

**Toward a Critical Appreciation of Political Globalization: Gender in the
Service of the Internationalized National Security States**

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Introduction: The Intellectual Debates on Globalization

Two decades of expanded debates on the concept of globalization have produced a huge body of literature on the phenomenon, but limited agreement on its key features or mode of operation. More than one student of this phenomenon has suggested that the concept continues to be hotly contested and slippery.¹ Some agreement existed on what economic globalization represented i.e. the rapid spread of market economies, their increased levels of integration into the capitalist world economy, and reliance on and use of rapidly developing information technologies and communication systems.²

No such basic agreement existed on what political globalization represented. There was the widespread assumption that global capital, represented by transnational corporations, has had detrimental effects on the nation state, but the assessment of that effect has varied widely. Initially, many predicted that it will cause the demise of the state, but many now think that this was a premature prediction. There is some fruitful discussion on how globalization has led to the reorganization of the state rather than its bypassing, very specifically its simultaneous concern with the juggling of the interests of national and global capital.³ According to this view of the internationalization of the nation state, it embraced a complex internalizing and/or mediating role that also included “policing the world order on the local terrain”.⁴

In this discussion of political globalization, the formal global spread of different forms of democratization represented the other face of market economies with its specific forms of domination or ideologies of freedom⁵ i.e. the association with the disciplinary agendas of neo liberalism vs. the old participatory ideals.⁶

Robert Cox situated “the internationalization of the state in the context of the rise and fall of the hegemonic world order of Pax Americana” with each state adjusting national economic policies to the dynamics of the world economy” and its developing international consensus.⁷ This complex formulation avoided the economism of some Marxian writings coupling the economic needs of global capital with developing political norms and discourses.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri developed the concept of “Empire” to capture the transition from the modern intellectual roots and operation of the international system to a postmodern global one. It posited the development of a decentered and deterritorialized Empire, a global political subject, in which the mobility of global capital paralleled that of the “multitude” composed of migrant workers, intellectuals, racial and gender groups represented new forms of challenges and a source of resistance. In this hybrid global world, the supranational sovereignties represented by transnational corporations and multilateral institutions worked with the national ones represented by the state and the non-governmental organizations that represented sub national entities and groups to collectively regulate the emerging power relations that characterized the new hybrid global world order.

Finally, Samuel Huntington gave a cultural spin to the emerging global norms through the use of “civilization” as a cultural category that emphasized the existence of “fundamental differences” among civilizations pitting the universal global West versus the equally global the “rest” with their particularistic values, systems and agendas. While this particular thesis was subjected to thorough critique because of the way it homogenized the West and the “rest” overlooking the differences within each group and

the cross cutting alliances uniting Western states and their non-Western counterparts,⁸ it gained pop status in the media which used it to give new articulations of the old orientalist assumptions and discourses that vilified Islamic civilization that were defined as the key source of terror and/or threat directed at the West. True to its orientalist antecedents, it separated the discussion of Islamic civilization, culture and societies from the previous complex discussion of the economic and political institutions of the global world representing a very crude rehashing of long established beliefs and views without adding anything new to the debate on globalization and how the region sheds light on its understanding and theorization.

None of the above theories and/or theorists gave gender and/or its uses a constitutive role to play in political globalization. The literature that dealt with gender and globalization largely focused on how economic globalization has marginalized women in the emerging globalized divisions of labor and/or how the neo-liberal states, that shed social welfare functions and policies, contributed to their further marginalization through the increase of their social burdens and the widespread feminization of poverty.⁹ There was another major concern that globalization's weakening of the national state affected the ability of women to rely on them to defend and/or expand their rights¹⁰ and that the neo-liberal states, which were sensitive to the needs of the global market and its transnational actors have assisted the development of new forms of the subordination of women in the global north and south.¹¹ Finally, Mary Hawkesworth suggested that even when the economic and political discussions of globalization and their discourses discussed women and gender, their representations of

both emphasized the global needs and agendas rendering women and their activist roles and feminist voices “invisible.”

In this paper, I wish to connect some of these theoretical issues in some coherent discussion that makes gender visible in its political service of the national security states, which emerged first in some parts of the undemocratic south with Egypt as a case in point, and then made a dramatic and widespread appearance in the democratic north after September 11, 2001. It provides an example of the political/military internationalization of the state in the pursuit of victory in the national, regional and global wars on terror. I want to argue that the comparative study of these states and their wars on terror offer insights into the unexplored violent and dislocating effects of globalization that required the reorganization and the privileging of their coercive political capabilities to confront the challenges from some of their political opponents. While the stated goals of these globalized national security states stressed the protection of their citizens (including women), they have widely contributed to the erosion of the existing rights of men and women in their policing activities.

Gender proved extremely helpful in providing moral grounds for these states’ expanded policing activities and the further development and institutionalization of their coercive apparatus in the pursuit of a new kind of enemy that moves easily at home and abroad. Most of the state’s national security discourses implied that women, have been doubly victimized by the terrorists: as unwitting objects of their random acts of terror and the target of their socially conservative agendas. This gendered representations of the violent and misogynist terrorists and women as their victims proved to be potent ideological weapons in mobilizing support among the larger public and women. They

discredited one's political opponents and won the prized visible support of active feminist women and their non-governmental organizations contributing to successful public campaigns leading up to the national war on terror against the Islamists in Egypt and the global one against the Taliban in Afghanistan. These gender discourses have been successful in the development of the conservative concept of a "just war", which Hardt and Negri characterized as contributing to political banalization and/or the normalization of war as everyday political instruments in the global era. The new alliance between women and the state contributed to a new alliance between women of the north and the south who agreed for a change on the definition of Islamism and terrorism, as the enemies of women and their different societies. Unfortunately, this was a short lived alliance that did not restructure the assumptions they made about each other, the power relations between the north and the south and the divisions among women within states and in the new global world order.

II. The Internationalization of the National Security States and the War on Terror:

A. The Regional National Security State and the War on Terror in Egypt

Following the Camp David Accords with Israel in 1979 that led to a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel Egypt became the second largest recipient of US aid. Most of this aid comprised of security assistance which included "military education and training, aid to counter nuclear proliferation, terrorism and illicit narcotics."¹² This intersected with national political developments in Egypt that contributed to the internationalization of an expanded national security state that unleashed new levels of violence against the government's Islamist opponents in what became categorized as a war on terror that spilled into the international arena. The attack on backwardness of the gender agendas of

the Islamist opponents by Egyptian secular men and feminist women played a key war in the public campaign to discredit the enemy and justify the regional war on terror.

The internationalization of the national security state in Egypt gained momentum with the turbulence that characterized the last 2 years of the second republic of president Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981). While his ascent to political power was uneventful, he spent the next decade trying to establish the distinct characteristics of his regime from that of his predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser whose goals of postcolonial national liberation emphasized the need for state led modernization/development, Arab unity defined in support for Palestinian right to self determination and an anti imperialist foreign policy that embraced non-alignment as its identifying emblem. His second republic quickly embraced “open door” policies that emphasized the role of national and global private capital in development, switched Egyptian alliance with the USSR to one with the US, whose mediation of the Camp David Accords contributed a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel that minimized Egyptian commitment to Palestinian rights and Arab unity.

Ideologically, the new president enthusiastically accepted his identification with religious faith (*al-Ra'is al-mu'min*) forging a new national alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood (which had been previously banned) allowing it to spread its influence and then to consolidate its power in many institutions of an emerging civil society beginning with the student unions at the national universities and then the professional associations. When the Brotherhood's expanded influence led to the emergence of other groups identified with political Islam as the new oppositional movement that eventually grew too big for the regime to control especially the new alliance with the US, Sadat moved

against it along with all his other political critics and opponents, including secularists, socialists and the pope of the Egyptian Coptic church. This created a polarized political climate that led to his assassination by the members of a small Islamist group, al-Jihad, that had infiltrated the military parade he was attending paving the way to his vice president, Hosni Mubarak who was seated next to him but escaped injury, to assume power and define the institutional characteristics of a new national security state whose history coincided with the birth of the third republic (1981-present).

The violent beginning of the third republic was marked by the declaration of a state of emergency in October 1981, which remains in place until today. President Mubarak's different governments have, for the last twenty nine years, requested and got the approval of the different Peoples' Assemblies to extend the state of emergency and its laws every 3 years to "combat the threats of violence and terrorism". The normalization of the concept of an "emergency" situation provided the institutional basis of authoritarian politics in some distinct ways: "the constitution is not suspended and the civil courts have not ceased to function,"¹³ but political practices and laws associated with security with as an "on going emergency condition" have distorted both the legal and political processes. The president could refuse to ratify legal rulings and censorship over political activity was widely tolerated. "Individuals can be arrested solely on the basis of political crimes and the gathering of five or more people or the distribution of any political literature without government authorization gives the government the right to arrest all those involved.... The 45 days limit on holding an accused person in custody for questioning can be extended indefinitely without a formal hearing.... The President of

the Republic has the right to refer to the military judiciary any crime which is punishable under the Penal Code or under any other law.”¹⁴

The intensification of the security apparatus’ power and policing activities gained additional resources from US security assistance to Egypt some of which were explicitly earmarked for the fight against terrorism providing it with political cover.¹⁵ The resulting internationalization of political violence did not immediately begin following president Mubark’s ascent to power. The early years witnessed political coexistence with the Islamists lasted until the new regime consolidated its power. It ended with legislative elections in April 1987 when the Muslim Brotherhood won 9 percent of the votes establishing itself as the main opposition group despite the usual interference by the ministry of Interior’s in the electoral process.

In the summer of 1987, state detention of 3000 individuals, the majority of whom were not active Islamists, but people deemed to have Islamist tendencies simply because they grew beards or attended sermons in mosques that the state considered to be strongholds of its political opponents reflected a major change in regime attitudes. Worse, the roundups included female family members, friends and neighbors of the suspects, which personalized state violence and Islamist reactions to it ¹⁶ from 1987 onwards especially in upper Egypt. In this new war, the state resorted to such tactics as the forced exile of key Islamist figures, like Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman, who was sent to the Sudan in 1989. Stiff prison sentences were also meted out by military courts against key Islamist figures, like Dr. Ayman al-Zawahri, who fled from Egypt in 1984 to Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and then Afghanistan where he became the number two man in Osama bin Ladin, in al-Qaeda’s leadership structure.

In addition, there were extra judicial killings of many suspected Islamist figures and sympathizers in raids on villages or Cairo's working class neighborhoods like Imbaba. Islamist retaliation included the political assassination of the former speaker of parliament Dr. Rifaat al-Mahgub in 1990. According to one analyst, the level of state violence used in the period 1990-1993 was "by far the bloodiest not only of the Mubarak presidency, but also of the century."¹⁷ In response, some independent judges threw out cases brought to trial by the security forces whose evidentiary base was insufficient and confessions extracted through the use of torture. This led the state to amend the penal code creating security/military tribunals (Law 97 in July 1992), which expanded the use of the death penalty and expanded the definition of terrorism to include such broad causes as "spreading panic" and "obstructing the work of the authorities". In 1993, the "Supreme Constitutional Court reaffirmed the president's right to refer any crime to a military tribunal".¹⁸ The bloody toll of 1300 fatal casualties of the state's war of terrorism from 1990-1997 and 15, 000 to 20, 000 Islamist prisoners from 1990-2001¹⁹ provided a significant backdrop of the regional war on terror setting the stage for the globalization of the war between the Islamists and the state opponents on the September 11, 2001. The latter should not be seen as an isolated incident, but as the continuation of trends begun in the Middle East and very specifically in Egypt.

There were other pieces of evidence to support this claim. Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman, who was forced to leave Egypt to the Sudan in 1989, eventually moved to the US where he was eventually convicted as "spiritual leader" of those who planned for the explosion of a bomb in the first World Trade Center incident in 1993. In commenting on the conviction, President Mubarak claimed that he had warned the US not to give him a

visa.²⁰ This suggested that at this stage in the regional history of the war against the Islamists, there was some degree of consultation and coordination between the American and the Egyptian states regarding how to contain and/or neutralize the security threats represented by these Islamist figures. Parallel to the internationalization of state policies regarding these Islamist political opponents, Abdel Rahman was willing to internationalize his activism by moving to the US. Similarly, al-Zawahri declared his support of Bin Ladin's call for an "Islamic international front to fight Jews and Crusaders" in February 1998 indicating the internationalization of the states which served as targets. The attacks of the US embassy bombings in Kenya in August 1998 provided clear indications that the new war was to be simultaneously fought in national and international arenas.

While these bloody confrontations between the Egyptian state and some of the key figures of the Islamist movement within its border weakened the latter and made their goal of capturing state power unlikely, it also contributed to undermining the political legitimacy of the state whose coercive character could be clearly seen in the escalating cycle of state violence contributing Islamist retaliation. To reverse this unflattering view of its violence, the state developed a new discourse that provided an alternative basis for its political and social legitimacy. Throughout the 1990s, the coercive apparatus of the state with the help of the media and the state intellectuals slowly transformed their political opponents from fundamentalists (*usulliyyun*) and Islamists (*Islamiyyun*) to terrorists (*'irhabiyyun*). Whereas the old discourse emphasized the radical religious political agenda of the challengers, the latter represented them as criminals and thugs.

The new discourse relied very heavily on Max Weber's definition of the state as possessing the legitimate monopoly of the use of violence. Political opponents who used violence to challenge state power were considered to be outlaws who terrorized the civilian populations. The state represented itself as having a duty to protect its population by apprehending and even killing these criminals cum terrorists.

This discursive switch was politically beneficial because it made it possible for the Egyptian state to simultaneously claim the mantles of Islam and the European enlightenment. It claimed to be a representative of the "true" moderate Islam, one, which it declared to be more in tune with the indigenous limited enlightenment project. In this discourse, the idea of a clash of civilizations was internalized justifying the military and extra legal tactics of the modern and/or modernizing state against the usurpers of the "true" Islamic message who were backward and unenlightened.

Because of Islamist assassination of Farag Fouda, the secular intellectual in 1992 and the attempted the assassination of Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz in 1994, the terrified secular elites allied themselves with the state not only for fear of their physical survival, but also as an expression of their unwillingness and resistance to share prestige and power with their Islamist counterparts. A leftist intellectual, like Rifa'at al-Said a leading member of the leftist party, *Hizb al-Tajamu*, began to argue in the early 1990s that the distinction among Islamists willing to operate within the formal rules of the political system and those who did not was superfluous because of the intolerance of religious thought to peaceful dissent. The secular modernist, Gaber Asfour who was the president of the Higher Council on Culture took up the same position.²¹

Ironically, this position, which justified the state's use of emergency laws against Islamists of all stripes to deny them any rights, gave the state a free hand in oppressing the representatives of civil society and narrowing the margin of freedom available to groups working within Egypt's authoritarian system. It showed the extent to which a sizable section of the modernist nationalist intellectual class and its discourses became complicit in the state's declared war against its Islamist political opponents, which it described as a war against terrorism.

B. Modernist Anti Islamist Gender Discourses in the Service of the War on Terror:

In the mid and late 1980s, the secular nationalist intellectuals in Egypt responded negatively to Islamist political ascendance by attacking all the women who adhered to the Islamic dress (*al-Muhajjabat*), as an assumed rear guard of their conservative social movement. The first such attack was by Zaki Naguib Mahmud, an Egyptian analytic/positivist philosopher.²² In an article published in the daily newspaper, al-Ahram, Mahmud described the spread of the Islamic mode of dress among women as a "regression" (*ridda*). The Arabic translation of *ridda* is a powerful religious concept used to describe how some early Muslim reverted back to idolatry abandoning their new faith following the death of prophet Muhammed. In this case, Mahmud used this very evocative religious concept to describe young Egyptian *muhajjabat* as having abandoned the "modernist faith" of the early Egyptian feminists who shed their Islamic mode of dress as a marker of their modernization and liberation. Instead of looking forward, he accused the more religiously minded younger women of being *salafis* i.e looking back in time for social inspiration.²³

The article initiated a heated debate in which the older secular feminists agreed with Mahmud that the spread of the new form of dress was a negative development which symbolically privileged faith over modernism, younger Muslim women declared that the choice of Islamic dress did not lead them to give up their rights or modern aspirations. Among the feminist voices that initiated a sustained attack on the *muhajjabat* in the magazine *Noon* (which was the voice of The Arab Women's Solidarity Association) was Nawal El Saadawi. This venerable feminist figure and medical doctor condemned her state employer, the Egyptian Ministry of Health, in the early 1970s for not outlawing female circumcision. As a result, he was fired, but she continued her valiant effort to challenge the social taboos authoring books on male and female sexuality. On the pages of *Noon*, El Saadawi followed in the footsteps of Mahmud by attacking the *muhajjabat*: belittling their choices and denying them the right to deal with their bodies and dress as they see fit. She declared them to be victims of false consciousness i.e. being taken in by the conservative discourse of the Islamist movement and giving up their hard won rights to uncover themselves. Next, she described their head covers as a veil on their minds (*hijab `ala al-`aql*) explicitly claiming that it eclipsed their rational capabilities. Like Mahmud and other secular nationalists of this period, she became invested in setting up a significant duality between faith and reason in which the former clashed with the latter diminishing the rule of reason associated with the enlightenment²⁴ and yielding to the obscurantist religious dogmas.

This was an interesting position because it contradicted El Saadawi's earlier critical views of how local and international capitalism objectified women's bare bodies to sell various commodities. The voluntary covering of the bodies of Muslim women was

suddenly seen as a serious social evil that deserved wither ridicule or the most serious condemnation. Finally, El Saadawi was merciless in labeling *al-muhajjabat* as hypocrites because some of them wore make up which clashed with their claims that they adhered to the principle of Islamic modesty.

In a lecture she gave at Cairo University during this period in which she addressed an auditorium filled with *muhajjabat*, she waxed nostalgic about her time at the university in the 1950s when students wore shorts and Western clothing as a sign of progress. It is difficult to imagine that El Saadawi whose writings constantly celebrate her rural origins was one of those westernized students. Worse, she no longer sympathized with younger students who came from that background and their attempt to bridge the huge gap between their rural origins and the standards of urban chic.

The attacks on the *muhajjabat* published in *Noon* were tolerated by the state as it began its attacks on its Islamist opponent in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The state finally turned against El Saadawi in 1991 by closing down her association and magazine. El Saadawi took an opposing position against the first Gulf war in 1991 in which the Egyptian state joined the international coalition led by the US to reverse Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. The reasons the state offered to justify its decision ironically cited El Saadawi's attacks on Islam and the Islamic mode of dress! While the state was far from being supportive of the spread of the Islamic mode of dress among men and women, it successfully used El Saadawi's denigrating attitude towards devout Muslim women to pacify this large segment of the population claiming the mantel of defending Islam and Muslim women at the same time that it was engaged in a bloody war with the Islamists in different parts of the country especially the rural upper Egypt. In discussing the story

behind the closing down of her association, El Saadawi seemed to be completely unaware of how she was unwittingly used by the state to justify its attacks on the Islamists and to defend Muslim women against her disrespectful attacks.

III. The Rise of the National Security State in the US and the Global War on Terror:

A. September 11, 2001 and the Rise of the National Security State in the US

The failed first attack on the World Trade center in 1993 was followed by the bombing of US embassies in Africa in 1998 and the attack on the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen in October 2000. The more devastating attack demolished the twin towers of the World Trade center and damaged the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 as symbols of US economic and military power. It reflected the success of the regional war on terrorism in displacing its own challengers to the international arena. The exile and/or the flight of many leading Islamist figures from Egypt in the 1980s and the 1990s led many of them to focus their actions against the US as the main military and political supporter of the repressive and the authoritarian regime of President Mubarak.

Al-Qaeda's emergence as a key non-state opponent of the US had a separate tortured history. Many of its members, including Bin Ladin, were politically and militarily shaped by the important role they played in resisting and ending Soviet occupation of Afghanistan with the support and training by the US. These former US allies turned enemies after the first Gulf war in 1991 with Osama Bin Ladin using the role that Saudi Arabia played in the international coalition that reversed Iraqi occupation of Kuwait to discredit the monarchy for allowing foreign troops to operate within sacred Islamic territory helping the spread US influence in the region. The September 11 attacks

represented the strongest and most violent Islamist protest actions against increased US involvement in the Middle East. They would not have been possible under any other conditions but the global ones, allowing for mobility of people, coordination and access to global financial services. Its Islamist transnational discourse and recruitment reflected the internationalization of the opposition against the US.

The large number of casualties that resulted from the attacks of 2001 and those that preceded it led the US to identify al-Qaeda as the primary enemy of a new global war on terror. It was an unusual enemy in an increasingly global world. It was a non state actor that recruited its supporters internationally from the wider Islamic world including Pakistan and Africa. Ramzy Yousef in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and Khaled Sheikh Muhammed involved in the 2001 attack were Pakistani nationals and African participation in the US embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998. The 19 hijackers responsible for 9/11 were of different Arab nationalities: 14 from Saudi Arabia, one from Egypt, another from Lebanon and 2 from the United Arab Emirates. Because al-Qaeda was headquartered in Afghanistan in 2001 getting state support from the Taliban regime, the latter became the first target of the US/global war on terror.

The US administration's initial discursive attempt to explain the attacks to its public and to justify the launching of the "war on terror" was to divide the world into good and evil: a *crusade* by the democratic West vs. the anti-democratic East. President Bush was frequently quoted as saying that the Muslim hijackers, who represented al-Qaeda, were "jealous of our freedoms". The new global war on terror and terrorism was a war without borders and without any time limit because the mobility of the enemy made

it a moving target that was difficult to fatally wound by a conventional army once and for all. This global definition of war in the twenty first century represented new type of war

This transformed what had been regional wars on terror in the Middle East into a global type of war that engaged more than one state in conflict pitting them against non-state actors whose movements and operations were difficult to pin point. The result was the political rise of security states, not just in the authoritarian Middle East, but also in the democratic West with changes in the laws that govern the treatment of such suspects introduced in the US, France and the UK. The regional and global wars on terrorism represented complex relationships between these Western states and their Islamic counterparts adding al-Qaeda as a new Islamist non-state actor who was once an ally, but now turned enemy. In this new type of war, the modern definition of war as the military/political confrontation between one or more states in the pursuit of national interests was replaced by a postmodern one in which non-state violence represented destabilizing political threats to the power of the state.

To combat it, extra legal measures were justified by the need to protect civilians from the illegitimate use of violence by challengers of the state. The US Patriot Act took away many of the fundamental legal rights (like habeas corpus which allows those arrested to be charged with a crime and to have access and the right to quick and speedy trial where they confront their accusers and the evidence against them) which distinguished a democratic system of government from an authoritarian one like the one in Egypt. In a more serious development, the use of torture against those that it called enemy combatants (to be distinguished from prisoners of war whose rights were protected by the Geneva conventions) was condoned. This earned the US a dismal human

rights record that compared with other authoritarian states that engaged in these practices. The discussion of these torture practices were characterized by Byzantine debates of how and when to administer torture with feedback from psychologists to those engaged in the actual practice.

In this complicated set up of a national security state in the US, the problems posed by these non-state challengers were categorized as security, not political concerns. Up until now, there is resistance to all attempts to examine US policies in the region including US support of the many authoritarian states. The discussion of the spread of anti-American attitudes among these populations especially among young Middle Eastern men which made them available to mobilization by al-Qaeda was treated as a product of the misunderstanding or misrepresentation of what the US stands for.

The definition of “terror” as a security, not a political concern, helped join the rise of the national security states in both Egypt and the US. If you couple this with political discourses that sacrificed freedom in the service of security, the suspension of due process to individuals suspected of threats against the state and the use torture as a legitimate tactic against those it declared to be enemy combatants in Guantanamo Bay as well as off shore military facilities made the US national security state in the US resemble the one in Egypt in some significant ways. In addition, the US adopted the policy of rendition, which allowed for the kidnapping of individuals considered to be security threats transferring them to global locations (including, but not exclusively their mother countries) where they were subjected to harsh interrogation measures to extract information. In the most publicized case, Egyptian Islamists, who resided in Italy were kidnapped by the CIA with the tacit consent of the Italian government, were sent to Egypt

were they were tortured for information. Finally, the operation of a large surveillance program of US citizens without requiring the kind of control that was necessary before 9/11 provided further evidence of the erosion of civil liberties as part of a crude political choice between security or freedom in democratic societies.

Because of the inequality of military power between the two antagonists and the fear that the suspension of civil liberties generates among the general public, the political battle for public opinion was considered to be “as important as any military victory” in the global war on terror.²⁵ This created the political need for a new discourse on terrorism that offered the American public an explanation of the new political choice they were asked to make between security and freedom and the extra legal practices used by US law enforcement and military institutions.

In a joint address to Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush gave the most specific description of the al-Qaeda, as a terrorist non-state actor and enemy of the US. The following is the most specific description that exists of what the US administration that initiated the war on terror is all about.

American are asking who attacked our country? The evidence we have gathered all pointed to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organization known as al-Qaeda. They are the same murders indicted as for the bombing of the American embassies of in Tanzania and Kenya and responsible for bombing the USS Cole....

Al-Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money, its goal is remaking the world and imposing radical beliefs on people everywhere....

The terrorists practice *a fringe form of Islamic extremism* that has been rejected by Muslim scholars....It is a fringe movement that perverts the teachings of Islam.

The leadership of al-Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of the country. In Afghanistan, we see al-

Qaeda's vision for the world. Afghanistan's people have been *brutalized*- many are starving...*women are not allowed to attend school.*²⁶

In the above, al-Qaeda is represented as a criminal organization likened to the Mafia. It is accused of committing criminal acts in the service of its agenda, which is to impose its radical beliefs on others. It is a fringe movement that is associated with perversion in this case of the Islamic method. Finally, it is associated with practices undertaken by the Taliban like brutalizing its population and denied women basic rights like schooling. This particular discourse offered a parallel to the Egyptian discourse on the Islamist movement and which was also described as a criminal element responsible for the mistreatment of other Muslims and women in the name of an extreme and backward form of Islam.

In his acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace prize in 2009, President Barak Obama made an attempt to move away from the simple description of the global war on terror as a contest between good and evil suggesting that the concept of a "just war" applied to it. He acknowledged that the US was engaged in two wars: one in Afghanistan and the other in Iraq. Because the US did not seek the former but choice was involved in the decision to engage in the latter, it was the war in Afghanistan that was used in his elaboration of the concept of a "just war". Another reason for choosing the war in Afghanistan to focus on was that while 42 nations joined the US in its defense of itself and other nations, no such international consensus support existed of the latter. Other characteristics of a "just war" included (1) the use of violence as a last resort or in self defense, (2) the force employed was proportionate and (3) whenever possible civilians were spared the violence.²⁷

Even by the standards set by this definition, the application had problems. the application of the concept of a “just war” to the global war on terror encountered problems. the proportionate use of force was clearly missing from a war that pitted the world’s only superpower and the Taliban regime, not to mention that the global war on terror was really between the US and al-Qaeda as a non state actor. Secondly, while the US did not target the civilian population in that war, the pursuit of the key figures of al-Qaeda frequently resulted in civilian casualties in many operations that missed their intended targets.

Problems of definition aside, there was another major problem in the use of that concept to describe the global war on terror which president Obama noted: a peace prize was given to the commander in chief of the world’s only superpower that was engaged in more than one war. Worse, most of his speech was focused on how in today’s world war, not peace, was emerging as a primary, if not a normal, form of politics. This indicated that those who awarded him the prize as well as the president were struggling with the relevance of modern concepts of war and peace, which up until now served as organizing mechanisms for the international system, to the violent realities of a postmodern global world. President Obama acknowledged this by asserting that “yet a decade into a new century, the old architecture of is buckling under the weight of new threats....Terrorism has long been a tactic, but modern technology allows a few men with outsized rage to murder innocents on a terrific scale. Moreover, wars between nations have increasingly given way to wars within nations.”²⁸

What is to be done in the face of these new realities? “I do not bring you with me today a definitive solution to the problems of war....It will require us to think in new

ways about the notions of just war and the imperatives of a just peace. We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth. We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes.

There will be times when nation-acting individually or in concert-will find the use force not only necessary but morally justified.... Evil does exist in the world. A non- violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies, Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaeda's leader to lay down their arms. To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism-it is recognition of history, the imperfections of man and the limits of reason....So yes the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace.”²⁹

What is important in this speech is not only that it reflected the thinking of a sitting president who was engaged in more than one war, but most probably the thinking of US defense and diplomatic establishments' assessment of the realities of a global world. As such, it reflected the extent to which the normalization of war has occurred as a political instrument used in the north and the south. The limits of reason are not the problem but whose reason is used to justify decisions to go to war. Also absent in this articulation is the discussion of war as a failure of politics, not successful ones.

The normalization of war and the realist acceptance of it suggested a powerfully masculine discourse in which men went to war and died for the defense of their country. The gendered figures in this narrative were all men whether they included the commander in chief that sends “young Americans to battle in a distant land. Some will kill and some will be killed” as well as the men in Hitler's armies and al-Qaeda. While some nuance is allowed here in the depiction of the young American soldiers who will kill others before they are killed, no such nuance is allowed for the enemy. The resulting

scenario is a grim one in which different parts of the world that are increasingly littered with the dead bodies of men who are soldiers, but also civilians caught in wars that increasingly blur the distinction between civilians and combatants.³⁰

B. Gender in the Service of the National Security State's Global War on Terror:

In the Egyptian and the US discourses on the war on terrorism, gender was used to establish the progressive credentials of the states waging the war against Islamism. The states represented themselves as seeking to protect of women against the reactionary grip of Islamism in Egypt and the Taliban in Afghanistan who were represented as conservative religious-social forces whose interpretations of women's roles in society threatened to wipe the advances made by them in the last fifty years. Westernized/secular Muslim men and women in Egypt and the Bush administration with the support of some feminist groups in the US supported their states' war against Islamism and/or terrorism defining feminism as a Western creation that provided means of advancing and protecting the rights of brown women from the aggression of brown men.

As the Bush administration began to prepare to go to war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which had provided a haven for al-Qaeda. In the build up to the first phase on the war on terror, there emerged a paradoxical alliance between a liberal feminist group, the Feminist Majority, and the Marxist group, the Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association (RAWA) in which members of the latter group were funded by the former to tour US campuses and address women's group describing how the Taliban regime forced women to wear the *burqa*, a form of dress that covered women from head to foot leaving a few holes in the cloth that covered the face area for women to see and

breath. The Taliban also closed down women's schools and prevented them from public work.

During the period immediately before the war, the focus on the *burqa* increased reviving the old symbol of Afghan/Muslim women's oppression. I personally heard a representative of RAWA in a conference describe the *burqa* as a filthy rag that needed to be set aside if women were to regain their rights. Both RAWA and the Feminist Majority provided support to the war in Afghanistan resorting to another popular discursive theme of the liberal feminist trope, which was the need for women and men of the civilized world, including Western/Marxist Afghan women, to rescue brown women from backward brown men.

The overthrow of the Taliban regime by the Bush administration led both the state and the Feminist Majority to take all the credit for having liberated Muslim Afghan women. The Feminist Majority made no mention of the role played by the RAWA women in the lead to the war. When representatives of RAWA tried to challenge the claims by the Feminist Majority in the US media, there was very limited interest in their story. The media preferred to adhere to the view that US men and women were responsible for the liberation of Afghan women. The attempt by the Afghan RAWA women to say that some Afghan women played a role in that effort had no space in that familiar Western narrative.

The above political discourses feminist discourses produced in Egypt and the US on their Islamist opponents in the war on terror used Muslim women's dress as a surrogate for the negative representations of their local and international challengers. They belonged to the dominant liberal feminist discourse that looks with disdain to

difference and its local expressions. The idea that Muslim women's dress is a marker of loss of agency is a key assumption of this discourse, which has its adherents in Egypt and the US. They provide parallels of how feminist women have wittingly or unwittingly used these representations, which benefited the state as it garnered local and international support for their regional and international wars on terrorism.

This discourse relies on many dualities including those between the Occident and the Occident, reason vs. faith, good/secularist/feminist women and bad/Muslim and oppressed women. I have tried to destabilize many of these dualities by underlining the many parallels that exist among these states and feminist voices. In an increasingly global world, (cite the signs article) it is important to note the intersecting scattered hegemonies in local and international contexts and how they underline not the separateness of the Occident and the Orient, but their many parallels.

Conclusion:

The rise of the national security state in the north and the south is not just an aspect of political globalization that deserves study and attention. In my view, it presents a most interesting puzzle in the vast literature that deals with globalization demonstrating the paradoxical hazards which Hardt and Negri point to in the use of modern forms of thought that no longer suit the understanding of a postmodern global world. National security provided a better solution to international problems in which the nation state provided the primary arena for conflict resolution. In a global world, national security is no longer capable of addressing national problems that have global spin off effects requiring different modes of thinking and forms of resolution.

Dealing with the rise of Islamism, which most analysts correctly analyzed as a response and a challenge to national authoritarian politics, as a security not a political concern, has not succeeded in addressing the root causes of the problem. It has simply succeeded in pushing the challengers to globally articulate their grievances by mounting a challenge against the world's only superpower that had provided political cover to these authoritarian regional allies. By forcing the US to engage in a global war in Afghanistan, then Iraq (and increasingly in Pakistan), al-Qaeda demonstrated the difficulty of addressing security as an enhanced policing effort, not a political problem that needs political answers and solutions.

The coupling of the study of the regional and global wars on terror sheds instructive light on the role played by the south in globalization. Most of the literature assumes the defensiveness of the states of the south against the economic and political forces of the global north that are assumed to undermine their agency. The rise and/or strengthening of the national security state in that part of the world in the global fights against Islamism in the war on terror provide evidence to the contrary. The US thought that its contribution to the revamped policing by the Egyptian government would help to undermine the political opponents of a client state. While this has weakened the strength of Islamism in Egypt, some of the resourceful Islamist opponents used their own resources to flee to the international arena. By pushing some of its opponents outside its national boundaries, the Egyptian state minimized the threat to its national security, but it did not put an end to their political projects which used the new technology to keep in touch with their old constituency at home and to mobilize new ones in the north. .

Eventually, this displacement of the national security threats to the state in the south to the north forced the latter to invest more of its economic and political resources in the defense of its national security embarking on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq whose efficacy in defeating the enemy is doubted by many. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has destroyed the old states without replacing them with viable ones with national security capabilities. There is considerable discussion of why that has happened: was it the US fault or the fault of the leaders of these countries? What this debate overlooks is that perhaps along with strong national security states, the creation of weak states is part and parcel of political globalization defined as the internationalization of the state. Weak states become dependent on powerful regional and global powers for economic and political purposes. This represents one form of the internationalization of the state. The so called failed states in Africa as well as the very weak ones created in Afghanistan and Iraq may actually respond to some of the needs of global capital by providing dependent states and/or states that can be politically dominated by their own stronger national states.

The discussion of the rise and the need for a national security states with better policing capabilities addresses the problem of security in the wrong way because it ignores the interpenetration of national and global securities in an increasingly global world and assumes that security needs can be satisfied by better policing ignoring the political meaning/content of security. In the rare instances reported by the media when the US government and its occupying army took account of the broad and economic and political problems created by the global war on terror and the regimes they replaced, they were able to transform the hostile villages into friendly ones. In the literature that deals with the war on terror, this is treated as a tactic, not a strategy, for winning the hearts and

minds of these populations by building schools, roads, involving villagers in decision making. When examined more closely, one realizes that is what development and democratization as strategies for change are generally about. Not only do they provide very effective mechanisms for mobilizing against the violent protest agendas of al-Qaeda, but they save the civilian populations from the violent ravages that the war on terrorism has inflicted on them. When the political and economic roots of national security are attended to, the social, economic and political conditions which women face improve, the renegotiation of the gender roles becomes possible and the public space available for them is expanded allowing them to take new roles in their societies instead of being abstract symbols of good and evil in an equally abstract war on terror.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152-153.
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