

From Frontier to Foreign Policy: The Discursive Tributaries of American Orientalism

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that thanks to its unique interdiscursive character, American Orientalism, as a hegemonic discourse, constitutes the most realized expression of historical Orientalism. To this end, the article employs an interdiscursive analytical framework to map the specific "tributaries" that feed into and shape present-day American orientalist discourse. The study is systematically structured to define and explore these tributaries across three main analytical sections: firstly, an examination of American Exceptionalism as the primary tributary, encompassing foundational concepts such as the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny; secondly, an analysis of frontier mythology including the tropes of the "Wild West" and "Indian Country" and their applications to orientalist constructions; and thirdly, an investigation of postwar novel orientalist paradigms, including Modernization and Democratization theories, neo-orientalism, and the "Clash of Civilizations"/new barbarism theses. Through the systematic analysis of these primary discursive streams, the study reveals how American Orientalism operates as a complex interdependent system of colonial and intellectual discourses. In so doing, it demonstrates that post-9/11 imaginaries represent not a departure from but rather an intensification of historical orientalist constructions, employing familiar frontier metaphors and exceptionalist rationale to justify contemporary foreign interventions. By tracing the genealogical connections between Orientalism, America's founding myths and neo-orientalist discourses, this article seeks to illuminate how the United States has inherited and transformed the imperial mantle from declining European colonial powers while infusing it with distinctly American discursive features that are rooted in its own colonial and expansionist history. The findings contribute to understanding how American orientalist constructions that are permeated with national mythologies continue to inform American foreign policy formulation in the Middle-East and beyond.

Keywords: American Orientalism, Foreign Policy, Exceptionalism, Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, Heritage Mythology, Clash of Civilizations, New Barbarism, Neo-Orientalism

INTRODUCTION

In the final chapter of his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), titled "Orientalism Now," Edward Said explicitly frames the whole book as a response to American foreign policy (Elmarsafy & Bernard, 2013, p. 3). The obvious reason is that since the postwar period, the United States as the new hegemon has taken over "the Orientalist mantle" (McAlister, 2001, p. 37) from former colonial European powers. For Said, with this rise to prominence, the American variant of Orientalism has not only been rejuvenated but it also came to pervade all realms of interactions with the East in order to manage it "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively" (2004, p. 3). Besides the expression "American Orientalism" which recurs at least four times in *Orientalism* (18, 19, 275, 300), Said has also been talking about the "American Oriental position" (p. 17). He maintains that this Oriental position has fit, since World War II, "self-consciously" in the places excavated by the two earlier European colonial powers, Britain and France (p. 7). With this position, the United States also inherited the basic assumptions inherent to European views on the East and the "intellectual authority" on the Orient derived from the power/knowledge nexus underwriting its super power status. On top of this legacy, and through "a process of selective accumulation, deletion, rearrangement and insistence" (Said, 2004, p. 176) a specifically American orientalist perspective has been grafted, and the whole construct congealed into a powerful pervasive discourse, i.e., American Orientalism. The "Global war on terror" launched in 2001 inaugurated one of the most defining moments in America's Orientalist politics "through other means" which brought even more relevance and significance to Said's prescient assertions. Orientalism, under

the American banner this time, was suddenly “abroad again, revived, and hideously emboldened” (Gregory, 2004, p. 155) and became a very topical subject in the beginning of the twenty-first century, concurrently with the debate that had been raging about the American imperium and the unipolar moment at the turn of the millennium.

This article aims to put a particular emphasis on those specific aspects which distinguish American Orientalism from classical Orientalism. Not only has Orientalism transitioned alongside imperialism to the American continent but it also took on new characteristics which flowed from the founding myths of the frontier-driven American civilization throughout its relatively recent history. American Orientalism, a powerful pervasive discourse, is therefore characterized by a stronger and more diversified “interdiscursivity” than European Orientalism since it has incorporated other inherently American elements of colonial discourses and neo-colonial paradigms. Here, the primacy of interdiscursivity as the “weaving together of different discourses and genres” within a particular sociocultural field or context (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 153) is furthermore considered in the sense that any discursive practice is “defined by its relations with others, and draws upon others in complex ways” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 55). Hence, the article employs an interdiscursive analytical framework to examine those distinctive characteristics of American Orientalism which differentiate it from its European forerunner. It does so through the identification of uniquely American discursive “tributaries” that have shaped America’s Orientalist worldview and foreign policy orientations. The methodology centers on tracing the genealogical connections between foundational American myths, frontier mythologies, neo-orientalist paradigms and the common core of canonical Orientalism. It emphasizes how American Orientalism draws upon and incorporates these affluents in complex interdependent ways. The article is systematically structured to explore these tributaries across three main analytical sections: firstly, an examination of American Exceptionalism as the primary tributary, encompassing foundational concepts such as the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny; secondly, an analysis of frontier mythologies including the tropes of the “Wild West” and “Indian Country” and their application to orientalist constructions of the “Oriental” other; and thirdly, an investigation of contemporary neo-orientalist paradigms including Modernization and Democratization theories, and post-9/11 formulations such as the “Clash of Civilizations”/ New barbarism theses.

The main goal of this article is to enable a better understanding of how these interwoven discursive tributaries have collectively informed U.S. perceptions and policies toward the Middle East and other “Oriental” regions. Indeed, awareness of these undercurrents allows a better cognizance of the orientalist constructions underlying foreign policy formulation and implementation in the contemporary era at the highest levels of US officialdom, with far-reaching consequences for the “East.”

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM, MANIFEST DESTINY AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

American exceptionalism, together with Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, form one of the most important tributaries of American Orientalism. American exceptionalism in particular stands out as a most powerful generative stream. In the words of Alexander Woolfson (2012, pp. 66, 141), it is the “para-ideological umbrella” for the two other concepts alongside other ideas such as the American Dream, the New World Order and the policy of containment, during the cold war the global war on terror.

From American Exceptionalism to American Orientalism

Several scholars have indeed identified Exceptionalism as the cross-cutting theme in the most dramatic geo-political and strategic transformations involving armed violence, throughout the history of the United-States. James W. Ceaser (2012, p. 8), for instance, considers it as the line which runs “from seventeenth-century Puritan thought, to the Revolution, to the mid nineteenth-century doctrine of manifest destiny, to late nineteenth-century American imperialism, to Wilsonian idealism, to cold war anticommunism, and finally to George W. Bush’s unilateralism . . .”. In the same vein, Gary Dorrien (2004, p. 17) traces the numerous self-images of superiority and divine favor that populate American history to American Exceptionalism, including “God’s New Israel, the Redeemer Nation, the City on a Hill, the New Order of the Ages, Manifest Destiny, the Pax Americana, the Arsenal of Democracy, the Leader of the Free World.” Dirk Nabers and Robert Patman (2008, p. 170), for their part, view the notion of “Exceptionalism” as referring to an informal framework that has organized American society and America’s place in the world, that is America’s view of itself and of its place in the world vis-à-vis Western and non-Western others.

Depending on specific historical contexts, American Exceptionalism has been invoked to justify the country's conduct on the world stage, particularly its assertive policies in Third World countries, including the Middle-East. It has persisted, as a justification, from the period of New Imperialism, through the Cold War, into the Global War on Terror, up to the current war on Iran. In fact, at each watershed of American rise to power, innovative iterations were instrumental in formulating hegemonic narratives while rhetorically washing the US clean from any imperial ambition. Woolfson (2012, p. 248) has demonstrated how the refashioning of American Exceptionalism by several US presidents and their key advisors, as “ideological innovators”, has allowed for the articulation of US grand strategy to ensure enduring dominance on the world stage. One President in particular, Ronald Reagan (as cited in Knickerbocker, 2015), clearly outlined this view:

We cannot escape our destiny, nor should we try to do so. The leadership of the free world was thrust upon us two centuries ago in that little hall of Philadelphia. In the days following World War II, when the economic strength and power of America was all that stood between the world and the return to the dark ages . . . We are indeed, and we are today, the last best hope of man on earth.

And while exceptionalism has become almost exclusively associated with America, Niall Ferguson (2004, p. 15) contends the historian of empires can only retort that America is as “exceptional as all the other sixty-nine empires.” In the same vein, Ronald Granieri (2016) has demonstrated how the idea of exceptionalism has been conspicuously and rhetorically at the heart of at least four former empires (the Roman, the British, the French and Nazi Germany). He also maintains that exceptionalism or unbridled faith in the superiority of one’s race, nation, social or political model has been a springboard to colonialist, expansionist or at least assertive foreign policies. The preceding statements, though shorn of Orientalist concerns, are perfectly in line with Edward Said (2004, p. xvi) when he argues that, “every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, . . . that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy.”

American exceptionalism is particularly relevant to Orientalism as it provides, alongside other founding myths, “moral justification for military violence throughout American history and is important for understanding contemporary war rhetoric” (Esch, 2010, p. 359). In this regard, Walter Hixson notes a “warlike continuity of U.S. foreign policy flowing from a distinctive national culture,” a continuity that has reached its logical extreme in the war on terrorism (as cited in Hoff, 2007, p. 192). William Spanos (2008, p. 147), for his part, points to how the post-9/11 era itself “constitutes a recuperation of American Exceptionalism” based on a self-representation as radically and morally superior to the rest of the world.

The intersections and interactions between American Exceptionalism and American Orientalism are also edifying in probing the dynamics of the othering/orientalization of the Middle-East by American ideologues. In fact, whenever the Orient was involved in US enterprises abroad, the race-based distinctions/hierarchies of exceptionalism (Nayak & Malone, 2009, p. 260) have served to leverage Orientalism’s huge otherization potential. Since collective identities are mutually constitutive, as argued by Said (2004, p. 332), the cementing of national identity implicates the dichotomy of constructing the opposites and others. Therefore, the foundational narratives, associated with American exceptionalism and the construction of the national ethos, have been central to the otherization process throughout US history, particularly in times of conflicts in the Orient. And while the founding myths about the “exceptional nature of American democracy” were constructed in contradistinction with the “corrupted old world,” they were progressively pressed into service to justify the early expansions in the American continent, the colonial ambitions in the Orient, including the Philippines, Vietnam and more recently in the Middle-East (Nayak & Malone, 2009, p. 254).

Scholars like Meghana Nayak and Christopher Malone (2009, p. 254) go as far as to qualify American Exceptionalism as a “specific form of Orientalism intended to produce ‘America.’” They conversely define American Orientalism as “a style of thought that gets grounding through American Exceptionalism” (p. 253). Hence, they call for American Orientalism to be always considered concurrently with American Exceptionalism, in order to achieve a better understanding of US identity, foreign policymaking, and hegemony. They also demonstrate how both Exceptionalism and Orientalism “deploy similar discursive, ontological, and epistemological claims about the ‘West’ and its non-western ‘Others’” (p. 253). The reason is that Exceptionalism is as much about a difference between the “civilized” and “non-civilized” worlds as it is a distinction from European countries (p. 253). And it is at this point that Exceptionalism clearly overlaps with American Orientalism.

These exceptionalist ontological interpretations of the American national identity underlie the “belief in a providential mission to bring order to the world” and “the racial hierarchy that prioritizes the Anglo-Saxons” (Nayak & Malone, 2009, p. 254). Such claims have ultimately translated themselves into the will to project what made the United States, in its eyes, exceptional: its values and institutions, if need be, through military control and domination. Recently, thanks to international politics, American exceptionalism and Orientalism have been particularly virulent and active in tandem when the Other is an Arab or a Middle-Easterner (including Iranians and Afghans). It is therefore not surprising, for instance, that the discourse of the Global War on Terror has been characterized both as aggressively Orientalist (Gregory, 2004, p. 155) and a blunt resurgence of American Exceptionalism (Nayak & Malone, 2009, p. 257).

Since American Exceptionalism constitutes the “para-ideological umbrella” for such crucially related concepts as the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny (Woolfson, 2012, pp. 66), the examination of its incidence on American Orientalism would be incomplete without exploring the ways these ideas have contributed to the discourse of American Orientalism.

The Monroe Doctrine

Since its proclamation in 1823, the Monroe doctrine has consistently been made to serve US grand strategic designs. In fact, the doctrine has lent itself to incremental reinterpretations, first as continental, second as hemispheric, and ultimately as global (Boal et al., 2005, p. 83), depending on the evolving international stature of the US. It aimed initially to secure an exclusive sphere of influence over the American continent by staving off European intervention in the American continent described as “the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States” (Ibid.).

As the United States grew stronger, the Doctrine was used to extend this influence to the whole Western Hemisphere. As of late nineteenth century onwards, the USA resumed its westward expansion to establish a stronger presence in and across the Pacific, seizing the islands of Hawaii, Wake, Guam and the Philippines to form a naval and re-fueling route across the Pacific, in an attempt to dominate the China market space (Liddle & Rai, 1998, p. 501). The forcible “opening” of Japan in the late nineteenth century was similarly motivated by the desire to use Japan as a coaling station on the route to China (Ibid.); hence establishing significant encounters with Orientals and developing the country’s own firsthand experience of Orientalism. In this context, it is interesting to consider the “divine inspiration” that struck President William McKinley (as cited in Brody, 2010, p. 1) after he conquered the Philippines in the end of the 19th Century:

One night late it came to me this way -- I don’t know how it was, but it came: That we could not give them [the Philippines] back to Spain . . . that we could not leave them to themselves -- they were unfit for self-government -- and . . . that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.

This statement is very telling in terms of similarity and continuity when put in perspective with George W. Bush’s 2003 claim that: “I’m driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, ‘George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan.’ And I did, and then God would tell me, ‘George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.’ And I did” (as cited in MacAskill, 2005).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, in support for his heavy-handed “big stick” policy, Theodore Roosevelt not only enforced the Monroe Doctrine through show of force but also expanded it to argue for intervention. Roosevelt’s intervention was destined to stabilize the economies of small nations in the Caribbean and Central America in case these proved unable to repay their international debts, all in the name of United States’ “providential role in this new world” (Nayak & Malone, 2009, p. 266). In the same vein, the United States was keen to enshrine the Monroe Doctrine as a valid part of the post-world war I global order, in Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919), in spite of its manifest contradiction with the basic principle of the sovereign equality of states (Falk, 2009, p. 46).

Having served as the foundation stone for U.S. assertive diplomacy in the Western Hemisphere for more than 100 years, the Monroe Doctrine became, as far as the Near-East is concerned, what Douglas Little (2008, pp. 5, 119)

describes as “an intellectual lodestone” for policymakers seeking to ‘stabilize’ the Mideast after 1945 and contain communism in the region during the cold war. Hence developing “a Monroe Doctrine for the Middle East” had been the concern of U.S. policymakers for more than fifty years (ibid., p. 154). This tells a great deal about the character of this doctrine as a prism of perception of Middle-Easterners, and thereby its relevance to the understanding of American Orientalism.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, it is striking how the Neocons resorted once again to the Monroe Doctrine as a lasting mainstay of American foreign policy and as a kind of universal law that other countries around the world were required to respect. Referring to a bombing incident in Argentina that was supposedly committed by Iran, on July 18, 1994, hawkish neocons David Frum and Richard Perle lashed out against Teheran in these terms “Iran defied the Monroe Doctrine and sponsored murder in our own hemisphere” (as cited in Falk, 2009, p. 50). This argument was a contorted bid to make a case for retaliatory action against Iran.

The doctrine shows again how resilient Orientalism is. Under its guise, anti-imperialism had been firmly emphasized in the face of competing European powers in order to pave the way for USA’s own expansion and extension of sphere of influence. Later, the Monroe Doctrine, abandoned its anti-imperialist rhetoric, to reveal itself, in retrospect, to rather stand for what historian Appleman Williams calls “the manifesto for the American empire” (as cited in Heiss, 2002, p. 519) with markedly strident orientalist overtones.

Manifest Destiny

Manifest destiny is another powerful notion which is “deeply ingrained in American exceptionalism” (Nabers & Patman, 2008, p. 171) with significant implications for American Orientalism. Dirk Nabers and Robert Patman (2008, p. 171) stress its religious origins in the sense that it reflects the idea that expansion in the American continent was a predestined mission guided by providence. In this regard, William Spanos (2008, p. 188) traces this myth to the construction of American national identity based on the early Puritans’ beliefs that their “exodus” from Europe and “errand in the wilderness” of America was, like the Old Testament Israelites’, divinely ordained. Therefore, the rubric of Manifest Destiny, as Marry Ann Heiss (2002, p. 520) contends, is a construct driven by a deep faith in American superiority and divine mission.

Combined with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, Manifest Destiny not only allowed the United States to conquer large swathes of territory beyond the original British colonies but it also enabled it, later, to frame its global goals as distinct from old-style imperialism (McAlister, 2001, p. 30). Indeed, when John L. Sullivan first coined Manifest Destiny in 1840, it was a way of criticizing other European powers for interfering with the “natural” process of westward expansion by the United States, “for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence” (as cited in Horsman, 1981, p. 219). As a justification for later forms of expansion, Manifest Destiny served to foreclose any contradiction with United States’ much vaunted history of anti-colonialism while expanding its influence and actual presence at others’ expenses. Reginald Horsman (1981, p. 300) describes it, in *Race and Manifest Destiny*, as a “racist ideology” used initially to justify the dispossession of the Indians and the enslavement of Africans, and later all sort of expansion or occupation within and without the US territory. Indeed, the “destined use of the soil” served to justify Indian killing and deportation into reservations -- Indian Removal -- and the “extension of the area of freedom” to cover Texas annexation, the Mexican War, and the acquisition of New Mexico and California (Parish, 1997, p. 429). The outright racist biases inherent in this idea are well illustrated by Theodore Roosevelt’s 1901 words as he claimed, at a time when political correctness was not a major concern, that “the barbarians recede... due solely to the power of the mighty civilized races... gradually bringing peace into the red wastes” (as cited in Drinnon, 1997, p. 232). Such a statement not only chimes with the European tradition of celebrating the noble spirit of the colonial settler (Spurr, 1993, p. 115), but also belies the bellicose and racist thinking that had permeated American thought, thanks to Manifest Destiny. Such an ideology, when taken to its logical conclusion, could justify all sort of atrocities in the confrontation with the original inhabitants of the “Wild West,” and later on with those of the “Wild East.”

The following section examines the enduring legacy of the “Wild West” experience in the form of cultural tropes and metaphors. This is meant to shed more light on other specifically American Orientalist discursive practices during the wars in the East and in Iraq in particular.

FRONTIER MYTHOLOGIES AND OTHER HERITAGE METAPHORS:

The recurrent use of US heritage metaphors and tropes in oriental contexts attests to the intertwining of elements of Exceptionalism and Orientalism. It is therefore worthwhile examining the significant cultural influence of such tropes as the “Wild West” and “Indian Country” on American orientalist imaginaries. These tropes are fraught with rhetorical elements pertaining to what Richard Drinnon (1997, p.333) calls “Indian-hating” and “Indian-fighting.” They were and continue to be exported into “new frontiers abroad and across new borders,” (Kaplan, 1993, p. 17) and especially into Oriental environments where the US has engaged in imperial wars.

Since these tropes derive from the foundational myths of Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, they are also grounded in supposed epistemological and ontological distinctions with non-Western others. In fact, like Orientalism, these legacy tropes invoke deep-rooted otherization mechanisms that are inherited from the earliest American conquests and settlements of the “Wild West.” In this sense, American Orientalism can be said to be also nurtured by the mythologies of the “Wild West,” the “Frontier Mentality” and “Indian Country.”

The East as “Indian Country”

Several works have pointed to the existence of interdiscursivity between Indian Hating and American Orientalism. The wide use of heritage metaphors of Indian Country and the Wild West among soldiers, military strategists, reporters, and internet users (Silliman, 2008, p. 237) in their reference to Iraqis, during the invasion and occupation of Iraq, alongside other derogatory words such as “Hajjis” and “sand niggers” --implying other semantic field -- corroborates the existence of interdiscursivity with Orientalism. Iraqis have indeed been consistently referred to by US soldiers and military commanders as “Injuns” and “Indians,” and Iraq as a whole as “Indian Country” (Egan, 2007). Instead of interdiscursivity or complementarity, Daniel Egan (2007, p.150) sees almost a kind of interchangeability between both discourses when he considers that “one set of colonial representations are just as good as another.” Moreover, several scholars (Drinnon, 1997; Hall, 1992; Ivie, 2005; Silliman, 2008) have pointed out, that these heritage metaphors are rooted in colonialism and aggression, and predicated on a belief in the legitimacy, and anticipated military victory of the United States. The metaphors also reveal elements of white supremacy because historically, these are racialized and have been used in faraway “non-white, non-Western” but predominantly oriental lands, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq (Silliman, 2008, pp. 238, 241, 242). In this respect, Daniel Egan (2007, p. 147) remarks that “combat in the Pacific (but not in Europe) was regularly referred to as ‘Indian warfare’.” More to the point, as early as the 1898, American conquest of the Philippines, as David Brody (2010, p.67) notes, the US press widely portrayed Filipinos as wild and belligerent by using familiar tropes related to representations of Native Americans.

To better appraise the powerful othering/orientalizing potential of these metaphors, it is necessary first to understand the imageries that surround the figure of the native Indians. Here, the aforementioned 1901 quotation by Theodore Roosevelt is particularly relevant when read against the following excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, America’s ultimate reference text as far as identity construction is concerned. The famous introductory statement of the Declaration reading “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness;” is followed by an uncompromising and paradoxical description of natives as the “inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.” Not only did such representations enduringly stigmatize the original population of the land in the collective imagination of future generations but they also served to justify subsequent massacres and unfair policies inflicted on them such as the Indian Removal Act of May 28, 1830. The dismal conditions of the Removal, which passed in history as the “Trail of Tears,” resulted in the death, during the journey, of thousands of natives out of exposure, disease, and starvation (Zinn, 2015, p. 109).

The narratives derived from the violent encounter with the native Indians, with their foundational mythologies may tell a great deal about the American orientalist vision, especially with regard to the way they have often been reshaped and reloaded to serve designs of an expansive and aggressive foreign policy. Such deep seated cultural and political narratives and myths inevitably wear off the worldview when the Oriental others are concerned. Pre-existing discursive mechanisms are at work to orientalize whole populations and portray them as savages by drawing upon these legacy tropes especially since discourse of savagery versus civilization is “deeply rooted in the American

political lexicon, its culture and collective psyche” (Ivie, 2005, p. 56). As Richard Jackson (2005, p.186) claims, such related myths as that of “redemptive power of violence,” American Exceptionalism and the notion of “the good war” have had and still have a determinative role in the trajectories of US foreign policies.

For instance, the “Wild West” echoes the central trope which has been further crystallized by the movie genre of “Westerns.” It refers to vast, empty and uninterrupted lands which almost beg for settlement and domestication. The Wild West sounds like a popularized version of the Eurocentric notion of “state of nature” which earlier Europeans used on the eve of their colonial enterprise. This metaphor, a “core notion in Western political thought,” rationalized and legitimated European dispossession and appropriation of land, resources and populations (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006, p.347). The conquest of the new continent by the new settlers could accordingly be constructed as responding to the appeal of nature “which calls for the wise use of its resources,” and that of the native, who call for “protection from their own ignorance and violence” (Spurr, 1993, p. 34). US soldiers actually described Iraq during 2003 occupation in these words: “Anbar has the savagery, lawlessness and violence of America’s Wild West in the 1870s. The two most lethal cities in Iraq are Fallujah and Ramadi, and . . . between them is Indian Country” (Silliman, 2008, p.240). In a different context, during congressional hearings concerning Vietnam, General Maxwell Taylor referred to the Vietnamese opposition as “Indians” in his testimony on the war, whereas Captain Robert B. Johnson replied to a congressman: “In the same way we slaughtered the Indian’s buffalo, we would slaughter the water buffalo in Vietnam.” (Ibid.). These and other descriptions made by soldiers, officers and decision-makers alike show the persistent and pervasive power of this trope of Wild West and Indian Country in viewing and waging war in oriental lands.

In 1980, Richard Drinnon (1997, p. 333), borrowing Herman Melville’s expression “the metaphysics of Indian-Hating,” has shown how this hostility has been a major driving force behind American expansionism to become “the current metaphysics of empire-building under a tropical sun” in the Oriental context of the Philippines and Vietnam. Drinnon (1997, p. 403) has also established a parallel between the slaughter of Indians in the Wild West and the massacres of Vietnam to the point where he writes “Vietnam lay west of the Mississippi.” He thus identifies similarities in the discourses of belligerence used in the American West on the one hand, and in the East/Orient namely the Philippines, and Southeast Asia on the other. In this sense, Drinnon’s work traces an almost direct link in “racist mentality from the early Pilgrims, through to the founding of the Republic, the nineteenth-century expansion of America, and its twentieth-century forays into new ‘frontiers’ like the Philippines and Vietnam” (David McDonald 2007, p. 75).

Building on Drinnon’s work, it becomes interesting to explore how this “metaphysics of Indian-Hating” has also operated in the case of Iraq. In other words, how the metaphysics intertwines with the other components of Orientalism to produce the American sort of Orientalization of the other Oriental “Other,” i.e., the Arab. Indeed, the metaphors of the Wild West supplement and coincide with modern Orientalism in the sense that they “represent[s] the language of colonization in the present” (Silliman, 2008, p. 243). For Silliman (Ibid.) the mere evocation of this kind of metaphor in the context of a military campaign in the Middle East conveys the idea that “the occupying troops are agents of colonization, imperialism, and the presumed highest orders of civilization.” Thanks to the works of George Lakoff (“Metaphor and War” (1992)) and Lakoff and Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By* (1980)), it has become clear that these metaphors are not “mere semantics” or “inconsequential references” to old histories with little significance in people’s lives. Metaphors are indeed fundamental to thought and not just incidental to the communication of those thoughts.

Wild West tropes as Tools of Narrative Inversion

Regarding the figure of the “Indian savages” who populated the allegedly empty spaces, their presence was constructed as threatening for the settlement projects. The Indian figure which is closely associated with the “Wild West” became equally weaved into the language of Otherization throughout US engagement in ‘Oriental’ conflicts. And the same conceptual pattern was applied to these conflicts where instead of representing the invasion/settlement in the Orient/West for what it is, i.e., an offensive conquest, the collective imagination has constructed it as a defensive reclaiming of free land which was hampered by the ominous Oriental/Indian figure. There is, in fact, a recurrent theme in the narratives of Hollywood “Westerns” about the small group of settlers or soldiers on the defensive, who are callously assailed by hordes of Indians. The tendency of using a defensive narrative involving aggressive natives to obfuscate an offensive invasion has been charted by scholars like Taraq Barkawi (2009). Such a pattern reverses

the direction of aggression since conquest becomes “defense,” and domination becomes “liberation.” Through the repetition of the underlying tropes, expeditionary warfare becomes self-defense in the face of barbarism, and violence a necessary recourse to expand the boundaries of civilization or democracy into benighted Oriental lands. The whole framework metaphor thus performs the same “moral alibi” of past empires to mask the economic and political ulterior motives, i.e., a justification for the domination and exploitation of the “Orient” under the guise of selfless benevolence.

What became known as the Jessica Lynch episode gives the ultimate illustration of the way the Pentagon, the core apparatus of U.S. power projection, sought to make use of the reservoir of Wild West’s tropes, linking gender, race and militarism to consolidate the American public’s support for the 2003 war on Iraq. In fact, in the wake of the 2003 invasion, the Pentagon exaggerated the predicament of a female soldier, Jessica Lynch, and converted her phony saving mission into a saga. It concocted the story of brave US marines saving private Lynch, who was, in reality, injured in the crash of her Humvee and placed by Iraqis in a civilian hospital where she received a transfusion that saved her life (Kampfner, 2003). The dramatized narrative was meant to become a “parable of American innocence lost and regained through the intervention of military might” (Takacs, 2005, p.297). The “Lynch saga” reproduced a distinctly Orientalist dramaturgy, one that became especially potent because the episode unfolded in Iraq, a space long situated within the American imagination as the quintessential Orient, thanks to Hollywood’s classics like “Arabian Nights”, “The Thief of Bagdad” and recent animations like “Aladdin.” The narrative was primarily destined to the home front, seeking to pander to the deep orientalist feelings circulating in society. Its immediate objective was to keep the home front tuned to the orientalist master narrative while enhancing the thrilling and mobilizing character of the infotainment dimension of the war. The home front hence could become a key site for what Stacy Tackas (2005, p.302) calls the “ideological reproduction of consent for the project of American hegemony.” Besides, the geopolitical complexities of the problematic invasion (not sanctioned by a UN resolution) were displaced by a moral melodrama of savagery and salvation, one that drew on the deep cultural archive through which the “Orient” has historically been represented. It is worth noting that while three women were involved in the incident, only the “fate” of Jessica Lynch, “the blond 19-year-old from Palestine, West Virginia,” was brought to focus; while the other two, namely a mortally wounded Hopi Indian from Arizona, and an African- American from Texas, were ignored in the official account for obvious reasons of race, age, and background (Tackas, 2005, p.301). Although the Saga achieved initial success because it fit readily into pre-existing orientalist representational patterns, it backfired as soon as the calculated deployment of the myth became clear when the ‘heroic’ narrative was exposed and contrasted with the reality of an unguarded hospital rescue. The Lynch episode exemplified how deeply embedded cultural archetypes of American frontier mythology can be Orientalized and weaponized to serve contemporary political and military agendas.

At the core of the orchestrated Lynch narrative, the Pentagon mobilized another powerful and enduring trope of American mythmaking: the “cavalry rescue.” The cultural script of the heroic cavalry arriving from beyond the horizon to save besieged settlers from racialized Others can be traced from 19th-century captivity stories to Hollywood Westerns up to its modern Iraq War deployment. The cavalry metaphor originates also in the frontier mythology, particularly in representations of the U.S. Army “cavalry” riding in to rescue white settlers from ‘savage Native American abductors.’ Just as the cavalry historically represented a decisive military force bringing order and progress, in American Orientalist discourse, it stands for America’s purported modernizing/democratizing mission to tame the “wild” East. More to the point, in American films and military propaganda, the arrival of helicopters or armored columns is often depicted as “the cavalry coming to the rescue,” a trope that conveys technological superiority and moral righteousness. Expressions like “the cavalry from the sky” are frequently used in U.S. military discourse and media to describe helicopter and drone interventions, suggesting that this metaphor structures how Americans conceptualize control and dominance. One scene, in particular, exposes how deeply this metaphor is woven into the American imagination. It is the emblematic scene from the 1979 film “Apocalypse Now” depicting the helicopter assault by the Air Cavalry troops –the unit’s official designation– on a Vietnamese village to the sound of Wagner’s Ride of the Valkyries.

The persistence and revival of the imagery of 19th-century cavalry campaigns, alongside tropes of savagery and uncivilizedness in “Eastern” settings, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, highlight ideological continuities between frontier mentality and contemporary Orientalist discourse underlying U.S. foreign policy and interventions. As Silliman argues (2008, p. 237), “the salience of these symbols in 21st-century U.S. armed conflicts attests to its staying power in national narratives of colonialism at home and abroad.”

In order to gain further insights into how the above-described imagery operates within American Orientalism, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the subsequent paradigms which replaced the orientalist “ideology of the civilized” with the “ideology of the modern” and later “of the democratic.”

DICHOTOMIZING PARADIGMS AND NEO-ORIENTALISM

Influential dichotomizing paradigms, notably Modernization and Democratization theories, were formulated in elite U.S. universities, foundations, and Cold War–era think tanks during the postwar period. However, the failure of both the Modernization and Democratization projects to deliver on their promises paved the way for the emergence of a more virulent form of American Orientalism known as neo-Orientalism, which sought to blame the cultural traits of Middle-Eastern societies for the shortcomings of US projects in the region. This new strand of Orientalism, considered almost the latest avatar of the discourse, began burgeoning in the 1990s alongside key ideological constructions such as the Clash of Civilizations thesis and the New Barbarism thesis, both of which had a formative role in shaping neo-Orientalism itself.

Modernization and Democratization

By espousing Modernization and Democratization, American policymakers actually reinvented the colonial “White Man’s Burden” argument. These paradigms did not emerge in a vacuum. They extended and reconfigured older Orientalist modes of knowing by recasting cultural difference into a hierarchy of “traditional” versus “modern,” “developing” versus “developed,” and “authoritarian” versus “democratic.”

The two paradigms served to justify interventionist and imperialist policies in the world in general and in the East and the Middle-East in particular (Deepa Kumar, 2010, p.17). Far from replacing Orientalism, these paradigms updated and institutionalized it, embedding older hierarchies in the language of social science, development economics, policy planning, and geopolitical strategy. For instance, on the pretext of the static and unchanging character of the Islamic civilization, aggressive and even militarist policies have been undertaken in the Middle-East, based on disputable theories and arguable premises that are traceable to Orientalism. Indeed, the very classification of non-Western peoples according to the paradigms of Modernization and later Democratization implies the “judgment of their character” (Spurr, 1993, p. 71). It above all implies the establishing of what Edward Said (1989, p. 207) calls a “dreadful secondariness” within an ontological hierarchy, which fixes them “in zones of dependency and peripherality.” Samuel Huntington himself (1971, pp. 285, 288), and before Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism, unwittingly revealed the Orientalizing and dichotomizing character of Western Modernization theory and project when he defined the process of Modernization as “The bridge across the Great Dichotomy” between “more primitive and more advanced societies.” These were the basic assumptions which underpinned the theory’s world view and helped shape Middle East studies as it developed and prospered in the 1950s and 1960s (Lockman, 2004, p. 135). The assumptions had enduring effects in this particular field as its literature and findings became increasingly policy relevant when successive US Administrations sought to make sense of what was happening in the region and “formulate policy accordingly” (Lockman, 2004, p. 140).

Similarly, succeeding the discourse of Modernization with its “truly amazing conceptual arsenal --theories of economic phases, social types, traditional societies, systems transfers, pacification...,” (Said, 1993, p. 290) there is Democratization. The latter with its associated projects such as “the Great Middle-East”, “regime change” and “nation-building,” also operated like a modern-day civilizing mission destined to wean the Middle-East from its “despotic” ways. However, democratization, as the main pretext for the war on Iraq after the WMD casus belli, has proved ill-founded. It has rather replicated Huntington’s above mentioned “Great Dichotomy/ization,” which hardly conceals the Orientalism lurking behind it. Accordingly, democratization, like modernization, while based on the “Great Dichotomy” involves a great contradiction or paradox. The reason is that if the premises of this theory -- supposedly advocated sincerely by its proponents -- are taken to their logical conclusion, they would lead ultimately to a full and sovereign exertion of popular will in the targeted states. Such a popular will when exercised would put an end or at least reconsider the existent unbalanced economic and political relations in a way that is detrimental to Western interests in “democratized” countries. In this regard, Edward Said (1993, p. 300) clearly denounced this duplicity in discourse between ideals and practices:

For two generations the United States has sided in the Middle East mostly with tyranny and injustice. No struggle for democracy, or women's rights, or secularism and the rights of minorities has the United States officially supported.

Instead, one administration after another has propped up compliant and unpopular clients, and turned away from the efforts of small peoples to liberate themselves from military occupation, while subsidizing their enemies.

Said's claims are supported by historical evidence which reflects the orientalist stratagem of using Modernization or Democratization projects as pretexts to maintain foreign tutelage over targeted countries and to integrate them, by military force, if necessary, into the global economic and political system of neoliberalism. Indeed, the most promising modernizing projects in the Middle-East region -- Mossadag's and Nasser's -- were willfully aborted on the pretext that they were carried out by the sort of nationalisms which according to a CIA report "provided an excuse for a host of deficiencies and inadequacies" in Middle-Eastern societies (as cited in Little, 2008, p. 30). Hence the claim of the benevolent transference of Western ideals to Middle Eastern regions under the modernization/democratization banner is yet another manifestation of Orientalism's unique resilience, whose aim is to perpetuate hegemony and domination.

The paradigms of Modernization, Democratization and later Nation-Building clearly reproduced Orientalist assumptions, casting Eastern societies as lacking state structures, incapable of self-government, or culturally unprepared for modern institutions. However, the blatant failure of these paradigms to deliver on their promises in the Middle-East, namely in Iraq and Afghanistan, paved the way for a more virulent form of American Orientalism, which became known as neo-orientalism. It grants culture greater explanatory powers to account for the shortcomings of past US projects in the region. It seeks to blame the cultural traits of Middle-Eastern societies for the failings of America's demiurgic projects in the region.

New/Neo-Orientalism

The term neo-Orientalism is commonly used for heuristic reasons to designate one of the latest manifestations of American Orientalism. The prefix "neo" itself has been used by scholars instead of "new" to signal "the continuity between contemporary and traditional forms of Orientalism" (Williams & Behdad, 2010, p. 284). More generally, neo-Orientalism refers to the prevailing mode of representation of the Middle East and Muslims after 9/11. It is a style of thought about the region and its inhabitants which is informed by a "militant" intellectual trend and disseminated through novel mass distribution technologies (smart devices, high-speed internet...) and multimedia capabilities (Apps, videogames, electronic press, blogs...). It is a form of Orientalism that may be associated with neoconservatives' steady rise to power. The latter, through their intellectual, corporate and political webs of influence, succeeded, especially during the Bush son administration and beyond, in imposing their ideological agenda of which neo-Orientalism was a major pillar.

As stated above, although neo-Orientalism implies the idea of transformation and change, it displays many aspects of continuity and repetition with earlier manifestations of Orientalism, mainly in terms of binarism, culturalism and moral superiority. While neo-Orientalism has reproduced many of the conceptual tenets of classical Orientalism, it has also overstressed the acute binarism between the proclaimed superior American values and the supposedly inferior Arab culture (Altwaiji, 2014, p. 313). In this sense, neo-Orientalism is to be understood as a supplement to enduring modes of Orientalist representation (Williams & Behdad, 2010, p. 284) which through the 21st Century's novel tropes of othering, has partaken in the re-inscription of particular power relations. Thanks to its extraordinary resilience, mainly through elaborations and re-articulations, Orientalism has vigorously resurged as neo-Orientalism in the era of the GWoT. The spectacular 9/11 attacks constitute a watershed event in the tumultuous interactions between a revengeful United-States and the new 'Orient' which became, due to the geopolitical fallouts, more localized in the Middle-East and Central and South-West Asia sub-region. The strident rhetoric unleashed with the GWoT was so replete with reminiscent tropes that Said (2003, p. xxi) described the twenty-first century Orientalism as "belligerent neo-Orientalism."

In this regard, Dag Tuastad (2003, p. 591) uses the expression neo-Orientalism critically to highlight American designs in the Middle East as underpinned by a firm belief in the preeminence of American values. Through the prism of neo-Orientalism, the United States increasingly and sharply contrasted itself with the Middle-East, depicted as deeply mired in despotism, tribalism and religious fanaticism. While classical Orientalism attended to the agenda of European colonial powers in the past, neo-Orientalism and Islamophobia have been pressed into the service of the new hegemonic projects of the hyperpower of the day. Hence, there was a systematic dissemination, at all levels be they academic, political or cultural, of representations about the region's barbarism, backwardness, brutality,

aggressivity and terrorism (Bail, 2012, pp. 855–879), in order to pave the way for intervention and territorial encroachment.

Genealogically, neo-Orientalism can be said to have started burgeoning first in the 1990s especially with the advent of resounding theories about the clash of civilizations, the end of history and the steady rise of Neocons' power within the US foreign policy establishment (Mann, 2004). These ideological constructions celebrated the triumph over communism and signaled the quest for new enemies to prove the continuing relevance of the huge military apparatus inherited from the Cold War. However, the real mastermind behind revivifying Orientalism remains Bernard Lewis, "the dean of American Orientalism," (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 293) and his legion of disciples such as Daniel Pipes, Martin Kramer, Patricia Crone and others who inaugurated the Academic strand of neo-Orientalism.

While the major focus had been throughout the 20th Century on the deep roots of the endemic and historical lack of democracy and modernity, the events of 2001 initiated a marked interest in culture as the primary prism through which the region was to be viewed. Moreover, cultural factors became persistently foregrounded to explain issues of "modernization, political democratization, military strategy, the behavior of ethnic groups, and the alignments and antagonisms among countries" (Huntington, 2000, p. xiv). Thus, at the turn of the new century, prominent social scientists -- such as Francis Fukuyama, Lawrence Harrison, Robert Kaplan, Seymour Martin Lipset and Samuel Huntington -- increasingly revived and favored cultural interpretations in their works. For them, culture has an overriding "influence on social, political, and economic behavior" (Ibid.). One work in particular served to "universalize" and enshrine the basic tenets of neo-orientalism (Tuastad, 2003, p. 595); chief among them was the primacy of culture: *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (2000). Edited by leading authorities in the field, namely Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison, author of the controversial *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, this anthology was destined to set the tone and the agenda for the field, during the opening decade of the new century, throughout Middle-East Studies Departments and related scholarship.

While putting too much focus on the supposedly overriding role of cultural values and attitudes as facilitators of, or obstacles to, progress, the authors also wittingly and avowedly brushed aside other factors which had been emphasized previously by several other researchers. The influences of colonialism, imperialism and dependency were therefore rejected outright as "unsatisfactory explanations" for "unsatisfactory progress toward prosperity and political pluralism" overseas, just as "racism and discrimination are unsatisfactory explanations for minority underachievement at home" (Harrison, 2000, p. xxii).

Since 2001, this ascendancy of culturalism in American Orientalism gained considerable currency as the issue of terrorism took on more relevance and was recast at the heart of the discourse about the Middle-East. In this respect, Christina Hellmich (2008, p. 112) has described the "neo-Orientalist terrorism discourse" as the tendency within US academic and political circles to lump together all recalcitrant groups from the Middle-East, be they secular, Sunnite, Shiite, Arab or non - Arab under the banner of "Muslim terrorism." This tendency assumes "some underlying Islamist terrorist agenda" and focuses "on superficial similarities such as suicide attacks and airplane hijackings" (Ibid.) Bernard Lewis, Martin Kramer and Robert Spencer, drawing on and promoting Lewis's theory about "the Roots of Muslim Rage" attributed terrorism to the atavistic Islamic hatred of the West. Lewis and his disciples clearly blamed Islam for the upsurge of political violence in the Middle-East and around the world. In his *Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (2003), Lewis points purportedly to "the historical roots of the resentments that dominated the Islamic world today and that are increasingly expressed in acts of terrorism." The pervasive influence of these dispensations is reflected in one of the statements of National Security Strategy of September 2002: "We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the *embittered few*" (p. 1, emphasis added). When the neo-Orientalist doxa evokes these "roots of resentment," it basically alludes to two major theses that have had a formative role in shaping the emergence of neo-orientalism itself: the "Clash of Civilizations" and the "New Barbarism."

The Clash of Civilizations and the New Barbarism Thesis:

The thesis of the Clash of Civilizations has had an undeniably huge impact on the Orientalist worldview in the United-States and Europe since the 1990s. As for the New Barbarism thesis, it has also contributed, though in a lesser degree, to the formulation of ideologized conceptions of different conflicts around the world, including in the Balkans and the Middle-East.

The clash of civilizations metaphor has given a huge thrust to the neo-Orientalist project. Through the clash paradigm, Huntington, well known for his acquaintances with powerful neo-conservative circles (Fukuyama, 2004, p.57), managed to insert “into the public sphere something very much like the old Orientalist framework for understanding world relations” (McAlister, 2001, p. 269). Like classical Orientalists, Huntington opposes, along clean lines of belief, value and culture, civilizations, which are presented as unified, homogeneous and coherent (Ibid.). In so doing he replaces Orientalism at the heart of American foreign policy even before the events of 9/11. His thesis’s overly controversial and divisive logic gained more currency after the 9/11 attacks and facilitated the mobilization of public support in the run up to the Iraq war. Moreover, it owes a great deal to classical Orientalism itself, in the sense that as a work draws a great deal on Bernard Lewis’ pessimistic Orientalist “Master Narrative” manifest in the latter’s 1990 article entitled “The Roots of Muslim Rage.” The very expression “Clash of Civilizations” was used for the first time in Lewis’ article (Brown, 2006, p. 150) to announce an inevitable confrontation between a ‘civilized West’ and an ‘enraged Middle-East’ where Muslims have existed historically and inevitably in a state of conflict with ‘Judeo-Christian’ civilization (Steuter and Wills, 2008, p.30).

Like in other preceding social and political paradigms, as noted earlier, orientalist ideas have been recycled and integrated into this influential thesis. They have played an important role in shaping how the public, Media and leaders have made sense of the Middle-East in the United States at a particular historical juncture. The invocation of the civilized/barbarian topoi has been recurrent and explicit in statements made by the members of the Bush son administration (Salter, 2002, p. 163). For instance, in his commemorative Presidential Address to the Nation on September 11, 2007, Bush (2007) described his “war on terrorism” in the following terms: “this struggle has been called the clash of civilizations. In truth, it is a struggle for civilization.” Despite the Administration’s façade efforts to distance itself from the paradigm, there were always discursive elements which betrayed its deep ideological adherence to the thesis. As Michael Dunn has noted, every time President Bush stated that “there is no clash of civilizations,” or dismissed it as “a passing myth of history,” the rhetoric of “civilizations” was creeping into other parts of his statement, such as “[t]his is civilization’s fight,” or “the need for civilized people” to unite against “rogue states” (Dunn, 2006, p.2-3).

Concerning the “New Barbarism” metaphor, the expression was first coined by Paul Richard in 1994 in rebuttal to neo-conservative writer Robert Kaplan’s “innate and anarchic view of trends in the Third World” (Duffield, 1996, p. 182). Robert Kaplan is a renowned neoconservative writer who has frequently lectured for and consulted the US military, and whose influential book, *The Coming Anarchy*, has been “faxed to every American embassy in Africa” (Tuastad, 2003, p. 593). The designation of Kaplan’s thesis (2000, p. 45) as “New Barbarism” is in part explained by its emphasis on the irrationality of the violence raging in “places where the Western Enlightenment has not penetrated.” Robert Kaplan’s ideas, which “have had a high degree of political influence on leaders of the US state apparatus” (Tuastad, 2003, p. 593), like the clash of civilizations, form another identifiable political ideology that has been used to provide cover for interventions in Third World countries. The mere evocation of the word barbarism conjures up a semantic field that is reminiscent of the colonial era’s “civilizing mission” and reveals how the same rationales are reinvented and re-inscribed through the use of different rhetorical and discursive strategies. As Wendy Brown (Regulating, p. 179) argues, “an opposition between civilization and barbarism...provides the mantle of civilization, progress, and peace as cover for imperial militaristic adventures.” Dag Tuastad, for his part, further elaborates on the “new barbarism” thesis, which he conceptualizes as a tendentious explanation of violence in Third World countries through the omission of political and economic interests and contexts in its descriptions.

Both ideologies served as interpretative and prescriptive conceptual frameworks (Stocchetti, 2007), that had serious policy significance and implications. There is even a kinship between Kaplan’s thesis and Huntington’s clash of civilizations (Tuastad, 2003, p. 593). In effect, New Barbarism and the Clash of Civilizations are made to nurture neo-Orientalist imaginaries when hostile representations about the oriental Other are needed to justify and rationalize economic and political schemes in the Middle-East, both before and during the military enterprises of the 2000s. While the Clash of Civilizations acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy which construed the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq as inevitable, the New Barbarism thesis portrayed the anarchy resulting from the undoing of the social fabric and the upsetting of millennial sectarian and ethnic balances as the sole consequence of atavistic traits embedded in local cultures. The Clash of Civilizations also intertwines with the New Barbarism thesis when the world is divided into civilized and less civilized/barbarian civilizations. The resultant politics is illustrated in US military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere which form part of the “barbarian” sphere -- closely associated with terrorism -- where the “civilized” military violence was given free vent (Salter, 2002, p. 163).

The significance of “New barbarism thesis” in the context of the GWoT is that, once coupled with the “clash of civilizations” thesis, it serves to support the orientalist claim that restraint in or proportionality in the use of force are “a luxury Western states and societies can no longer afford” (Rengger, 2002, p. 362) especially in the face of another civilization that is inherently barbaric. Because this barbarity threatens the homeland and the whole world order, the use of all sorts of sophisticated weaponry is justified to wage devastating wars aimed to prevent/pre-empt such a looming threat (Ibid.). The “New Barbarism thesis” is also useful for the understanding of the cultural turn in the war on terror and the orientalist representation of the natives’ agency. One of the main discursive effects of the cultural turn --i.e., the post-2003 incorporation of cultural knowledge into U.S. counterinsurgency practices-- is indeed the obfuscation of the responsibility of the invaders in the deterioration of the security situation, under occupation, by placing the blame on the locals, who are represented as pitted against each other in resurgent ancestral feuds. This tendency was largely illustrated by what could be named the “hate paradigm”, exemplified by the disingenuous questions put forward, with force, in the public sphere throughout the different stages of the GWoT: “Americans are asking, why do they hate us?” (Bush, 2001; Zakaria, 2001); and “why do they hate each other” (Ghosh, 2007); “Why do they still hate Us, 13 years later” (Zakaria, 2014).

Thus, in addition to the clash of civilizations, the New Barbarism thesis not only paves the way for military intervention but also deflects responsibility and criticism for the violence such actions generate. The violence is actually generated first as a consequence of foreign invasion and occupation and second as a result of disruption, willfully or inadvertently, of well-entrenched ethnic and religious fabrics and balances, under the pretense of modernization or democratization.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated how American Orientalism operates not as a monolithic discourse, but as a dynamic confluence of historical narratives, mythological constructs, and contemporary paradigms that collectively shape the United States' engagement with the Orient in general and the Middle-East in particular. Unlike its core constituent, European Orientalism, which emerged from direct colonial administration and scholarship, American Orientalism has evolved as an organic synthesis of frontier mythology, exceptionalist ideology, and demiurgic/social engineering ambitions. This synthesis has proven remarkably adaptable, capable of reinventing itself across historical periods while maintaining its central function: legitimizing American power projection through the construction of civilizational hierarchies. The vivacity of these tributaries reveals a marked continuity in American foreign policy discourse. Whether manifested through the Monroe Doctrine's assertions, Manifest Destiny's territorial imperatives, or the contemporary "Clash of Civilizations" framework, these discursive streams consistently provide moral and intellectual justification for interventionist policies.

Perhaps most striking is how these discursive tributaries have become naturalized within American political culture, operating below the threshold of conscious critique. The "Wild West" metaphors applied to Iraq, the "Indian Country" tropes used to describe Afghanistan, and the persistent invocation of American exceptionalism in foreign policy debates all reveal how deeply embedded these orientalist constructions have become in the American political imagination. They function not merely as rhetorical devices but as cognitive frameworks that shape the way policymakers and citizens alike perceive and interpret global events. As the United States starts to grapple with its role in an increasingly multipolar world, the interdiscursive nature of its strand of Orientalism is likely to make it potentially more vulnerable to disruption through counter-narratives and alternative frameworks from the Global South that may significantly challenge its predominance on the world stage.

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