The U.S. War on Terror Discourse: Mapping De-politicization and the Politics of Confinement in Afghanistan

PAMIR H. SAHILL[*]

ABSTRACT *This article argues that today, 17 years after the September 11, 2001 attacks, it is even more important to look at the beginnings of, and to reinterpret, the U.S. "war on terror" discourse. To do so, this article employs a poststructuralist critical discourse analysis and it advances the debate around the notion of "evilization." Drawing upon Foucault's work on the history of madness, it develops the notion of the politics of confinement and situates it in the context of Afghanistan. The article notes that the politics of confinement is illiberalizing and oppressive, contradicting the idea of emancipation functioning behind the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. Thus, the contradictory discourse of the war in Afghanistan does not serve the purpose of victory as Trump envisages it.*

Introduction

There are aspects of evil that have such a power of contagion, such a force of scandal that any publicity multiplies them infinitely.[1]

In August 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump laid out his Afghanistan and South Asia strategy, vowing to win the war against terrorism. Trump's strategy expands the war from Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan by seeing it in a regional context[2] 17 years after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks. The events of 9/11 marked the beginning of the (re)construction of terrorism discourse; the fight against terrorism has continued to dominate public, political and academic discourses as one of the most important global problems.[3] Given the significance of the *terror problem,* this article argues that it is even more important today to reinterpret and critically assess the discourse of former U.S. President George W. Bush on the war on terror (WoT) in Afghanistan. Bush's pronouncements brought in a new and now dominant discourse (and practice). One of the most noteworthy cracks in Bush's discourse on the WoT is that it is based on the shaky foundations of what Ish-Shalom, Müller

One of the most noteworthy cracks in Bush's discourse on the WoT is that it is based on the shaky foundations of what Ish-Shalom, Müller and Sheikh call 'evilization,' which is the process of appointing or assigning evil

and Sheikh[4] call 'evilization,' which is the process of appointing or assigning evil.

Evil, as Foucault notes, is indeed powerful, not only as a "contagion" but in its effects as well.[5] Since it is historically embedded in religious discourses, the concept of evil 'solidifies' and fixes human identities, constituting an identity/difference nexus[6] that is deeply divisive. Perhaps Bush realized its power and thus used the term frequently after 9/11. The U.S. discourse on the WoT in Afghanistan during the Bush presidency defines and identifies 9/11 as an evil act that was perpetrated by al-Qaeda against modern, freedom-loving civilization. Framing al-Qaeda and the Taliban as 'evil' however, is problematic, and has had far-reaching implications. This article contests the idea that evilization in the Bush discourse on the WoT in Afghanistan was 'rhetorical' or merely a securitization speech act; instead it seeks to advance the debate around evilization by further problematizing president Bush's discourse on terrorism and the war in Afghanistan. In this process it asks two equally important questions: (i) Why does evilization function as part of a wider de-politicization in Bush's discourse on terrorism and the war in Afghanistan? And, (ii) How is the (evilized) de-politicization constitutive of the spaces and politics of confinement?

The article employs a poststructuralist Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and first outlines the theoretical and methodological profile of the study. Second, it sets the scene by unpacking Bush's discourse. Third, utilizing scholarly work around the evilization process and drawing upon Nietzsche's work on morality, it contextualizes the notion of 'evil' and argues that evilization is part of the de-politicization process. Finally, the article argues that understanding evilization as a securitization speech act may not suffice to reveal the confining power of Bush's discourse on terrorism; therefore, it provides a brief description of Foucault's archival work on psychiatry[7] and then applies his ideas to the post-2001 Afghan context.

Theory and Methodology: Why a Poststructuralist CDA?

Poststructuralism follows an anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist epistemology and ontology, rejecting the possibility of a given or valid 'truth' about the world[8] suggesting that "truth is not discovered," and that "the analysis of political processes cannot rely on categories which are prior to or 'outside' the

process itself."[9] Understanding the world from an anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist perspective, however, presents a "radical challenge to both the fact/value distinction and our concept of facticity generally," because post-structuralism claims that facticity is not "founded in nature"[10] but is formulated where the 'meaning is always imposed,' as the world we come to know cannot be "separated from the interpretive *practices* through which it is made."[11] The process of imposing meaning does not take place in a vacuum, but instead implicates power. It is thus the "exercise of power" that "perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power." In that sense, "it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power."[12] Once understood in this way, power becomes productive, "both objectify[ing] and subjectivat[ing] modern subjects."[13] Foucault argues that the interplay of the power/knowledge nexus is spread throughout the social body, where "a certain economy of discourses of truth" is formulated which operates through the very power/knowledge association.[14] Ontology and epistemology are thus bound together in poststructuralism. Rather than dealing with them separately and aspiring for a positivist, objective knowledge, in poststructuralism, the way of investigating the world ultimately affects the ways of understanding it. Following Nietzschean tradition, Foucault notes that the world does not itself "turn towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher;"[15] rather it is formed and understood through discourse:

> All that we can know is textual and related to discourses. There is a constant referral of meaning, the signifier/signified breaks down and everything becomes a signifier with never ending possibilities. This allows many readings of the text to occur.[16]

Like power, then, discourses are dispersed everywhere in a society like a web or a network of veins through which they flow and are filtered at the same time, "enabling maintenance and reinforcement." That said, discourses are not mirrors, only reflecting social reality, but are also making it.[17]

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a suitable methodological frame for this article to unpack the discourse on the WoT in Afghanistan, because discourses cannot be simply confined as "groups of signs," but are rather "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."[18] The Foucauldian concept of discourse, involving power relations, enables the "production and re-production of particular subjectivities and identities" and exclusions.[19] Discourse offers a "stable unity of meaning and identities," and is representative of a "gap which prevents full closure."[20] Put differently, there are certain limitations, contradictions and inconsistencies in discourses which can be efficiently unveiled through CDA, which extends "the critical tradition in social science" focusing on modes and ways of discrimination[21] or revealing the dividing practices that occur in societies. The 'critical' in CDA exhibits a rather

U.S. soldiers handcuff an Afghan man during the inspection of a local bazaar for weapons and suspected militants linked to al-Qaeda on November 14, 2002 in the town of Yayeh Kehl, south of Kabul, Afghanistan.

AMEL EMRIC / Pool / Getty Images

explicitly radical approach, what van Dijk calls "an attitude;"[22] nonetheless, it is not to say that this *attitude* sets the researcher free from ethical academic considerations because then the research does not add value and rather reduces to a polemic. Any researcher utilizing CDA cannot be situated beyond or outside the discourse, as subjects are "themselves the historical outcome of discourse;" therefore her/his "possible bias is not based on truth but represents a position that in turn is the result of a discursive process."[23]

Method: Text Selection, Delimitation and Timeframe

I have chosen Lene Hansen's Model 1 for delimiting texts to conduct the analysis of the post-9/11 U.S. discourse on terrorism. Hansen describes three intertextuality models.[24] Model 1, which deals with grand or dominant discourses, suits the scope of this article better than the other models, which deal with oppositional and marginal discourses. Bush's discourse on the WoT in Afghanistan became hegemonic and dominant almost immediately after the events of 9/11. Moreover, until almost the end of Bush's presidency, the discourses of the U.S. government, the opposition, and the international community in regard to the WoT in Afghanistan did not have any substantial disagreements and rather merged together in a way that strengthened the grand or dominant discourse.

The critical analysis of the U.S. discourse on terrorism and the WoT focuses on the Bush era, 2001 to 2008. The text selection and delimitation from the primary sources was a two-step process. First, texts, policies and speeches were selected and delimited from four booklets published by the White House –comprising about 850 pages– as well as the autobiography of George W. Bush and his 9/11 interview with *National Geographic*.[25] Only policies and texts that dealt with the war in Afghanistan were selected. At times, the information in the publications of the White House was repetitive; the recurrence of themes and phrases is indicative of the efforts of the Bush Administration to ensure the dominance of certain categories of 'truth.'

A discourse denotes an organized "order, or a field, that makes specific beings and practices intelligible and knowledgeable, makes us who we are, and what we do and think."[26] In the Foucauldian sense, it is a group of statements that is behind the production, transformation and reproduction of objects, subjects and concepts;[27] therefore, the dominance, suppression and the expansion or existence of a discourse in the social body should be determined in some way. To do that, I cross-checked all the selected texts in the international and Afghan media. I looked for texts in globally circulated news media like *The New York Times, The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal,* and *BBC*. In Afghanistan, because of the low literacy rate, the texts were examined in the available record of news-hours and the websites of *BBC Pashto*, and *Azadi Radio*, the most-listened-to radio channel.[28] Any text that did not fulfill the criterion was omitted.

As part of the secondary sources, the article uses scholarly works to contextualize, contest and advance the debate. In the following section, the article utilizes primary sources to revisit and unpack Bush's discourse on the WoT in Afghanistan, then turns to a theory-driven analysis illuminating its most serious consequences.

In the hegemonic Bush discourse on terrorism and the WoT, the U.S. is presented as being extraordinary in its essence, questioning how anyone could dare attack "the brightest beacon for freedom"

(Re)shaping the (Dominant) Discourse: Constructing New Realities

Ten years after 9/11, former U.S. President George W. Bush recalled, "I remember thinking: the first one was likely an accident, the second one was an attack and the third plane was a declaration of war."[29] Bush told the *National Geographic* Channel:

My first reaction was anger; you know: who the hell do *[sic]* that to America? I hastily scribbled the statement. (…) It became apparent we were facing a new kind of enemy. This is what war was like in the twenty-first century.[30]

In his first official statement, the president called the incident an "apparent terrorist attack."[31] Later that night, he described it as a "series of deliberate terrorist attacks," ending the lives of thousands. In his address, Bush painted a scene of planes crashing into the Twin Towers of New York City, asserting that the U.S. government was fully functioning and that the search for the perpetrators of the "evil acts" was in progress. He said, "no distinction" was to be made between the terrorists and their hosts, vowing to "win the war against terrorism" together with the allies of the U.S. He concluded his address by quoting from Psalm 23 that, with the help of God, freedom would be defended fearlessly.[32] Three days after 9/11, the president made another statement that was suggestive of taking revenge, ridding his fellow citizens and the world of "evil." Bush stressed that God's created world was of "moral design" where "tragedy" and "hatred" were short-lived but "goodness, remembrance, and love" were limitless; he commended Americans for having moral and exceptional characteristics. Bush focused on drawing the *face* of the *faceless evil*, trying to identify the "group of thugs who used American assets to kill thousands of citizens on [U.S.] soil."[33] He interpreted the situation as "a different kind of war" which had become "a new reality," since the 9/11 attacks had altered the view that the U.S. was "protected by the oceans." Unlike the past when people "felt pretty secure at home,"[34] the theater of war had now been brought to the U.S. homeland.

On September 20, President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress claiming that "al-Qaeda" was responsible for 9/11, headed by "a person named Osama bin Laden," who was supporting the oppressive regime of the Taliban in Afghanistan. He demanded the Taliban to hand over the al-Qaeda leaders to the U.S., threatened some states to deny safe haven to the terrorists, and drew the famous distinctive line: either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. He requested the world to join his country in the WoT as it was not only Washington's war, but "the world's fight," a combat for all of "civilization" and of those "who believe in progress, and pluralism, tolerance and freedom." The U.S. president engaged in shaping the new and different realities of war at home and rallied support from many states, especially by using the United Nations' (UN) platform.[35] Less than a month after the attacks, on October 7, the U.S. –with the support of "more than 40 countries"– began its military campaign in Afghanistan, called Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).[36]

The purpose of revisiting the 9/11 attacks and the days that followed is to show how a policy discourse regarding terrorism was taking shape, and propagating and enforcing newly constructed realities in the U.S. and abroad. In the hegemonic Bush discourse on terrorism and the WoT, the U.S. is presented as

being extraordinary in its essence, questioning how anyone could dare attack "the brightest beacon for freedom."[37] This discourse demonstrates the process of giving an *evilized* face to the enemy both in moral-religious and secular contexts, and providing the administration with an opportunity to spatiotemporally magnify the enemy.[38] In the new discourse on terrorism regarding the war in Afghanistan, a new kind of enemy is given a face, an identity in real time; it is an enemy that is "barbarian" in nature because

The U.S. logic of suppressing the extraordinary nature of the threat from "evil terrorists" to the "civilized world" rests upon causal thinking, which denotes that "freedom" will come under attack unless the original sources of terrorism in unfree societies like Afghanistan are tackled

it targeted the "civilized." Al-Qaeda, along with its affiliates, are blamed for their project of "remaking the world" which is deemed dangerous and should be eliminated at its source, i.e. Afghanistan; therefore, the war that began at home was taken back to foreign soil. That discourse paved way for the policy that came to be known as the Bush Doctrine, which notes: first, that terrorists and those who harbor them are the same; second, that the U.S. should deal with the threats "*before*[39] they fully materialize," and finally, by providing and propagating "the hopeful alternative of human freedom," it became the duty of the U.S. (and its allies) to "counter the hateful ideology of the terrorists." Based on that policy, the U.S. went to Afghanistan to suppress the terrorist threat and to liberate Afghanistan from the "oppressive regime of the Taliban." Operation Enduring Freedom succeeded in removing the Taliban from power and the U.S. claimed to have "liberated 25 million Afghans."[40] The discursive process of identifying and framing al-Qaeda and the Taliban as evil, barbarian and anti-freedom is what this article sees as part of the de-politicization of the conflict, which has had serious consequences. The next section delineates the process of de-politicization through evilization before turning to the Foucauldian-inspired concept of the politics of confinement.

Re-interpreting 'Evilization' in the Bush Discourse

The U.S. logic of suppressing the extraordinary nature of the threat from "evil terrorists" to the "civilized world" rests upon causal thinking, which denotes that "freedom" will come under attack unless the original sources of terrorism in unfree societies like Afghanistan are tackled. Framing al-Qaeda as an organization that wants to remake and change the world through its radical ideology exhibits the continuation of a cycle which must be broken; i.e., al-Qaeda is working on a project that challenges and poses a *gigantic* threat to

Evilization is not merely *a securitization speech act*. It is rather a de-politicization, not only of the violence of the enemy, but of the entire complexities of Afghanistan

the Westphalian and liberal political order –which is a *problem* that needs to be *solved* before it is too late. In this logic, al-Qaeda's project is essentially political; however, by situating it opposite to the values and ideals of democracy, freedom and egalitarianism, al-Qaeda is condemned because it wants to impose its radical ideology through violence,[41] making its enterprise terrorism. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are hence 'evil' because they are against modern, liberal and civilized values and nations.

Bush's construction of al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan is part of a discursive process that Jackson[42] has explored and critiqued in detail. Müller, Sheikh and Ish-Shalom have taken it a step further by arguing that it is "evilization," i.e. "an extreme form of securitization by virtue of the attributes ascribed to the supposed enemy." In the dominant political discourse, evilization is conceived as a "subspecies" or "part of the process of securitization" that leads to "an escalation of conflict, limit[s] deliberation and prevent[s] compromise" and is a "powerful manifestation of identity politics." Hayden argues that in the international political theater, the image of "evil" is "fixated on an unduly narrow discourse" that operates on three different, yet closely linked, levels. Following "the tradition of Christian theology as well as Hobbesian realism" the first image traces back and identifies evil as rooted in "human nature," while the second represents the intrinsic "corruption of the domestic political orders," i.e. state(s), and the third situates the existence of evil in the anarchic structure of the international political system. The process of evilizing moves politics beyond the realm of normal where "the freedom of action of governments is not only enlarged," but, simultaneously, the options of future reconciliation are shrunk.[43] The Bush discourse is representative of the same behavior, indicating that al-Qaeda and the Taliban are unchangeable through "education, socialization, persuasion or even sanctioning;"[44] thus their elimination is the only solution. Geis and Wunderlich point to the "unlawful treatment" of Guantanamo detainees and the horrific torture of Abu Ghraib prisoners in Iraq, arguing that a "grave implication of the use of 'evil' rhetoric is the distraction from and externalization of political wrongs,"[45] which means that evil is made responsible for all mistakes and wrongdoings.

This article does not agree with Müller, Sheikh, Ish-Shalom and others, arguing instead that the use of evil cannot be reduced to "rhetoric," as doing so not only makes the words of Bush devoid of meaning but also suggests that he might
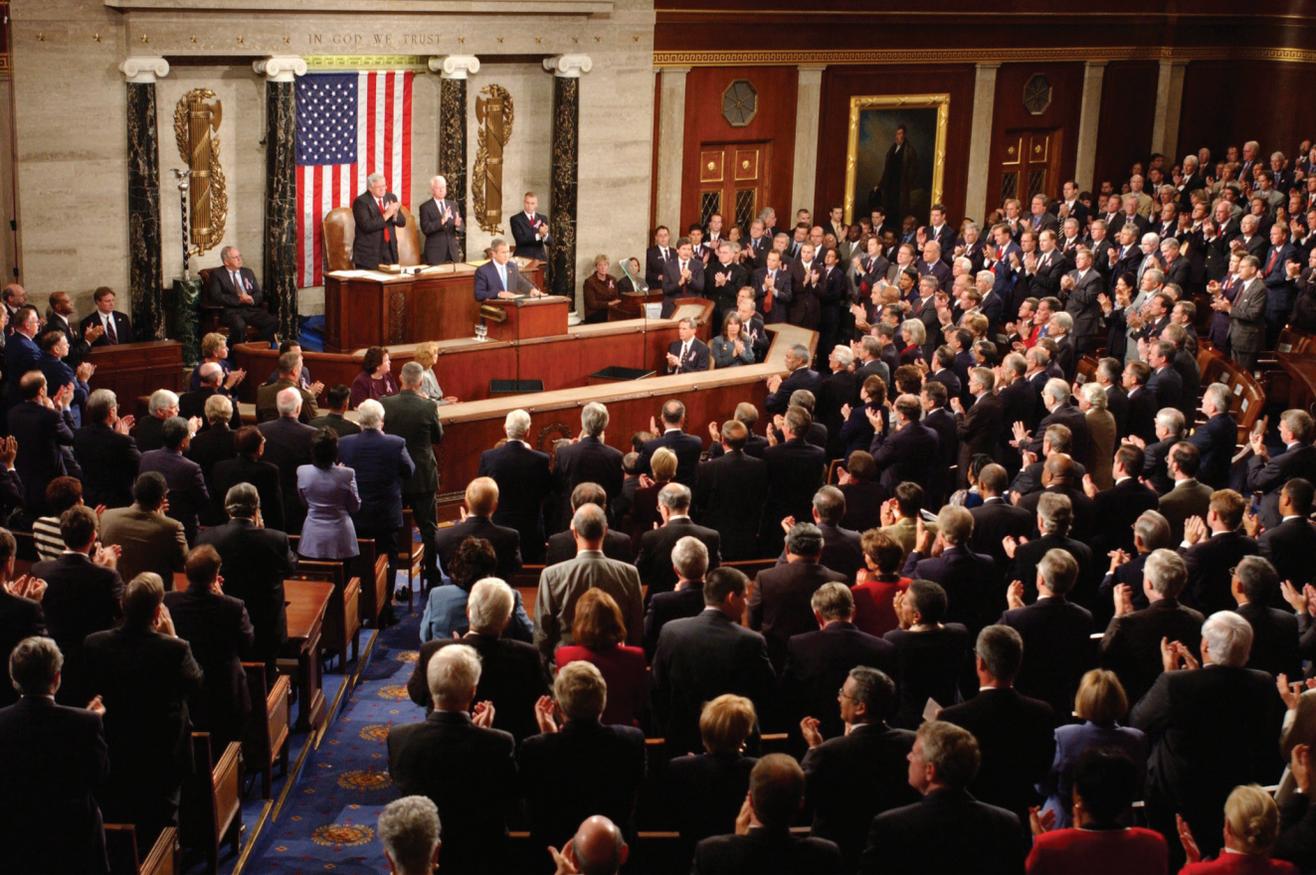
have used them due to extreme post-9/11 anger or for political point-scoring, which was not the case; rather words like "evil" (or phrases like "axis of evil") were deliberately used and should be analyzed as embedded in their political and cultural discursive context.[46] Jackson claims that discourses "draw upon existing discourses and narratives which then shape them," through processes that are "particularly noticeable in the case of political discourses,"[47] meaning that evilization is not merely *a securitization speech act*. It is rather a de-politicization, not only of the violence of the enemy,[48] but of the entire complexities of Afghanistan. De-politicization is the process of moving issues beyond the realm of the political, and since evilized securitization serves that purpose that is why, it is a part of a wider de-politicization[49] involving the transformation of political problems into security, humanitarian and societal issues[50] through discourse.

The evilization in the WoT discourse requires a firm foundation, a powerful dichotomy so that the 'other' is demonized and, the 'self' –no matter how paradoxical, contradictory and inconsistent– is simultaneously elevated to a higher moral level: it is shown privileged, and its identity is fixed.

Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of morality is helpful to understand how a certain form of valuation becomes superior, condemning the opposite as an evil. In the first essay of *Genealogy of Morals*, he describes two types of moralities. One is the "master morality" that functions and is perceived from "inside" to "outside;" master morality is based on the self. In contrast to that,

In the aftermath of 9/11, the Manichean dualistic construction of good and evil in the U.S. discourse on the WoT went far beyond a simple representation of liberal/illiberal dichotomy when religious connotations were attached to it

"slave morality" sees the master, the noble and the good as an "evil," censuring the master morality. The slaves, who are powerless, develop a certain kind of sentiment and hatred for the powerful masters, what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*. The outward look or perception equips slave morality with the construction of its own valuation, making ressentiment creative because to be identifiable and distinguished, it must say "no" to "everything that is outside." Nietzsche argues that the rejection of the "other" is a revolt and "a feature of ressentiment: in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world" needing an "external stimuli in order to act at all, –its action is basically a reaction."[51] In his view, the modern –democratic and egalitarian– valuation is "the heir of the Christian movement" which originated from the revolt in slave morality. Thus, modern morality is "herd-animal morality" before and after which there are possibilities of higher moralities:

> [T]his morality defends itself against such a 'possibility' or 'ought' with all its strength: stubbornly and relentlessly it says, 'I am morality itself, and nothing else is morality!' –yes, with the aid of a religion.[52]

Similarly, over the years, discourses of liberal democracy, freedom and egalitarianism have been presented in inviolable, natural and even sacrosanct ways. Any discourse opposing or questioning them is ultimately denounced as a threat, nefarious and evil. That is how Bush termed the attacks of 9/11 as an attack on "freedom" and "the way of life." He, quite often using religious language, vowed to defend the *civilized* morality of the West, and represented the evil in a way that illustrated that al-Qaeda and Taliban members were worshiping a "false God."[53] In the aftermath of 9/11, the Manichean dualistic construction of good and evil in the U.S. discourse on the WoT went far beyond a simple representation of liberal/illiberal dichotomy when religious connotations were attached to it.

The point here is not that political violence carried out on 9/11 is justified or should have a privileged status vis-à-vis freedom or democracy. Critical inquiry into the discourse on terrorism should not be, in any way, labeled as "having sympathy for the terrorist devil;" that is what Der Derian calls the "ideological obstacle" one faces when analyzing terrorism, arguing that, "following a rash of terrorist incidents –at the moments of highest tension when

sober thinking is most needed– responses other than instant excoriation and threats of retaliation are seen as 'soft,' or worse, collaborationist."[54] The argument here is to question the very mechanism of religiously-charged evilization and to see how freedom and democracy are shown as values and characteristics that are universal and immune to questioning and criticism. Reproaching and rebuking those who problematize the very notion of democracy is itself an act of putting limits on critical inquiry, because, according to that logic, nudging the untouchable implies sinfulness and impiety. It is congruent to the accusations of blasphemy coming from Muslims after the publication of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad in Denmark and later in the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in France.[55] In fact, Bush presented morality or valuation as fixed, static and unchangeable, and exercised its power. The construction of the "evilness" of terrorism "implies in advance its own moral condemnation"[56] and hence justifies and legitimizes any retaliatory act on the part of governments.

The religious evilization in Bush's discourse on the WoT in Afghanistan functioned at two levels. First, it stripped al-Qaeda and the Taliban's discourse of its religious foundations by claiming that they "blaspheme the name of Allah," because they "commit evil" in his name and therefore the "terrorists are traitors to their own faith."[57] The removal of religious foundations deprives militant groups of the legitimacy they posit for their actions of political violence. Second, religious evilization aids the secular project that consolidates the de-politicization of the WoT. Here is when "the clear boundary between the religious and secular quickly begins to be blurred."[58] By identifying the terrorists as "evil" and against the "civilized" and modern, democratic, free way of life, Bush's evilization goes beyond Huntington's deeply flawed, yet popular notion of "clash of civilizations,"[59] because al-Qaeda and the Taliban do not represent Muslim civilization. So, the WoT is not a clash between two civilizations, but between terrorists and the civilized nations of the world. In Bush's discourse, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are constructed as possessing characteristics of metaphysical evil having no purpose other than the annihilation of the *civilized* world; they are barbarians who are not "living outside the reach of civilization" but are dwelling within weak states like Afghanistan. The terrorists are "monster[s] born out of modernity" who, with the aid of human technological advancements,[60] move around the world and form networks to achieve their (deadly) objectives. Contrary to Chandler's argument about Norwegian Anders Breivik who killed many in July 2011, the evil as represented in the Bush discourse is not "all about us;" it is not "democratized," but remains external; thereby the "acts of mass killing or destruction" by al-Qaeda or Taliban are not to be comprehended as "reflections upon ourselves and our own societies."[61] In the post-2001 hegemonic discourse on the WoT, al-Qaeda is shown as, first, an omnipresent evil threatening modern, liberal civilization and second, as supporting the Taliban's tyrannical rule in Afghanistan where people are oppressed, and who need to be liberated.

None of the U.S. allies explicitly questioned the hegemonic discourse on the WoT and instead strengthened it by offering practical help. Along with the militant groups, Afghanistan as a state and as a society was de-politicized, a project which could better serve the politics of confinement

The evilized de-politicization of the WoT in Afghanistan has had deep implications –some of which include expanding the freedom of the U.S. governments' actions, shrinking the space for reconciliation, and escalating the conflict. A very important consequence of the de-politicization of the WoT is what I call *the politics of confinement*. Drawing upon Foucault's early work on psychiatry and the history of madness, this article claims that the post-9/11 Bush discourse on terrorism paved way for the politics (and practices) of confinement in various de-polit-icized spaces of the world which are termed as spaces of confinement that are zones or structures formed as consequence of the WoT discourse in Afghanistan that are objects and subjects of the politics of confinement which is unilateral, oppressive and, illiberalizing. To develop the concept of the spaces and politics of confinement, this article uses Foucault's work on madness, psychiatry and the advent of asylums in post-Renaissance Europe. Foucault's genealogical study on madness is relevant for this article because it is a good example of how the power of dominant discourses can (de)politicize certain zones, structures, arrangements or societies. Based on the contextualization of Foucault's work on psychiatry, this article theorizes post-2001 Afghan society as a large space of confinement akin to the asylums formed for people who were thought of as deviating from what was viewed as normal in particular epistemes in Europe.

The Paradox of Liberation through the Politics of Confinement

Foucault critically assessed the meaning of "madness" as it developed and transformed in Europe over the period of three epistemes: the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and Modernity. He notes that the language of psychiatry, developing in the late 17th and 18th centuries has come to, constitute madness in the modern age as "mental illness," throwing "into oblivion" all those ways, words and phrases whereby "the exchange between madness and reason was made." The discourse of psychiatry, as it developed through the arrival and dominance of positivist epistemologies after the Renaissance, is a "monologue of reason about madness," while what is labeled as madness is "silent" in response, as "modern man no longer communicates with the madman." Foucault, therefore, calls his investigation into madness, "the archaeology of that silence." He

shows that the meaning of madness was historically constructed either as a "religious or philosophical phenomenon or as an objective medical essence," rejecting that such theorizations were "discoveries." Labeling people as "mad" led to their confinement in the Classical Age which, recapitulating the evolving meaning of madness itself, gradually transformed into institutionalized asylums. In the 18th century, the "consciousness" of madness

> … did not evolve in the context of a humanitarian movement that gradually related it more closely to the madman's human reality (…) nor did it evolve under the pressure of a scientific need that made it more attentive, more faithful to what madness might have to say for itself. If it slowly changed, it was within that simultaneously real and artificial space of confinement. (…) No medical advance, no humanitarian approach was responsible for the fact that the mad were gradually isolated (…) It was the depths of confinement itself that generated the phenomenon; it is from confinement that we must seek an account of this new awareness of madness. A political more than a philanthropic awareness.[62]

Foucault claims, as time passed in the 18th century, the "madness" of the confined became the "image" of their "humiliation," as their "reason" was "reduced to silence." This way, the madman was "not the first and the most innocent victim of confinement, but the most obscure and the most visible symbols of the confining power," maintaining, in that period the political critique of confinement did not function "in the direction of a liberation of the mad," and it did not allow a more philanthropic or medical attention to the mad, rather it "linked madness more firmly than ever to confinement." Thus an "abyss" was built which isolates madness from "reason;" the madman –as in classical confinement– is being observed in a way that involves "his monstrous surface" and is read as "in a mirror." The madman, kept in the asylum of the modern age, is considered "a latecomer in the world of reason;" the bearer of a "social personality" that is "silently imposed on him by observation;" he becomes the object of "the order of observation and classification" where he does not talk to the observer but is rather judged "without appeal." The difference between old and modern confinement is that in the former, it was practiced "outside of normal juridical forms" while in later the therapeutic methods and knowledge of medicine were translated into a "justice" that paradoxically promised liberation but was in fact repression.[63]

In Foucault's analysis of madness and confinement, the interplay of the power/ knowledge nexus becomes visible when dividing practices are strengthened with the foundations of scientific reason. Power is thus "legitimated if it is exercised in the name of scientific truth."[64] It is indeed power/knowledge that constructs 'a specific mode of subjection' and gives "birth to man as an object of knowledge for a discourse with a 'scientific' status."[65] Power, in the asylum

American soldiers on patrol in and around the village of Shkin in the Pashtun tribal zone of Waziristan, Afghanistan, trying to track down Bin Laden, July 2004.

Reza / Getty Images

centers or structures of confinement, is bound with the science of psychiatry; objectifying the madmen, it disguises itself behind false veils of correction, treatment, liberation and humanism. This power operates as a "new mode of social control" which, in the first place, estranges the individual from society and vice versa because s/he is deemed dangerous for society and then is psychologically alienated in a way that the "self" estranges from "itself."[66] This phenomenon shows that in our societies "the relation between legitimate power and scientific truth" is very strong and penetrating.[67] It also reveals how confinement and its spaces were representative of a large-scale de-politicization: first, the discursive construction of madness and criminals through the lenses of religion, morality and law which confined the mad, the criminals, and the poor altogether in one space; second, the division and segregation of the mad from the criminals in the confinement facilities was based on modern legal knowledge; and finally, the confinement, alienation and isolation of the *insane* from the *normal* individuals in accordance with the discourse of psychiatry. The mad were situated beyond the realm of the normal. The noise of reason, scientific truth and knowledge suppressed their voices, thus breaking the possibility of any dialogue, any question or criticism. Apart from individuals, the spaces of confinement (i.e. asylums), were also de-politicized structures.

The essentialist representation of al-Qaeda and the Taliban as "evil," and "the very worst of human nature,"[68] and their subsequent demonization and evilization –through the discursive lenses of religion, morality, humanity and emancipation in Bush's discourse– served as their de-politicization in the

same fashion as madness and the mad were de-politicized in Europe between the 17th and 18th centuries. The only higher morality that spoke for itself after 9/11 was the morality and ethos of modern, liberal, democratic civilization and order. Like psychiatrists standing on the foundations of scientific truth, Bush, using the narratives of freedom and democracy, showed the worldview

The dominant discourse on the WoT constructs the U.S.-led coalition's troops as *good* fighting an *evil* in Afghanistan which is so vaguely defined that it seems interwoven in the fabric of the society

of al-Qaeda and Taliban as nefarious, diagnosing them with the illness of evil that was embodied in them, which had to be stopped from spreading, and which had to be fought and rooted out. None of the U.S. allies explicitly questioned the hegemonic discourse on the WoT and instead strengthened it by offering practical help. Along with the militant groups, Afghanistan as a state and as a society was de-politicized, a project which could better serve the politics of confinement.

The term "politics of confinement" is not new and is often used with reference to prisons and their conditions.[69] Adhering to the poststructuralist tradition, this article does not provide a universal, essentialist definition of the politics of confinement nevertheless, drawing upon Foucauldian ideas, argues that it takes place in de-politicized spaces and on de-politicized (group of) individuals. The politics of confinement is unilateral, oppressive, discriminatory, divisive and objectivating. It is immune to questioning as it bases itself on a humanist, emancipatory discourse that claims to express a higher morality. It operates in such a way that it becomes an ethos on its own. The politics of confinement is woven into the warp and weft of the spaces of confinement.

In the case of Afghanistan, where the WoT discourse led to the de-politicization of the war, militant groups and society, four types of spaces and/or structures of confinement emerged. First, militant groups like the Taliban or al-Qaeda became confined to the mountains, caves and villages where they are either in control or are strong in numbers; they were alienated from the society and vice versa. Second, confinement centers, i.e. detention facilities or prisons, were established for captured suspects. Third, walled military bases were occupied by the U.S.-led international coalition. From those bases, international troops carry out surveillance of the area, use modern warfare technology and launch their offensives, killing or detaining militants and suspects who are in turn cut off from society. The military bases are both the objects and the main sources of the politics of confinement; the bases serve as confinement spaces where troops are told to remain vigilant as they are under constant threat. Thus, they too are objects of confining politics. At the same time, they

The problematic Bush discourse on the WoT is dominant even today, obliging current U.S. President Donald Trump to seek 'victory' in Afghanistan –a notion that is as contentious and vaguely defined as the U.S. discourse on the WoT itself

are the subjects and agents of the politics of confinement in their operations.[70] Finally, the entire state in its de-politicized form serves as an example of a huge space of confinement. Whether the state is understood through its most common and mainstream definition as an entity possessing sovereignty, a permanent population and a functional government, or if it is seen in Foucauldian terms as "a principle of intelligibility and strategic schema," as "the regulatory idea of governmental reason" and as "a practice,"[71] the construction of Afghanistan in the post-9/11 discourse on the WoT fails to fulfill both criteria. In that discourse, it is represented with a kind of ailment that makes it a launching pad for transnational terrorist activities. It is seen as incapable of operating on its own because the Taliban and its allies pose an extraordinary threat to its security and stability. The society is oppressed and should be liberated; its citizens must opt for a liberal, democratic form of governance so that Afghanistan does not become a sanctuary for terrorist organizations. Since Afghanistan is dangerous and a warzone, therefore, it is quarantined like a patient and remains isolated from the rest of the world.[72]

In the aforementioned spaces, de-politicized groups of people are confined where the only sane, reasonable and responsible humans are international troops. There, the lines between modern and conservative (or traditional), liberal and illiberal, oppressor and oppressed, evil and good, become increasingly blurred because of the de-politicization of the militants and the society. The dominant discourse on the WoT constructs the U.S.-led coalition's troops as *good* fighting an *evil* in Afghanistan which is so vaguely defined that it seems interwoven in the fabric of the society. The politics of confinement takes place in de-politicized spaces and societies which are seen as beyond the norm. The Bush discourse on the WoT creates the grounds for the politics of confinement which does not come under the coverage of any domestic or international legal framework. As the WoT is a 'just war' against a huge threat to global security, and it serves to liberate Afghans from the 'evil' Taliban and al-Qaeda, therefore, the confinement of a state and society and the politics of confinement are not to be questioned. Bush demanded that the Taliban hand over the al-Qaeda leaders to the U.S., shut down all 'terrorists' training camps,' and give access to the U.S. to ensure that these camps 'no longer' operate. He concluded that the demands were non-negotiable, therefore he broke the possibility of any dialogue. The dominant, emancipatory and 'reasonable' voice of the politics of confinement silences the voices of the Afghan society and closes the doors of

communication, hence the killing, suffering and the predicament of Afghans has gone unnoticed, and unquestioned, since 2001.

Conclusion

This article, using a poststructuralist CDA, unpacked, questioned and analyzed former U.S. president Bush's discourse on terrorism in Afghanistan, arguing that the evilization of al-Qaeda and the Taliban was an important and powerful discursive tool for de-politicizing the WoT and Afghan society. The evilization of the militant groups in religious, moral and secular contexts, their elimination, and the liberation of Afghanistan, were prerequisite to protecting and securing the global liberal-democratic political order. The article concludes that the discourse created a de-politicized state and society better suited for the practices of the politics of confinement, which is increasingly illiberalizing. The illiberalizing power of the politics of confinement strengthens and expands the longer it endures. It was the construction of de-politicized spaces of confinement in Bush's discourse on the WoT that compelled his successor Barack Obama to expand the politics of confinement in Afghanistan by dramatically increasing the levels of troops and creating further spaces of confinement in the neighboring tribal areas of Pakistan. The de-politicized spaces of confinement and the politics of confinement imply each other and are directly proportional, functioning in a cyclical fashion offering no end-result. In fact, the problematic Bush discourse on the WoT is dominant even today, obliging current U.S. President Donald Trump to seek 'victory' in Afghanistan –a notion that is as contentious and vaguely defined as the U.S. discourse on the WoT itself. ●

Endnotes

1. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (New York: Vintage, 1988).

2. Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia," *The White House*, (August 21, 2017), retrieved on August 30, 2017, from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia.

3. Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 42, No. 3 (2017), pp. 394-426.

4. Ish-Shalom does not specifically use the term 'evilization' but rather calls it the process of 'evilness.' For details see, Piki Ish-Shalom, "Conceptual Relics, Mutual Assured Evilness and the Struggle over Israeli Public Common Sense," *International* Politics, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2014), pp. 543-560; Harald Müller, "Evilization in Liberal Discourse: From Kant's 'Unjust Enemy' to Today's 'Rogue State,'" *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (2014), pp. 475-491; Mona K. Sheikh, "Appointing Evil in International Relations," *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (2014), pp. 492-507.

5. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 67.

6. William E. Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Global Politics," in James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics,* (New York: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 323-342.

7. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*.

8. Judith Renner, "The Local Roots of the Global Politics of Reconciliation: The Articulation of 'Reconciliation' as an Empty Universal in the South African Transition to Democracy," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies,* Vol. 42, No. 2 (2014), pp. 263-285.

9. Bobby Sayyid and Lilian Zac, "Political Analysis in a World without Foundations," in Elinor Scarbrough and Eric Tanenbaum (eds.), *Research Strategies in the Social Sciences: A Guide to New Approaches*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 249-267.

10. Donna U. Gregory, "Foreword," in Derian and Shapiro, (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations*, pp. 13-21.

11. Michael J. Shapiro, "Textualizing Global Politics," in Derian and Shapiro (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations*, pp. 11-22.

12. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* 1st Edition, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 52.

13. Andrew W. Neal, "Michel Foucault," in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.), *Critical Theorists and International Relations,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 162-170.

14. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* p. 93.

15. Nietzsche is paraphrased in Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). Also, Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader,* (Boston: Routledge Kegan and Paul Ltd., 1981), pp. 51-78.

16. Carol Grbich, *New Approaches in Social Research*, 1st Edition, (London: SAGE Publications, 2004), p. 47.

17. Grbich, *New Approaches in Social Research*, p. 40; Shapiro, "Textualizing Global Politics," Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 1st Edition,(Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 3.

18. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), p. 54.

19. Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 1st Edition, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 16.

20. Sayyid and Zac, "Political Analysis in a World without Foundations," p. 260.

21. Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2001), pp. 63-94; Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis,* 1st Edition, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); Michael Meyer, "Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA," in Wodak and Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 14-31.

22. Teun A. van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: A Plea for Diversity," in Wodak and Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 95-120.

23. Siegfried Jäger, "Discourse and Knowledge: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of a Critical Discourse and Dispositive Analysis," in Wodak and Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis,* p. 34.

24. Hansen, *Security as Practice,* pp. 53-57.

25. "Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush: 2001-2008," *The White House*, (2008); "Policies of the Bush Administration: 2001-2009," *The White House*, (2009); George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (United States: Virgin Books, 2010); "Highlights of Accomplishments and Results: 2001-2009," *The White House*, (2009b); Marc A. Thiessen, (ed.), *A Charge Kept: The Record of the Bush Presidency (2001-2009)*, 1st Edition, (Washington D.C.: The White House, 2009); "President George W. Bush: The 9/11 Interview," *National Geographic Channel*, (September, 2011) retrieved from September 10, 2017, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ke_OgE_V6tQ.

26. Helle Malmvig, *State Sovereignty and Intervention: A Discourse Analysis of Interventionary and Non-interventionary Practices in Kosovo and Algeria,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.

27. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge.*

28. Sources mentioned in the text are not cited or given in the reference. They were only used to see how the official discourse regarding the WoT in Afghanistan was dispersed and circulated. For information on the literacy-rate in Afghanistan, see UNESCO, "Adult and Youth Literacy," (2012), retrieved September 22, 2017, from http://www.uis.unesco.org/FactSheets/Documents/fs20-literacy-day-2012-en-v3.pdf.

29. "The 9/11 Interview," *National Geographic Channel*.

30. "The 9/11 Interview," *National Geographic Channel*.

31. "The 9/11 Interview," *National Geographic Channel*.

32. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*.

33. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*.

34. "The 9/11 Interview," *National Geographic Channel*.

35. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*. Several UN Security Council Resolutions were passed, among which the most significant was Resolution No. 1373, passed on September 28, which called upon states to 'urgently prevent and suppress' acts of terrorism.

36. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*; "Policies of the Bush Administration," *The White House*; "Highlights of Accomplishments," *The White House*.

37. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*.

38. In the post-9/11 world, the strategy of evilizing and spatiotemporal magnification of the enemy was used by many states. See, Pamir H. Sahill, "The Terror Speaks: Inside Pakistan's Terrorism Discourse and National Action Plan," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 41, No. 4 (2018), retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1284448pp. 319-337.

39. Emphasis added.

40. Thiessen, *A Charge Kept*, p. 4.

41. Thiessen, *A Charge Kept*, p. 4; "Selected Speeches," *The White House*.

42. See, Richard Jackson, "Genealogy, Ideology, and Counter-Terrorism: Writing Wars on Terrorism from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush Jr," *Studies in Language & Capitalism,* Vol. 1, No. 1(2006), pp. 163-193; Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 42, No. 3 (2007), pp. 394-426.

43. See, Ish-Shalom, "Conceptual Relics;" Müller, "Evilization in Liberal Discourse;" Sheikh, "Appointing Evil," Geis and Hobson, "The Existence and Use of "Evil;" Anna Geis and Christopher Hobson, "The Existence and Use of 'Evil' in International Politics," *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (July 2014), pp. 417-423; Anna Geis and Carmen Wunderlich, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Comparing the Notions of 'Rogue' and 'Evil' in International Politics," *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (2014), pp. 458-474; Patrick Hayden, "Systemic Evil and the International Political Imagination," *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (July 2014), pp. 424-440.

44. Müller, "Evilization in Liberal Discourse," pp. 476-477.

45. Geis and Wunderlich, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," p. 464.

46. Geis and Wunderlich, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," p. 461.

47. Jackson, "Genealogy, Ideology, and Counter-Terrorism," p. 164.

48. Harmonie Toros and Luca Mavelli, "Collective Evil and Individual Pathology: The De-politicization of Violence against Afghan Civilians," *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (2014), pp. 508-524.

49. Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. 11.

50. Christian Olsson, "Military Interventions and the Concept of the Political: Bringing the Political Back into the Interactions between External Forces and Local Societies," in Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala (eds.), *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 146-178.

51. Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality,* 2nd Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1994], 2007), pp. 17-20.

52. Emphasis original, Nietzsche, *On the Geneology of Morality*, p. 151.

53. Toros and Mavelli, "Collective Evil," p. 512.

54. James Der Derian, *Critical Practices in International Theory: Selected Essays*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 69.

55. Pamir H. Sahill, "Charlie Hebdo Attack: An Analysis of the Consequences and the Role of Political Islam in the EU," *Jan Masaryk Review of International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1(2017), pp. 6-22.

56. Saul Newman, *Power and Politics in Poststructuralist Thought: New Theories of the Political*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

57. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*.

58. Geis and Hobson, "The Existence and Use of 'Evil,'" p. 419.

59. For details, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1996).

60. Ondrej Ditrych, *Tracing the Discourses of Terrorism,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014).

61. David Chandler, "Beyond Good and Evil: Ethics in a World of Complexity," *International Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 4 (2014), pp. 441–457.

62. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*; also see, Jean Khalfa, "Introduction," in Jean Khalfa (ed.), *History of Madness*, (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 13-25.

63. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, pp. 224-267.

64. Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 43.

65. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 3rd Edition, (London: Vintage, 2012), p. 24.

66. Khalfa, "Introduction," pp. 16-27.

67. Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, p. 44.

68. "Selected Speeches," *The White House*, p. 58.

69. Please refer to Karlene Faith, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement & Resistance*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011); Candace Kruttschnitt, "The Politics of Confinement: Women's Imprisonment in California and the UK," in Alison Liebling and Shadd Maruna (eds.), *The Effects of Imprisonment*, (New York: Willan Publishing, 2005), pp. 146-176; and Emily Thuma, "Against the 'Prison/Psychiatric State:' Anti-violence Feminisms and the Politics of Confinement in the 1970s," *Feminist Formations,* Vol. 26, No. 2 (2014), pp. 26-51.

70. After 9/11 more than 40 countries deployed their forces in Afghanistan and their troops were stationed in the bases of various provinces. The bases were mainly controlled and run by industrialized states, for example, the U.S. forces were based in Kabul, southern Kandahar and southeastern Paktia, Paktika and Khost provinces, the British were in Helmand in the south of the country, the Italians in the western Herat province, the French in central Kapisa, etc.

71. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 277-286.

72. The U.S. and European governments advise their populations against traveling to Afghanistan and Afghans, in return, do not receive visas easily.

GLOBAL
NEWS-ANALYSIS
PORTAL
OF
THE NEW
TURKEY

رؤية تركية

Rouya Turkiyyah is a quarterly academic journal published by SETA Foundation since 2012. It covers a broad range of topics related to domestic and foreign policy of the Middle Eastern countries focusing mostly in their politics, economy and social problems. Rouya Turkiyyah seeks to furnish a new regional perspective, through the allocation of new spaces for serious discussions on the World Affairs but more specifically in the Middle East affairs.