual message within the verticalized, satellite-based coverage that dominated the mainstream western media’s treatment of the war, especially during its earlier, bombing dominated, phases.

Such coverage combined to propagate a series of powerful and inter-related myths: that Iraqi cities existed as asocial, completely physical domains, which could be understood from the God-like perspective of remotely-sensed or cartographic imagery; that such cities were, at the same time, somehow devoid of their populations of civilians; and that it was not inevitable that Iraqi civilians would therefore be killed and maimed in large numbers when their cities were subjected to large-scale aerial bombardment (even when this targeting was deemed ‘precise’ through the dominant, verticalized, mediated gaze of Western onlookers). As Derek Gregory suggests, in this imaginative geography, which is strongly linked to the wider history of colonial bombing and repression by Western powers, Arab ‘cities’ were thus reduced to the:

“places and people you are about to bomb, to targets, to letters on a map or co-ordinates on a visual display. Then, missiles rain down on K-A-B-U-L, on 34.51861N, 69.15222E, but not on the eviscerated city of Kabul, its buildings already devastated and its population already terrorized by years of grinding war” (2004b).

Strikingly, US-UK forces invading Iraq have failed to even *count* the civilian deaths that have resulted either from the war’s bombing campaigns and initial, urban, battles, or the insurgencies, sectarian killings, and savage suicide bombings unleashed since the invasion. By February 2006, the web site [www.iraqbodycount.net](http://www.iraqbodycount.net) estimated, using confirmed media reporting, that between 28,400 and 32,300 Iraqi civilians had died in the war. Rigorous sampling methodologies, in an article in the prestigious UK medical journal, *The Lancet*, resulted in much higher estimations of over 100,000 by 2004 alone (Roberts et al, 2004). The discursive work done to construct Iraqi cities as asocial, purely physical receiving spaces for ordnance thus was a crucial part of a much broader, philosophical ‘casting out’ of Iraqi civilians as what Giorgio Agamben (1998) has called ‘bare life’ -- mere zoological humanity warranting no legal status or discursive or visual presence (Gregory, 2004b).

### Constructing Iraqi Cities as ‘Terrorist Nests’

Second, as in all wars, violence against the far-off places of the purported enemy has been legitimized in the ‘war on terror’ through repeated emphases on the supposed security this has brought to the increasingly securitized ‘homeland’ cities of the US discussed above. Backed by pronouncements from leading members of the Bush administration, and supportive right-wing media like *Fox News*, such a discourse gained enormous power even though not a single piece of serious evidence has yet emerged linking Saddam Hussein’s regime to Al-Qa’eda. Examples of such rhetoric are difficult to avoid, but two will suffice here. General Sanchez, the first US commander in Iraq, stressed in early 2004 as the insurgency raged across Iraqi cities that “every American needs to believe this; that if we fail here in this [Iraqi] environment, the next battlefield

will be the streets of America.” Paul Bremer, the first head of American civilian command in Iraq, meanwhile reiterated that he “would rather be fighting [the terrorists] here [in Iraq] than in New York” (both cited in Pieterse, 2004, 122).

In particular, significant discursive and material work has been done by both the US military and the mainstream US media to construct particular, highly symbolic, Iraqi cities as dehumanized ‘terror cities’ -- nest-like environments whose very geography is deemed to undermine the high-tech, orbital, mastery and omnipotence of US forces. For example, as a major battle raged there in April 2004 in which over 600 Iraqi civilians died, General Richard Myers, Chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, labeled the whole of Fallujah a dehumanized “rat’s nest” or “hornet’s nest” of “terrorist resistance” against US occupation that needed to be “dealt with” (quoted in News24.com, 2004)(see Graham, 2005b).

Such pronouncements have been backed up by widespread popular geopolitical representations of Iraqi cities. Derek Gregory (2004b, 2002), for example, analyses how, in their pre-invasion discussions about the threat of ‘urban warfare’ facing invading US forces in the highly urbanized nation of Iraq, mainstream US news media like *Time Magazine* repeatedly depicted intrinsically devious and stylized Orientalized streets in their colorful graphics. In these “nothing was what it seemed” ; “deceit and danger threatened at every turn” ; and the US forces’ high-tech weapons and surveillance gear emerged as the key to “reveal the traps” and “lift” the Orientalized veil obscuring Iraqi urban places (Gregory, 2004b, 2002).

A group of professional ‘urban warfare’ commentators, meanwhile, writing regular columns in US newspapers, routinely backed up such popular geopolitical representations of Iraqi cities. The most important of these is Ralph Peters, an influential columnist for the *New York Post*. To Peters, cities like Fallujah and Najaf are little more than killing zones which challenge the US military’s ability to harness its techno-scientific might to sustain hegemony. This must be done, he argues, by killing ‘terrorists’ in such cities as rapidly and efficiently -- and with as few US casualties -- as possible. During the battle of

Fallujah, Peters (2004a) labeled the entire City a "terror-city" in his column. Praising the US Marines "for hammering the terrorists into the dirt" in the battle, he nevertheless castigated the cease-fire negotiations that, he argued, had allowed those 'terrorists' left alive to melt back into the civilian population (2004a).

In a later article Peters (2004b) concluded that a military, technological solution was available to US forces to the problems of anti-insurgency operations in Arab cities that would enable them to 'win' such battles more conclusively in the future: killing faster, before any international media coverage is possible. "This is the new reality of combat," he wrote. "Not only in Iraq. But in every broken country, plague pit and terrorist refuge to which our troops have to go in the future" (Peters, 2004b). Arguing that the presence of "global media" meant that "a bonanza of terrorists and insurgents" were allowed to "escape' US forces in Fallujah, US forces, he argued "have to speed the kill" (2004b). By "accelerating urban combat" to "fight within the 'media cycle' before journalists sympathetic to terrorists and murderers can twist the facts and portray us as the villains," new technologies were needed, Peters suggested. This was so that "our enemies are overwhelmed and destroyed before hostile cameras can defeat us. If we do not learn to kill very, very swiftly, we will continue to lose slowly" (Peters, 2004b).

Whilst an individual, and obviously extreme, example, Peters' projections have been indicative of a large output of popular geopolitical depictions of Iraqi and Arab cities within mainstream US media of the challenges of 'urban warfare' in a post-Cold War context. Within this, the overwhelming emphasis has been on the ways in which the purported physical geographies of Iraqi cities interrupt the 'network-centric' doctrine preferred by the US military; force US personnel to resort to low-tech solutions and the corporeal occupation of urban spaces; and so expose them to the risks of ambush. As we shall see, the dominant military solution proffered by this body of popular geopolitical commentators, is to construct new surveillance and targeting systems which are designed specifically to expose the fine-grained geographies of Arab, or other Global South, cities to overwhelming force from a distance that renders US personnel safe once again (Graham, 2006b).

### Othering by Simulation I: 'Urban Warfare' Video Games

“In a world being torn apart by international conflict, one thing is on everyone’s mind as they finish watching the nightly news: ‘Man, this would make a great game!’” (Jenkins, 2003: 18).

Third, the construction of Arab cities as targets for US military firepower now sustains a large industry of computer gaming and simulation. Video games such as *America’s Army* (<http://www.americasarmy.com>) and the US Marines’ equivalent, *Full Spectrum Warrior* ([www.fullspectrumwarrior.com](http://www.fullspectrumwarrior.com)), have been developed by their respective forces, with help from the corporate entertainment industries, as training aids, recruitment aids, and powerful public relations exercises. Both games – which were amongst the world’s most popular video game franchises in 2005 – centre overwhelmingly on the military challenges allegedly involved in occupying and pacifying stylized, Orientalized, Arab cities. Their immersive simulations “propel the player into the world of the gaming industry’s latest fetish: modern urban warfare” (DelPiano, 2004). Andrew Deck (2004) argues that the proliferation of urban warfare games based on actual, ongoing, US military interventions in Arab cities, works to “call forth a cult of ultra-patriotic xenophobes whose greatest joy is to destroy, regardless of how racist, imperialistic, and flimsy the rationale” for the simulated battle.

Such games work powerfully to further reinforce imaginary geographies equating Arab cities with ‘terrorism’ and the need for ‘pacification’ or ‘cleansing’ via US military invasion and occupation. More than further blurring the already fuzzy boundaries separating war from entertainment, they demonstrate that the US entertainment industry “has assumed a posture of co-operation towards a culture of permanent war” (Deck, 2004). Within such games, as with the satellite images and maps discussed above, it is striking that Arab cities are represented merely as “collections of objects not congeries of people” (Gregory, 2004b: 201). When people *are* represented, almost without exception, they are rendered as the shadowy, subhuman, racialized Arab figure of some absolutely

external ‘terrorist’ -- figures to be annihilated repeatedly in sanitized ‘action’ as entertainment, or military training, or both. *America’s Army* simulates ‘counter terror’ warfare in densely packed Arab cities in a fictional country of ‘Zekistan’. "The mission" of the game, writes Steve O’Hagan (2004):

"is to slaughter evildoers, with something about ‘liberty’ [...] going on in the back ground [...]. These games may be ultra-realistic down to the caliber of the weapons, but when bullets hit flesh people just crumple serenely into a heap. No blood. No exit wounds. No screams"

Here, then, once again, the only discursive space for the everyday sites and spaces of Arab cities is as environments for military engagement. The militarization of the everyday sites, artifacts, and spaces of the simulated city is total. “Cars are used as bombs, bystanders become victims [although they die without spilling blood], houses become headquarters, apartments become lookout points, and anything to be strewn in the street becomes suitable cover” (DelPiano,2004). Indeed, there is some evidence that the actual physical geographies of Arab cities are being digitized to provide the three-dimensional ‘battlespace’ for each game. One games developer, Forterra systems, which also develops training games for the US military, boasts that “we’ve [digitally] built a portion of the downtown area of a large Middle Eastern capital city where we have a significant presence today” (cited in Deck, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

In essentializing Arab cities as intrinsically devious labyrinths necessitating high-tech US military assaults to ‘cleanse’ them of ‘terrorists’, this range of urban warfare video games obviously resonate strongly with the popular geopolitical pronouncements of military urban warfare specialists discussed above. Importantly, however, as part of what James Der Derian (2001) has termed the emerging US ‘military-industrial-entertainment complex,’ they also blur with increasing seamlessness into news reports about the actual Iraq war. Kuma Reality Games, for example, which has sponsored Fox news’s coverage of the ‘war on terror’ in the US, uses this link to promote urban combat games based on actual military engagements in US cities. In their words, one of these centers on US

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.forterrainc.com/news/news\\_hlan.html](http://www.forterrainc.com/news/news_hlan.html)

Marines fighting “militant followers of radical Shiite cleric Muqtaqa al-Sadr in the filthy urban slum that is Sadr city” (quoted in Deck, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

### Othering by Simulation II : ‘Urban Warfare’ Training Sites

Finally, to parallel such virtual, voyeuristic, Othering, US and Western military forces have constructed their own simulations of Arab cities as targets -- this time in physical space. The US Army alone is building a chain of 61 urban warfare training complexes across the world between 2005 and 2010, to hone the skills of its forces in fighting and killing within what, in military jargon, is termed ‘Military Operations on Urban Terrain’ (or ‘MOUT’) (Warner, 2005). Leading examples include Fort Carson, Colorado (which, by 2006, had three different mock ‘Iraqi villages’), Fort Polk, Louisiana, and Fort Richardson, Alaska. Such constructions are the latest in a long line of military construction projects, based on building simulations of the urban places of target nations. In World War II, for example, the composition and design of US and British incendiary bombs were honed through the repeated burning and reconstruction of extremely accurate German-style tenement blocks and Japanese-style wood and rice paper houses at Dugway proving grounds in Utah (Davis, 2002, 65-84).

Taking up to 18 months to construct, the simulated emerging chain of ‘cities’ currently under construction are then endlessly destroyed and remade in practice assaults that hone the US forces for the ‘real thing’ in sieges such as those in Fallujah. Some are replete with mosques, minarets, pyrotechnic systems, loop-tapes with calls to prayer, ‘slum’ districts, donkeys, hired ‘civilians’ in Islamic dress wandering through narrow streets. Others have olfactory machines to create the smell of rotting corpses. However, this shadow urban system simulates not the complex cultural, social or physical realities of real Middle Eastern urbanism, but the imaginative geographies of the military and theme park designers that are brought in to design and construct it.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.kumawar.com/>



It is also clear that the physical urban simulations emerging here are being carefully co-constructed with the electronic ones, just discussed, emerging through video games and training virtual reality packages. In *America's Army*, for example, participants develop their urban warfare skills in an electronic simulation of the 'MOUT' McKenna training complex at Fort Benning in Georgia. Meanwhile, the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) – which has had a major input into the development of *Full Spectrum Warrior* – now offers so-called 'augmented reality' urban training programmes to the US military. One such project, known as the 'Urban Terrain Module,' based at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, blurs the latest electronic simulation technologies seamlessly into physically staged dioramas of 'Arab' urban environments. Built with the help of Hollywood stagecraft professionals, and including electronically simulated 'virtual humans', the project's designers argue that the electronic simulations are so convincing that the borders between the virtualized and physical elements are increasingly indistinguishable (Strand, 2003).

### **Cyborg Dreams: Constructing 'Homeland' and 'Target' Cities Within U.S. Military Techno-science**

“The [US] Air Force wants to be able to strike mobile and emerging targets in fewer than 10 minutes so that such targets will have no sanctuary from US air power”, Adam Hebert, (2003).

All of which leads neatly to the third and final focus in our discussion of the imaginative urban geographies underpinning the 'war on terror': an exploration of the dialectical production of 'homeland' and 'target' cities within US military strategy. Here, strikingly, our emphasis shifts from discussions of disconnection and separation to those of integration and connection. This is because the huge research and development programme now going on to sustain the 'war on terror' emphasizes the use of the US military's unassailable advantages in military techno-science to address, and construct, both homeland cities, and the targeted, Arab cities, as key geographical domains within a *completely integrated*, transnational, 'battlespace'. Both sites are thus increasingly being

integrated through the US military's advances in speed-of-light surveillance, communication and orbital, air and space-based targeting capabilities (the result of what is widely termed the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' or 'network-centric warfare' – see Dillon, 2002; Duffield, 2002, respectively). Post 9/11, this integration has also been marked by the creation of a strategic military command – NORTHCOM – to cover the continental USA (previously, the only part of the globe not to be so covered). There has also been a marked increase in the deployment and exercising of US military forces within US cities. This process is over-turning a tradition that has prevented the routine deployment of non-reserve US military forces within the continental US that dates back to the late nineteenth century..

Crucially, however, this very integration of geographically-distanced urban sites through military techno-science is being done in a manner which actually hard-wires highly divisive judgements of people's right to life within the 'war on terror' into hard, military systems of control, targeting and, sometimes, (attempted) killing. These systems, very literally, enable, reinforce, and inscribe the geopolitical, biopolitical, and urban architectures of US Empire, with their stark judgements of the value -- or lack of value -- of the urban subjects, and human lives, under scrutiny within an integrated and all-encompassing 'battlespace'.

In US cities, as we saw in this paper's first discussion, this scrutiny is aimed at separating out those deemed 'terrorists' and their sympathizers from legitimized and valorised US citizens warranted protection and value, for extra-legal processing or incarceration. In the 'targeted' Arab cities just discussed, however, all human subjects are deemed to warrant no rights or protections. In such cities, the exposure of human subjects within the unified 'battlespace' is, as we shall soon discuss, being combined with the development of new, high-tech weapons systems. These threaten to emerge as automated systems dealing out continuous violence and death to those deemed by computerised sensors to be 'targets,' with little or no human supervision.

“How Technology Will Defeat Terrorism”

By way of demonstrating this argument, let me start by drawing on one particularly clear example of how dialectical imaginative geographies of cities, and the military techno-science of US Empire, are being produced, and imagined, together, by those helping to shape the direction of US military techno-science. This comes from an article titled “How technology will defeat terrorism” produced in 2002 by Peter Huber and Mark Mills -- two leading U.S. defense analysts closely involved, through their defense company Digital Power Capital, in the 'war on terror'.

Huber and Mills's (2002:25) starting point is that the United States now has "sensing technologies that bring to the battlefield abroad, and to the vast arena of civilian defense here at home, the same wizardry that transformed the mainframe computer into the Palm Pilot, the television tower into the cell phone". From the point of view of 'homeland' cities and systems of cities within US national borders, Huber and Mills argue that this advantage in electronic sensing capabilities means that, "step by step, cities like New York must now learn to watch and track everything that moves" (ibid. 27). This must happen, they argue, as sophisticated, automated, and software-based surveillance systems -- which use algorithms to automatically surveil massive quantities of data to preemptively 'sniff' out for signs of 'terrorist' activity -- are woven into the complex everyday technics that constitute urban America. "In the post-September 11 world," they write, 'smart' computerized systems need to be rolled out to all the infrastructural systems of urban America. This is necessary so that US homeland security agencies can "see the plastic explosives in the truck before they detonate, the anthrax before its dispersed, the sarin nerve gas before it gets into the air-conditioning duct" (ibid. 28).

In the 'target' cities and spaces of the Middle East, on the other hand, Huber and Mills stress that superficially similar, automated systems of sensing and surveillance must also be seamlessly integrated into the high-tech US military machine. Rather than pinpointing and reducing threats, however, the purpose of these systems is to continuously and automatically project death and destruction to pinpointed locations in the cities and

spaces that have discursively been constructed as targets for US military power in the 'war on terror'. "We really *do* want an Orwellian future," they write, "not in Manhattan, but in Kabul." Their prognosis is stark and dualistic. It renders the ideology of 'new normalcy' and the Pentagon's 'Long war' into a binaried splitting of geography overlain by, and facilitated through, globe-spanning US military sensor and targeting systems. "Terrorist wars will continue, in one form or another, for as long as we live", they write :

"We are destined to fight a never-ending succession of micro-scale battles, which will require us to spread military resources across vast expanses of empty land and penetrate deep into the shadows of lives lived at the margins of human existence. Their conscripts dwell in those expanses and shadows. Our soldiers don't, and can't for any extended period of time. What we have instead is micro-scale technology that is both smarter and more expendable than their fanatics, that is more easily concealed and more mobile, that requires no food and sleep, and that can endure even harsher conditions" (ibid. 29)

Saturating adversary cities and territories with millions of 'loitering' surveillance and targeting devices, intimately linked into global and 'network centric' surveillance and targeting systems, thus becomes the invisible and unreported shadow of the high-profile, technologically similar, 'homeland' security systems erected within and between the cities of the US mainland. To Huber and Mills, the United State's "longer-term objective must be to infiltrate their homelands electronically, to the point where we can listen to and track anything that moves", where the 'their' refers to the 'terrorists' inhabiting the targeted cities (ibid. 30). Then, when purported 'targets' are detected, U.S. forces:

"can then project destructive power precisely, judiciously, and from a safe distance week after week, year after year, for as long as may be necessary. [...] Properly deployed at home, as they can be, these technologies of freedom will guarantee the physical security on which all our civil liberties ultimately depend. Properly deployed abroad, they will destroy privacy everywhere we need to destroy it.[...] At home and abroad, it will end up as their sons against our silicon. Our silicon will win" (ibid, 31-34).

### Technophilic Unveilings of 'Homeland' and 'Target' Cities

Strikingly, in Huber and Mills's scenario, political judgements about the (lack of) value of human life in the demonized cities and spaces that have been so powerfully (re)constructed in 'war on terror' discourses, is actually maintained and policed through automated surveillance and killing systems. For here the apparent disposability of life in such 'target' cities is maintained continuously by the ongoing presence of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (or UCAVs) armed with 'Hellfire' missiles. These weapons can be launched at short notice, sometimes from operators sited at transoceanic distances, once the surveillance webs that saturate the 'target' cities detects some notional 'target'.

Far from being some fanciful military futurology from Huber and Mills' technophilic fantasies, then, these principles are actually directly shaping the design of new US military systems which are already under development or even deployment as part of the new Pentagon strategy of 'Long War' in which the number of unmanned and armed drones is to be more than doubled by 2010 (US Department of Defense, 2006). Thus, on the one hand, as already mentioned, the cities and urban corridors within US national borders are being wired up with a large range of automated sensors which are designed to detect and locate a whole spectrum of potentially 'terrorist' threats. On the other, the Pentagon's Research and Development outfit, DARPA (the Defense Applications Research and Projects Agency) are now developing the sorts of large scale, 'loitering' surveillance grids to try and 'unveil' the supposedly impenetrable and labyrinthine landscapes of closely built Middle Eastern cities. In a new program tellingly titled 'Combat Zones That See' (or CTS), DARPA (2003) is developing systems of micro-cameras and sensors that can be scattered discretely across built urban landscapes that automatically scan millions of vehicles and human faces for 'known targets' and record any event deemed to be 'unusual'. "The ability to track vehicles across extended distances is the key to providing actionable intelligence for military operations in urban terrain", the brief for the Program argues. "Combat Zones that See will advance the state

of the art for multiple-camera video tracking to the point where expected tracking length reaches city-sized distances” (DARPA, 2003).

Befitting the definition of Middle Eastern ‘target’ cities within US military doctrine as zones where human life warrants little protection or ornamentation, ‘actionable’ here is most likely to be translated in practice -- Israeli style -- as automated or near-automated aerial attempts at killing the ‘targeted’ person(s). Because urban density in target cities is seen to render “stand-off sensing from airborne and space-borne platforms ineffective” (DARPA, 2003), CTS’s main role will be to hold even targets within densely urbanized spaces continuously ‘at risk’ from near-instant targeting and destruction from weapons guided by the Global Positioning System. In US military jargon this is termed “compressing the kill chain” -- a process which “closes the time delay between sensor and shooter” to an extent that brings “persistent area dominance” (or “PAD”) even over and within dense megacities like Baghdad (Hebert, 2003).

Since 2002, for the first time, fleets of apparently identical US unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have indeed patrolled both the increasingly militarized border of the Southern United States and the cities and frontier lands of the war zones of the Middle East. Identical, that is, except in one crucial respect. Tellingly, in the former case, however, worries have been expressed about the dangers of accidental crashes from *unarmed* drones flying over the US’s civilian population by Federal aviation safety officers. “How UAVs could be integrated into civilian airspace within the United States is a fundamental question that would need to be addressed by the Federal Aviation Administration.” reported a committee to Congress on the issue in 2005 (Bolkcom, 2005). “Integrating UAVs into civilian airspace so that they could operate safely would require not only the creation of regulatory guidelines by the Federal Aviation Administration but also technical developments” (ibid.).

In the latter case, meanwhile, these unmanned aircraft have been armed for the first time with missiles and have undertaken, by remote control, at least 80 assassination raids targeting alleged ‘terrorists’ (and those are unlucky enough to be close by) in Yemen,

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. On one occasion, in early January 2006, a CIA-piloted 'Predator' drone, ostensibly targeting Ayman al Zawahiri, the Deputy leader of Al-Qa'eda, in Pakistan, killed 22 innocent civilians and sparked mass protests across Pakistan's cities.

As a further demonstration of how the transnational connections underpinning US military technology both reflect, and erupt within, the 'war on terror's' urban imaginative geographies, some Predator 'pilots' actually operate from virtual reality 'caves' in a Florida air base 8 or 10,000 miles away from the drones' target zones. For the US military personnel doing the piloting, this 'virtual' work is almost indistinguishable from a 'shoot-'em-up' video game (except that the people who die are real). "At the end of the work day", one Predator operator reflected in 2003, "you walk back into the rest of life in America" (quoted in Newman, 2003).

The 'success' of these aerial and long-distance assassinations has fuelled much broader investments in the development of aerial vehicles and munitions that will combine with CTS-type systems to provide the military holy grail of what US military strategists now term 'persistent area dominance'. Large scale efforts are already underway to develop such a capability. These specifically address urban 'target' areas through what is being termed, in the jargon, "Total Urban Dominance Layered System" (or TUDLS) (Plenge, 2004). This program, which builds on CTS, is designed to deliver what the weapons designers call "a family of integrated and complementary vehicles layered over an urban area to provide persistent dominance" (ibid.). In the euphemistic geek-speak of the US military, 'TUDLS' will encompass "long hover and loiter propulsions systems, multi-discriminant sensors and seekers, mini- and micro-air vehicles, mini-lethal and non-lethal warheads, autonomous and man-in-the-loop control algorithms, and a strong interface with the battlespace information network" (Plenge, 2004).

For those unused to the euphemisms here it must be stressed that 'autonomous control algorithms' actually means that the developers of these systems envisage that the flying vehicles, and the computer systems that control them, will, eventually, be designed to

take the decisions to kill purported ‘targets’ without any human intervention whatsoever. Entirely robotic attack aircraft or ‘dominators’ are already under development by the US Air Force (Tirpak, 2001). As the blurb from one manufacturer puts it, “these dominators will be capable of completing the entire kill chain with minimal human involvement” (Plenge, 2004).

### **Conclusions: Cities Under Siege?**

“The ultimate expression of sovereignty resides [...] in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe, 2003, 11)

This paper has demonstrated some of the ways in which the political, discursive, material and geographical dimensions of the Bush Administration’s ‘war on terror’ rest fundamentally on dialectical constructions of urban place. Such constructions, essentially, invoke both political and public reworkings of long-standing imaginative geographies. These are shaped and legitimized to do geopolitical work. Moreover, it has been shown that the dialectical constructions of urban place which underlie the ‘war on terror’ can only really be understood if analysis stretches to cover the mutually constitutive representation of both ‘homeland’ and ‘target’ cities. Thus, this paper has exposed how both urban imaginative geographies, and US military technologies, are essential foundations in maintaining and extending the neo-colonial territorial and urban constructions which lie at the heart of a US dominated neoliberal empire.

Such a perspective demonstrates the vulnerability of both US and targeted Arab cities – which both become *battlespaces* -- and their inhabitants – which are all scrutinized as *targets* -- to an increasingly militarized US national security state. This is especially so when this state mobilizing rhetorics of forcing global, neoliberal transformation based on ideologies of preemptive, technologized, or ‘long’ war (Roberts et al, 2003). Tellingly, then, this paper has shown how the new technological architectures of US military power -- as US forces reorganize to address what they see as a single, transnational, urbanising, ‘battlespace’ – are being superimposed upon imaginative urban geographies separating



valorised and demonised people and places. The unusual emphasis on the mutually constitutive roles of the portrayals of both US and Arab cities within the ‘war on terror’ within this paper allows us to close by emphasizing four key conclusions.

First, and crucially, it is very clear that extremely strong resonances exist between the dialectical constructions of urban places in official US ‘war on terror’ pronouncements and those in the ‘popular geopolitical’ domains, most notably the news media and video games. This points to the increasing integration of the prosecution, representation, imagination, and -- perhaps most important -- *consumption* of ‘asymmetric’ and ‘urban’ warfare in the early 21st century. The growth of the “military-industrial-media-entertainment network” (Der Derian, 2001) that sustains this blurring is occurring as reporters become ‘embedded’ in urban combat (with the language of “they’re moving out” becoming a language of “we’re moving out”), as theme park designers construct ‘mock’ Arab cities for US urban combat training, and as voyeuristic media ratchet-up both fear about attacks in the ‘urban homeland,’ and legitimize preemptive war attacking ‘target’ cities. Added to this, private military corporations are soaking up huge contracts for both ‘homeland security’ and overseas military aggression and ‘reconstruction’. ‘Network-centric’ weapons like armed drones increasingly rely on digital simulations which blur imperceptibly with the simulacra of ‘shoot-‘em up’ video games. And the US military themselves are now constructing Orientalist and racist video games where virtualized and stylized ‘Arab’ cities are experienced by millions of consumers as mere environments for the killing of ‘terrorists.’ These act both as troop training and recruitment aids, and as entertainment for US suburbanites in the urban complexes of the ‘homeland’.

Importantly, then, this complex of discourses and representations – themselves the product of increasingly militarized popular and political cultures -- work, on the one hand, to problematize urban cosmopolitanism in ‘homeland cities’ and, on the other, to essentialize and reify the social ecologies of ‘target’ cities in profoundly racist ways. From such symbolic violence real violence only too easily follows.

Second, this paper has demonstrated that the production of this highly charged dialectic -- the forging of exclusionary, nationalist, imagined communities and the Othering of both those deemed 'terroristic' within US cities and whole swathes of our urbanizing planet -- has been a fundamental prerequisite for the legitimization of the entire 'war on terror'. The truly striking thing here is how such fundamentalist and racist constructions of urban place have their almost exact shadow in the charged representations of cities routinely disseminated by fundamentalist Islamist networks like al-Qa'eda (Zulaika, 2003). Here, however, the 'targets' are the 'infidel,' 'Christian,' or 'Zionist' cities of the West or Israel. The theological mandate is invoked from a different source. And the sentimentalized cities and spaces of the Islamic 'homeland' are to be violently 'purified' of 'Western' presence in order to forcibly create a transnational Islamic space or *umma* which systematically excludes all diversity and Otherness through continuous, murderous force.

The real tragedy of the 'war on terror', then, is that it has closely paralleled al-Qa'eda in invoking homogeneous and profoundly exclusionary notions of 'community' as a way of legitimizing massive violence against innocent civilians. Strikingly, the strategies and discourses of both the Bush administration and Al-Qa'eda have both been based on charged, and mutually reinforcing, dialectics and imaginative geographies of place construction. Both have relied heavily on promulgating hyper-masculine notions of (asymmetric) war, invocations of some absolute theological mandate, and absolutist notions of violence to finally exterminate the enemy without limits in space or time. Both have also relied heavily on the use of transnational media systems to repeatedly project good versus evil rhetorics and spectacles of victimhood, demonization, dehumanization, revenge (Zulaika, 2003, Gilroy, 2003, Boal et al, 2005).

Third, the reliance of the 'war on terror's' imaginative geographies' on projections of absolute difference, distance and disconnection are overlaid by, and potentially usurped through, the manifold flows and connections that link urban life in Arab cities intimately to urban life in the cosmopolitan urban centers of the USA. The binaried urban and global imaginative geographies underpinning the 'war on terror' are inevitably undermined by

such contradictions as rapidly as they are projected. Thus, a revived Orientalism is used to remake imaginative geographies of 'inside' and 'outside,' just as a wide range of processes demonstrate how incendiary such binaries now are.

On the one hand, the construction of 'homeland cities' as endlessly vulnerable spaces open without warning to an almost infinite range of technologized threats, actually works to *underline* the necessary integration of US and western cities into the manifold flows and processes that sustain the rescaling political economies and state processes of neoliberal globalization. Similarly, the attempt to discursively demarcate the everyday urban life of US citizens from Arab ones denies the transnational and increasingly globalized geographies of media flow, migration, mobility, neocolonial governance, resource geopolitics, social repression and incarceration, and the predatory capital flows surrounding neoliberal 'reconstruction' that, paradoxically, are serving to connect US cities ever-more closely with Arab cities. Thus -- especially in the more cosmopolitan cities of the US -- the representations and discourses stressing disconnection and difference analysed in this paper are continuously contradicted by the proliferation of moments and processes involving connection, linkage and similarity. Many of these, of course, are shaped by the geographies of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2003), 'primitive accumulation' (Boal et al, 2005), and resource wars, that so dominate the neoconservative geopolitical strategy of the Bush Administration (Harvey, 2003, Retort, 2005). A key task, then, is to understand how the urban imaginative geographies and military technologies considered here help to constitute broader territorial configurations of a hyper-militarised US Empire (Kipfer and Goonewardena, 2005). How might the various acts of urban denial, erasure, securitization, targeting and 'reconstruction' that are so foundational to the 'war on terror' help to constitute and sustain the US empire's changing territorial colonial configurations, core-periphery geographies, and economic dynamics?

Our final conclusion derives from this paper's third focus: the treatment of US and Arab cities within emerging US military technology for 'persistent surveillance'. Here, we see colonial military technologies and militarised urban planning practices emerging which

stress the connection and integration of cities within both the US and in targeted nations within a single, urbanizing, 'battlespaces'. Such examples remind us that -- whilst usually ignored -- military geographies and technologies are actually themselves key drivers of neoliberal globalization (Shamar and Kumar, 2003). They also underline that, throughout the history of empires, military, social control and planning innovations, tried and tested in 'colonised' cities, have been used as exemplars on which to try and re-model practices of attempted social control in cities of the 'homeland' (Misselwitz and Weizman, 2003).

It should be no surprise, however, that an ultimate "colonial splitting of reality" lurks within this apparent, technologized (albeit highly militarized) integration. Here the colonialist imaginative geographies are being hard-wired into code, servers, surveillance complexes and increasingly automated weapons systems. For the ways in which judgements about the value of the human subjects are being embedded into the high-tech war-fighting, surveillance, and software systems now being developed to expose all urban citizens to scrutiny, in both US and Arab cities, could not be more different.

In 'homeland' cities, to be sure, there is a radical ratcheting-up of surveillance and (attempted) social control, the endless 'terror talk', highly problematic clampdowns, the 'hardening' of urban 'targets', and potentially indefinite incarcerations, sometimes within extra-legal or extra-territorial camps, for those people deemed to display the signifiers of real or 'dormant' terrorists. In the 'targeted' urban spaces of worlds within Barnett's 'non-integrating gap', meanwhile, weapons systems are currently being designed which are emerging as systems of automated, continuous, (attempted) assassination.

Here, chillingly, software code is being invested with the sovereign power to kill. Such systems are being brought into being within legal and geographical states of exception that are now increasingly being normalised and universalised as global strategy. This trend is backed by neoconservative ideologies and geopolitical scripts. These justify continuous, pre-emptive US military aggression against sources of 'terrorism' as a central platform of Dick Cheney's "new normalcy," or the Pentagon's "Long War". Such a strategy is also being fuelled by the great temptation, in the light of the horrors of street

fighting during the Iraq insurgency, and the 2000+ US military dead, for the US state and military to deploy autonomous and robotized US weapons against purported enemies who are always likely to remain all-too human (Graham, 2006b). “The enemy, are they going to give up blood and guts to kill machines?” wondered Gordon Johnson, head of a US army robot weapons team, in 2003. “I’m guessing not” (cited in Lawlor, 2004, 3).

The main worry here is that these systems will be deployed stealthily by the US state to ‘loiter’ more or less permanently above and within cities and regions deemed to be the ‘war on terror’s’ main targets. They might then produce realms of automated, stealthy, and continuous violence. Let loose from both the spatial and temporal limits, and the legal norms, of ‘war,’ as traditionally understood (i.e. in its declared and demarcated state-vs.-state guises), this violence is likely to largely escape the selective and capricious gaze of mainstream western media (see Blackmore, 2006).

This shift to robotised war, and militaristic paradigms which see cities as mere *battlespace*, and their inhabitants as mere *targets*, is far from uncontested. Even within the US military – especially the infantry in the US Army – many are deeply sceptical of any military ‘silver bullets’ emerging from the think tanks, research complexes, and weapons manufacturers of the US military-industrial-entertainment complex. Nonetheless, the latest 2006 Pentagon Defense Review suggests that the widespread deployment of autonomous, armed drones across large swathes of our urbanising world is already being planned and undertaken. The links explored here between urban imaginative geographies, high-tech weaponry, and the urbanizing geopolitics of insurgency against transnational colonial and military power of the US empire, thus look set to deepen further.



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