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# Architects of Empire: The Military–Strategic Studies Complex and the Scripting of US National Security

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**Abstract:** This paper considers a key academic support of US geopolitics overseas, which I term the “military–strategic studies complex”. The paper begins by outlining the development of Strategic Studies in the US since the early 1980s. It then uses the example of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments to work through a discussion of the palpable agency of the military–strategic studies complex in advancing a dual military–economic securitization strategy for what it calls the contemporary American “leasehold empire”. This strategy is focused especially on the Persian Gulf and involves both an enduring US military presence and long-term neoliberal designs for the region. Finally, consideration is given to alternative military–strategic visions before attention is turned to the task of Geography in countering US geopolitical and geoeconomic scriptings of the Middle East, all expedited under a vernacular of “national security”.

**Keywords:** geopolitics, empire, military–strategic studies complex, discourse, national security, USA

The war on terrorism and the condition of the international system at the present time—American hegemony—provide the United States with great opportunities. The American Empire may be expanded as it never has before into the Middle East with the result that anti-American regimes are replaced by pro-American ones, WMD programs are stopped, the terrorist threats of al Qaeda and Hizbullah are reduced, liberal political ideals are advanced, oil continues to flow to world markets, allies are supported, and the economies of states in the region are woven into the tapestry of the global economy (Thayer 2003:47).

## Introduction

Bradley Thayer is the senior analyst in international and national security at the National Institute for Public Policy in Fairfax, Virginia. For Thayer, the war on terrorism “provides the opportunity to increase significantly American military and economic power in the Middle East”; it was “only by invading Iraq” that the United States could “reach its strategic objectives in the region”; and since the US is “an imperial

power”, it should rightfully “exert its influence in the region to bring about regional change” (2003:4, 15, 19). Thayer is just one of literally hundreds of national security “experts” within what can be called the “military–strategic studies complex” of the United States today. This complex is a powerful, well-funded assemblage of policy institutes, military colleges and university departments, all with close links to the US Department of Defense and specializing in Strategic Studies research, teaching and policy publications. Like the National Institute for Public Policy, many are located in and around Washington, DC and northern Virginia, and in post-9/11 America their proliferation can be read as an adjunct of the ascendant Pentagon of the Bush administration.

The historical connections between Geography, geographical intelligence and military warfare have been well established (Mamadouh 2005; Woodward 2005). Anne Godlewska (1994) and Gerard Toal (Ó Tuathail forthcoming), for example, have illuminated the early military-induced institutionalization of modern Geography in Napoleonic France. Others have highlighted the key role played by prominent geographers through history—such as Isaiah Bowman in the United States and Halford Mackinder in Britain—in the advancement and enactment of imperial ambition (Kearns 2004; Smith 2003a). Yves Lacoste (1973) has illustrated the “geographical warfare” of the US military during the Vietnam War, while Ghazi Falah has shown the ongoing import of the “practice” of geography as a discipline, pointing out that “geography as practiced in Israeli academia today may provide one of the most distinctive cases in the political sociology of knowledge anywhere” (2005:1034).

Geography as a university discipline first became established in Europe in the era of high colonialism, and a critical interrogation of its initial development divulges the part played by geographical methods, institutions and academics themselves in imperial practices of exploration and military conquest (Dodds 2009). Although geography was never simply a tool of imperialist expansion, elements of the discipline, including regional surveying and cartography, facilitated what Edward Said called “acts of geographical violence”, in which spaces were “explored, charted, and finally brought under control” (1993:271). The twentieth century’s two world wars saw geography play an even more prominent role in both the practices of warfare and post-war statecraft (Barnes 2006; Clout and Gosme 2003; Farish 2005; Heffernan 1996). The import of geographical writing, mapping and surveying for the US military in particular continued through the Cold War (Barnes and Farish 2006; Farish 2006). Technical advances (especially in the USA) in the development of geographical surveying and analysis, including remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS) saw geography expand its military/defense utility. Jon Cloud and Keith Clarke (1999:1), for

example, have shown the “tangled relationships” between “civilian, military and intelligence remote sensing” during the early stages of the US space program.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, geography’s service to the US military in the prosecution of the war was variously heralded, and in the initial stages of the Cold War, the existing assemblages of spatial, regional and geopolitical “geographical knowledges” were increasingly expanded (Barnes 2008). Geographical surveying, modelling and cartography became extensively entwined with what Senator J. William Fulbright lamented in 1967 as the “military–industrial–academic complex” (Leslie 1993). That complex had become more and more powerful through the course of the 1960s, rendering prescient what President Dwight D. Eisenhower had warned of in his farewell address to the American people in 1961; his oft-quoted speech originally including the term “academic” (see Giroux 2007).<sup>1</sup> Various geographers have since skilfully unpacked geography’s role in the “military–industrial–academic complex” since the Cold War (Barnes 2008; Cloud 2000, 2002; Ó Tuathail forthcoming). However, what I am endeavouring to do in this paper is to illuminate the expansion of specifically strategic studies from the late 1970s and early 1980s, whose resulting “military–strategic studies complex” I am arguing was an important development with continued consequences, and especially so for the Middle East.<sup>2</sup>

The paper seeks to chart the role played by an assemblage of “strategic studies” knowledges in the support and advancement of US geopolitics overseas, particularly in the Middle East. It begins by outlining the development of strategic studies in the USA before presenting a history of policy–institute connections to the Department of Defense (DoD) that culminated in the formation of dedicated DoD regional centers for strategic studies in the 1990s. The paper then uses the example of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, one of the most connected strategic studies institutes in Washington, to examine the contours of the dominant national security discourse of the military–strategic studies complex in contemporary America. That discourse is revealed as a well-established enunciation from unelected and unaccountable individuals of an enduring US leasehold empire in the Middle East—comprising military bases, access rights and pre-positioned equipment and supplies—and an enthusiastic championing of US global economic ambition and indeed responsibility in securitizing the regional political economy. Through the course of the paper, the military–strategic studies complex is shown to be intricately informed by the territorial tactics of imperial history, and its close associations with the Pentagon are exposed in a critique of its ultimate countenancing of a state violence all too familiar to those whose “lived experience” it sets itself above (Lefebvre 1991). The paper examines too the extent

of alternative and resistant military–strategic visions in the USA today, before concluding by considering the responsibility of geography in advancing more grounded, nuanced and humane scriptings of the various worlds that form the backdrop of so much contemporary US geopolitical and geoeconomic calculation.

### Strategic Studies in DoD Service

As Matt Farish (2006) has shown, the linkages between regional surveillance, strategic knowledge and so-called “actionable intelligence” were significantly developed in the USA during the Cold War with the USSR (see also Barnes 2008; Barnes and Farish 2006). During the latter stages of that war in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new US military concept emerged—the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force—which signalled the beginnings of a new moment of US global ambition to counter Soviet influence in the Middle East and Central Asia (Morrissey 2008). That global ambition was concerned from the outset with attaining both geopolitical and geoeconomic hegemony, and was assiduously put forward by an emergent military–strategic studies complex that firmly binded existing links between scripted strategic “knowledge” and actionable military “intelligence”.

The memoirs of one of the most hawkish National Security Advisors of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Zbigniew Brzezinski, betray the contemporary anxieties of Washington strategists and their concerns with reasserting “pride” and “global forward presence” following various US military failures in the 1970s (Brzezinski 1983). The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, founded in 1976, was one of the first to champion the cause of renewed American intervention in pleas for a reinvigorated Pentagon that needed to recover from the “burden of a sagging military reputation” in the aftermath of the Vietnam War (Record 1981a:38). From 1979, defending the energy-rich Middle East from potential Soviet attack quickly became the US strategic priority in the wake of the fall of the Shah in Iran and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Epstein 1981; Waltz 1981). Soon thereafter, the US military conducted a war game entitled *Gallant Knight*, which postulated a “U.S. defense of Iran against a full-scale Soviet invasion”. The simulated US response “entailed the commitment of some 350,000 U.S. troops to Iran and the Arabian peninsula in an attempt to block a Soviet invasion through the Trans-Caucasus”, with the central goal being to “preserve Iran’s oil-rich province of Khuzistan [southwest of the country, strategically bordering both Iraq and the Persian Gulf] by halting Soviet forces in the rugged terrain of the Zagros Mountains” (Record 1981b:110).<sup>3</sup> The Soviet invasion never occurred of course—their own geostrategic overreach in Central Asia was then being increasingly exposed by the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan. However, the

important point here is that the DoD was increasingly planning for the “military–strategic” and “military–economic” securitization of the Middle East, and Washington’s strategic studies policy institutes were spearheading those plans (see, for example, Record 1981a; cf Klein 1989, 1994).

The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was established in 1980 and in 1983 became a unified command, US Central Command, with a geographic focus on the energy-rich Middle East. Soon thereafter, a number of influential strategic studies institutes—focusing particularly on US national security issues in the Middle East—emerged in Washington, including: the Defense Budget Project (1983); the Institute for National Strategic Studies (1984); and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (1985).<sup>4</sup> Their publications and those of other established institutes (including the Brookings Institution and the Center for Strategic and International Studies)<sup>5</sup> were unrelenting in citing the need for a more assertive US foreign policy in the defense of vital energy assets in the region through the course of the 1980s—with most calls betraying an implicit Orientalism, neatly packaged within a broader appeal for American leadership in securitizing the regional political economy and thereby safeguarding “global economic health” (Epstein 1987; McNaugher 1985; Record 1981a).<sup>6</sup>

By the late 1980s, the rise of strategic studies had resulted in the establishment of what Bradley Klein (1988a) has termed a hegemonic “strategic culture” in government circles in Washington (for an excellent overview of strategic studies in the USA, see Klein 1994). For Klein, “strategic culture” refers to the way a modern hegemonic state looks to the use of force to secure its geopolitical objectives (Klein 1988a, 1988b, 1989, 1994). In outlining the import of Washington’s “strategic culture” during the latter stages of the Cold War, Klein has illuminated the dual “declaratory” and “operational” strategies of deterrence that were successfully mobilized to both legitimize and suppress dissent for an overtly aggressive US foreign policy (Klein 1989). For Klein, strategic studies “assigns to violence a regulative function in the international system”, which also has a “generative nature”—“generative of states, of state systems, of world orders, and to some extent, of modern identity as well” (1994:5). As he argues, the “ability of strategic violence to reconcile itself with liberal discourse and modern civil society is possible only because that violence draws upon a variety of discursive resources that are themselves widely construed as rational, plausible and acceptable” (1994:5). Such discursive resources include a well-established imperial register of essentialist cultural binaries whose rhetorical powers depend on simplified imaginative geographies: us/them, good/evil, civilized/barbarous, order/anarchy, inside/outside and so on. As Klein so usefully has shown, what strategic studies does in effect is “provide a map for the negotiating of these dichotomies in

such a way that Western society always winds up on the ‘good’ . . . side of the equation” (1994:5). And of course the corollary is then clear:

Our putative enemy, whatever the form assumed by its postulated Otherness—variously the Soviet Union, or Communism, guerrilla insurgents, terrorism, Orientals, Fidel Castro, Nicaragua, Qaddafi, Noriega or Saddam Hussein—simultaneously is endowed with all of these dialectically opposed qualities. Strategic violence is then called in to mediate the relationship, patrol the border, surveil the opponent and punish its aggression (Klein 1994:5–6).

Through the 1990s and 2000s, Washington’s hawkish and hegemonic “strategic culture” continued to produce a vast array of uncritical, conservative and essentialist strategic studies publications (see, for example, Daalder and Lindsay 2003; Hooker 2005; Knights 2006; Krepinevich and Work 2007; O’Hanlon 2008; Ullman *et al.* 1996; Wilson 1999). Aside from the inherent Orientalism, a key feature of much of this work is the linking of US “military securitization” of the Middle East to a broader and long-term neoliberal “economic securitization” project. Outside of Washington, other prominent DoD institutes also augmented this military–geoeconomic grand strategy and further cemented the relationship between the scripting of strategic knowledge and production of actionable military intelligence. These include: the Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania;<sup>7</sup> the Center for Naval Warfare Studies at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island;<sup>8</sup> the School of Advanced Military Studies in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas;<sup>9</sup> and the Center for Terrorism and Irregular Warfare at the US Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California<sup>10</sup> (see Blank 1995; Bradford 2001; Hajjar 2002; Jager 2007; Simmons and Manuel 2003).<sup>11</sup> For the broader technical and academic defense community, RAND Corporation “strategy papers” and the leading military and security journals, such as *Joint Force Quarterly*,<sup>12</sup> were also important forums in the discursive production of US military strategy in the Middle East (Byman and Wise 2002; Freeman 1995; Lechowich 2000; Lesser 1991; Marr 1995; Sokolsky, Johnson and Larrabee 2001).

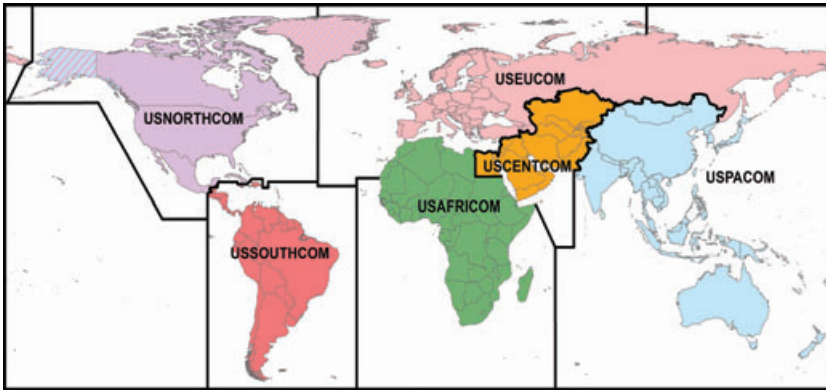
In the opening issue of *Joint Force Quarterly* in 1993, the then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, presented it as “the most recent addition” to what the US military calls “jointness”: that “all men and women in uniform, each service, and every one of our great civilian employees understand that we must fight as a team” (1993:5). At this juncture, the military–strategic studies complex was very much part of that team, and the establishment of official “strategic studies” centers, affiliated and sponsored by the DoD, was the natural progression for the ever-growing defense think-tank culture of Washington and the Pentagon. The George C. Marshall European



**Figure 1:** Department of Defense regional centers for strategic studies (source: adapted from Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2008)

Center for Security Studies was set up in Sheridan Barracks, Garmisch Partenkirchen, southwest of Munich, in 1993. It plays an active role in supporting US European Command (EUCOM) security objectives and those of US Central Command (CENTCOM) respecting the six Central Asian states of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>13</sup> The Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies was established at Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1995, and closely supports the national security objectives of US Pacific Command (PACOM).<sup>14</sup> The Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies was founded at the National Defense University in Washington in 1997, and works with US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and the recently established US Northern Command (NORTHCOM).<sup>15</sup> The Africa Center for Strategic Studies was instituted at the National Defense University in 1999; it now co-ordinates with the newly created US Africa Command (AFRICOM).<sup>16</sup> And in 2000, the DoD created the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA) at the National Defense University. This was the last of five DoD regional centers for Strategic Studies set up under the Clinton administration (see Figure 1). It regularly hosts security specialists and military personnel from a range of countries on training and study programs, and coordinates closely with CENTCOM in effecting national security objectives in the Persian Gulf region.<sup>17</sup>

The DoD's five regional centers for strategic studies are of critical importance to the US military apparatus, and are a direct intellectual and strategic advisory support to the now six regional unified commands (Figure 2). They regularly produce a wide range of reports and strategy recommendations.<sup>18</sup> NESA staff members, for example, have published a prolific array of materials since the founding of the institute in 2000 (Lawrence 2008).<sup>19</sup> Their academic productions reflect



**Figure 2:** “The world with commanders’ areas of responsibility”, 2008 (source: adapted from US Department of Defense 2002, 2007)

an evidently broad strategy in targeting different audiences, ranging from monographs, book chapters and conference papers, to security journal articles, military briefing papers, and mainstream op-eds and commentaries. This is hardly surprising of course; the DoD, after all, has been fully versed in the power and import of discourse for some time.

### **Imperial Lessons: The CSBA and the Recalling of Empire**

I now want to focus on one Strategic Studies institute—the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA)—to examine in more detail the discursive tactics of the military–strategic studies complex in calling for a long-term commitment of US forces to oversee American geopolitics and geoeconomics in the Middle East. I want to do two things, more specifically. First, my intention is to reveal the CSBA’s intricate links with the DoD; links that illuminate the considerable agency of the military–strategic studies complex in government circles in Washington. Second, I want to expose the CSBA’s prevailing geostrategic discourse of American intervention in the Middle East as being intimately informed by imperial history. Though it is not alone in enlisting the lessons of empire in devising the territorial, strategic and legal tactics of the contemporary imperial moment, its proclivity for “comparative imperialism” is both fascinating and highly illustrative of the overt grandiosity of the military–strategic studies complex.

The CSBA was founded in Washington in 1983, originally under the name the Defense Budget Project. The Defense Budget Project, initially directed by Gordon Adams,<sup>20</sup> was dedicated to analyzing Pentagon budgeting and policy, and has published an analysis of every fiscal year defense budget request since its inception. It changed its name to the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in 1996, yet its dual



focus on “strategy” and its “financing” remained, and indeed marked itself out as an especially useful think-tank for the DoD. The CSBA touts itself as “a non-partisan policy research institute” promoting “innovative thinking and debate about national security strategy and investment options” and providing “timely, impartial and insightful analyses to senior decision makers in the executive and legislative branches, as well as to the media and the broader national security establishment” (Work 2006:C). In securing government and corporate funding, it:

contracts with agencies of the Defense Department and some corporations in the defense industry to research subjects and to organize educational events related to changing military force structure, weapon system programs, and trends in U.S. military strategy related to the changing international security environment (GuideStar 2007:21).

The question of funding for the CSBA and the broader strategic studies community is an important one; the military–strategic studies complex is of course part of a broader military–industrial–academic complex that has a powerful political economy of its own. Though beyond the scope of this paper to unpack, DoD contracts for Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) are considerable. As Nicholas Turse (2004) has shown, various universities and research institutions profit annually from substantial RDT&E grants. In 2003, for example, the University of Southern California received nearly \$35 million for its ongoing *Virtual Humans* project for the US Army. Other recipients of huge grants in 2003 were Carnegie Mellon University (\$59.8 million), the University of Texas (\$86.6 million), Penn State University (\$149 million), Johns Hopkins University (\$300.3 million) and MIT (\$512.1 million). The CSBA’s funding is much smaller by comparison but it is not inconsiderable. Though it does not disclose on its website which DoD agencies and defense corporations fund its work (nor does it divulge how much funding it receives), the group’s 2006 IRS return revealed its annual revenue for that year as \$7,058,000 (GuideStar 2007:1). Of this, \$1,892,000 came from “direct public support”, \$1,268,000 came from “government contributions (grants)” and \$3,578,000 came from “program service revenue including government fees and contracts”. Its end-of-year total net assets were \$8,805,570 (GuideStar 2007:4). As a non-profit organization, the CSBA’s cites its annual publication of “monographs, issue papers and brief papers”—whose purpose is to “educate the public about issues of national defense”—as the “core element of the [tax] exempt function of the Organization” (GuideStar 2007:21).

The CSBA is intimately linked to the Pentagon on various levels. On 30 January 2008, it hosted its 24th annual pre-budget release press briefing in advance of the Defense Department’s release of the FY 2009

Defense Budget. Its current President, Andrew Krepinevich, outlines its connections, and tactics to acquire them, thus:

we've continued our persistent individual outreach to Members of Congress and their staff, military commanders, administration officials, industry leaders, as well as influential individuals from various academic and professional communities who are advising presidential candidates. I, personally, have engaged a number of senior officials who stand to play major roles in shaping the next administration's defense posture, among them Senator Evan Bayh, Army Chief of Staff George Casey, Senator Hillary Clinton, former Speaker Newt Gingrich, Senator Joseph Lieberman, Andrew Marshall, former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, Representative Vic Snyder, Representative Mac Thornberry, and General William Wallace (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments 2008a).

Krepinevich is keen too to boast of the “demand for CSBA’s independent research and analysis of US military policy and defense spending issues”—which is “astounding”. He points to CSBA staff being quoted on all “topical defense-related issues ranging from the FY 2009 defense budget request, to the war in Iraq, to Army, Air Force and Navy plans” (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments 2008a). And many of the CSBA’s research publications have been directly commissioned by the DoD (such as Robert Work’s 2006 *Thinking about Seabasing*, commissioned by the Office of Force Transformation at the Office of the Secretary of Defense).

Krepinevich himself is particularly connected to the corridors of power in the Pentagon. From 2002 to 2003, he served on the Joint Forces Command’s Transformation Advisory Board. He has testified on numerous occasions before the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, the Senate and House Budget Committees and the House Government Reform Committee. And he has served as a “consultant on military affairs for many senior government officials, including several secretaries of defense” (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments 2008b). On 17 April 2007, Krepinevich testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Future of the Army and Marine Corps. On 9 July 2008, he testified before the House Armed Subcommittee on Services Oversight and Investigations on Defense Language and Cultural Awareness Transformation.

Other CSBA strategists have also been “incorporated” into Pentagon advisory roles.<sup>21</sup> Michael Vickers, for example, as CSBA Senior Vice President for Strategic Studies, “provided advice on Iraq strategy to President Bush and his war cabinet” and acted as “a senior advisor to the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review” (US Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy 2008). Vickers was confirmed in 2007 by the US Senate as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special

Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities, and is currently the senior civilian advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense on “the capabilities and operational employment of special operations forces, strategic forces, and conventional forces”, and on all issues of “counterterrorism strategy, irregular warfare, and force transformation” (US Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy 2008).

So what are the politics of these powerful strategic studies experts? What are their agendas? Or more precisely for the purposes of this paper, what are the politics of their collective representations, their scriptings of grand strategy and national security? Given that some current and former CSBA staff members, including Michael Vickers, Devon Gaffney Cross (a current director) and Robert Martinage (a current senior research fellow), have in various capacities been involved with the Project for the New American Century, one could expect a strong neoconservative influence in their discursive productions (Political Research Associates Right Web Monitor 2008). And, indeed, neoconservative formulations are in evidence (Martinage 2008). However, neoliberal agendas are certainly evident too, tied into more realist IR visions (Work 2006), and I do not wish to argue that the CSBA are simply neoconservatives. There is more to learn from their story. I want to make the argument instead that the CSBA’s dual concern with DoD “strategy” and its “financing” has given a particular characterization to its research productions: a determined concern to learn from past imperial and geopolitical actions in formulating more efficient and effectual contemporary military and grand strategy. For want of a better phrase, then, they are perhaps best envisaged as the “pragmatic new imperialists” of our time. To demonstrate this, I want to draw attention to an important recent CSBA strategy document, *A New Global Defense Posture for the Second Transoceanic Era*, first presented in Washington in April 2007 (Krepinevich and Work 2007; Work 2007).

*A New Global Defense Posture for the Second Transoceanic Era* is a 258-page tome that identifies our contemporary moment as the “Second Transoceanic Era” of US military posturing of what it calls the “American ‘leasehold empire’” (Krepinevich and Work 2007:i, iii). It began in 1989, and comes after the “Continental Era” (spanning the period from the birth of the USA to the late nineteenth century), the subsequent “Oceanic Era” (which continued to World War II), and the “[First] Transoceanic Era”, marked by the Cold War with the Soviets.<sup>22</sup> The overall thrust of *A New Global Defense Posture* is to delve into America’s prior geostrategic and military posturing (done comprehensively in some 100 pages) in order to revise and reassert a new global defense strategy for US forces today. It broadly posits three key challenges the US military now faces; all of which have both geopolitical and geo-economic ramifications. The first relates to the

efficient restructuring of global bases for rapidly deployable troops to fight what it terms the “long war against radical Islamist extremists” (2007:iv–v, 208–211). This goal is crucial too for its second challenge: dealing with “nuclear-armed rogue or unstable states” (2007:v, 212–215). And, finally, it is also paramount in combating America’s latest threat: “the rise of China as a global power” (2007:v–vi, 216–224). The final concern here is surely underscored by geoeconomic anxieties too; contemporary China perhaps replacing Japan in the 1980s as the “perceived threat to United States trade and economic sovereignty” (Campbell 1992:223).

*A New Global Defense Posture* argues for an assertive forward deployment of troops in the enactment of a US military strategy tailored to ensure American ascendancy on the global geoeconomic and geopolitical stage. For all three of the military challenges outlined above, it specifically advocates “preemptive and preventative action” (2007:vi, 225). Such thinking, of course, is entirely consistent with the National Security Council’s 2002 and 2006 *National Security Strategy* documents, and the DoD’s 2005 *National Defense Strategy* (the three major strategy papers officially codifying the Bush Doctrine) (US Department of Defense 2005; US National Security Council 2002, 2006).

In addition, *A New Global Defense Posture* routinely references the tactics of former imperial powers in presenting in some considerable detail the need for reorientating its own “leasehold empire” in various strategic, territorial, legal and communicative capacities (Krepinevich and Work 2007:iii–iv, 35–37, 40–41, 48–50, 65–68, 84–85, 103–104, 149–150, 156, 191–194). It frequently draws, for example, on both the Roman and British Empires to lament the additional contemporary challenges of American Empire:

Unlike Imperial Britain or Rome, the United States has traditionally enjoyed far less unfettered operation access to many of its exterior bases, or complete freedom of action for the forces stationed at them (2007:36).

It goes on to explain that “seizing or negotiating military bases is a particularly tough job for a basing power” in the “post-colonial era”, and bemoans the fact that eventhough America is “the most powerful nation on earth” it must still negotiate “with even minor states” in maintaining its leasehold empire (2007:9, 36). After “an early period of constructing bases on annexed and colonized territories”, America, we are told, subsequently “built an extensive exterior basing network through a combination of treaties, security arrangements, and economic agreements”; this is outlined as a pretext for arguing the need for enhanced legal expertise in securing crucial Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) in countries hosting US bases (2007:15, 32–34; for more

on SOFAs and the juridical tactics of the US military overseas, see Morrissey 2011).

In outlining the taxonomy of the current American basing structure worldwide, Krepinevich and Work's tome describes US "forward bases" as the "modern equivalent" of former empires' "frontier bases"; and in the initial presentation of the strategy document in April 2007, Robert Work presented historical maps depicting the bases/fortresses geography of the Roman and British Empires at their zenith in a discussion of the lessons for the current American basing structure and the grand strategy it supports (Krepinevich and Work 2007:16; Work 2007). Krepinevich and Work refer to both the Persian and Roman Empires in arguing for a renewed focus on communications strategy; and they reverently recall the "strategic mobility" of the British Empire in enunciating appeals for greater global operational mobility for current US forces in maintaining the American leasehold empire (2007:24, 25, 29).

Whether we are dealing with American hegemony, empire or Empire in our contemporary moment—and I tend to agree with Simon Dalby that an intricate combination of both neoconservative "empire" and neoliberal "Empire" perhaps captures it a little more instructively than "hegemony" (cf Agnew 2005; Dalby 2007a; Hardt and Negri 2000; Sparke 2005)—what is certainly clear if we take the example of the CSBA, and its scripting of America's leasehold empire, is that the military–strategic studies complex has long likened the USA to an imperial power. However, it has also been determined to present itself as a "good" imperial power, concerned with "democratic values" and the promise of "neoliberal freedom" for all (Ferguson 2003, 2004; Ignatieff 2003, 2004). It has been keen too to "never tout or gratuitously boast of [its empire]" (Thayer 2003:16). To this end, since the end of the Cold War, the term "bases" has been routinely replaced with the designation "facilities" to "soften the political overtones normally associated with the basing of foreign troops in a sovereign country" (Krepinevich and Work 2007:9). For the war in Iraq, the aforementioned Bradley Thayer at the National Institute for Public Policy explains why keeping US imperial designs out of the public eye was important:

In addition to the reasons the administration discussed publicly, there [were] other reasons it chose to remove the Iraqi regime . . . [that] cannot be stated openly due to their impact on the American people, specific countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the international community more broadly. The first of these unstated reasons is that the American occupying authority will establish military and intelligence bases on Iraqi soil. Second, the bases will be useful in confronting Iran. [And] Third, a pro-American government in Iraq is a substitute for Saudi Arabia [as a pillar of American support] (2003:21–22).

In the run up to the war, however, the military–strategic studies complex was far from reluctant in grandly scripting and championing a metanarrative of American geopolitics and geoeconomics for “the betterment of the Middle East”. This metanarrative served to marginalize any (geo)graphings of the region that were critically (not strategically) informed by the historical interventions of Western colonialism, Cold War geopolitical rivalries or corporate-driven processes of globalization. It negated too accounts that were sensitive to the consequential political, economic and human legacies of geopolitical violence, past and present. Today, that metanarrative continues to present a benign empire, which “means well” and is intent on spreading “order and benevolence” (Mann 2003:13). It is ostensibly an empire of US troops deployed throughout the world as the “cavalry on the new American frontier” and tasked with bringing democracy and geoeconomic integration for all (Donnelly, Kagan and Schmitt 2000:27). It is in this manner that the influential strategists at the CSBA cite imperial history: to rhetorically pronounce their grand strategy as “different”. Imperialism’s most important lessons, however, are sadly lost on its architects—men like Andrew Krepinevich and Robert Work. They would do well to take note of one of Edward Said’s last writings before his regrettable death:

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilise, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort (2003:xvi).

### Reading Discourse and Agency

In the power–knowledge symmetry of the academic–military world, strategic studies discourses do vital geopolitical work: they prioritize, disguise, legitimize and characterize entire conflicts; they reduce political and cultural geographical knowledges of distant places; and they erase the signature of, and accountability for, “our” violence. In a world of euphemisms and neologisms, well paid mercenary soldiers become “contractors” or “security employees”; ungovernable spaces of abject violence and misery become areas currently experiencing “a slight uptick in violence”; and waterboarding becomes “simulated drowning”, not actual drowning interrupted or torture. As David Bromwich (2008) succinctly puts it, the “‘global war on terrorism’ promotes a mood of comprehension in the absence of perceived particulars, and that is a mood in which euphemisms may comfortably take shelter”. He points out that critical accounts of US foreign policy and its consequences and accountability are limited to popular academic works such as Chalmers Johnson’s *Blowback* or Robert Pape’s *Dying to Win* (Johnson 2000; Pape 2005).<sup>23</sup>

The reductive “imaginative geographies” of the military–strategic studies complex not only support the operations of US geopolitical and geoeconomic calculation in the Middle East; they also contribute to a pervasive and predominant cultural discourse on the region that has all the hallmarks of Orientalism (Gregory 2004; Little 2002; Said 2003; Shapiro 1997). National security “specialist” commentaries have long enunciated the threat of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and linked it to the feared potential of new political and economic orders emerging in the region (Lewis 1995; Roberts 1995). Since the war on terrorism began, such sentiment has been relentlessly championed in broader popular media circles; a development that has had grave consequences. As Stephen Graham (2005:6, 8) notes, the result of the “combined vitriol of a whole legion of US military “commentators” who enjoy huge coverage, exposure, and influence in the US media” is a world in which whole populations are positioned as unworthy of any “political or human rights”:<sup>24</sup>

In the construction of people as inhuman “terrorist” barbarians understanding little but force, and urban places as animalistic labyrinths or “nests” demanding massive military assault, Islamic cities, and their inhabitants, are, in turn, cast out beyond any philosophical, legal, or humanitarian definitions of humankind or “civilisation”.

Russell Smith (2003b) was in the minority in lamenting the standard and integrity of US reporting during the early stages of the Iraq War: “North American reporting, and in particular on the US television stations, has been cravenly submissive to the Pentagon and the White House”. As Smith dolefully observes, both the embedded and studio reporting of Fox, CNN and others “dutifully” used the “language chosen by people in charge of ‘media relations’ at the Pentagon”—describing, for example, the exploding of Iraqi soldiers in their bunkers as “softening up”, or referring to slaughtered Iraqi units as “degraded”. Reifying military sentiment rather than critical journalism resulted in the production and circulation of prioritized strategic and geopolitical discourses that worked to foster a reductive public understanding of the conflict (Pred 2007). In such a simplified discursive world, a close-up photograph of a battle-weary, frontline American infantry soldier—Marine Lance Corporal James Blake Miller—during the second Fallujah offensive in Iraq in November 2004 became the “Face of Fallujah” on CBS News, and on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Post* and more than 150 other American newspapers (Sinco 2007a). From the rubble and carnage of Fallujah, it was Miller’s image that became “iconic”; not, as Naomi Klein (2004) points out, an altogether different and proportionately more relevant image—that of “a dead child lying in the street, clutching the headless body of

an adult". The photograph of Lance Corporal Miller was ultimately mobilized into a well established scripting of US national security strategy in which young American men and women each play a heroic part in the defense of freedom overseas for all those who enjoy it at home.<sup>25</sup>

The recent work of Simon Dalby, Stephen Graham, Derek Gregory and others is both insightful and urgent in illuminating the "huge discursive efforts" in the US-led war on terror in "constructing and reconstructing" key spaces of the Middle East "as little more than receiving points for US military ordnance" (Graham 2005:6; cf Dalby 2007b; Gregory 2004). As outlined earlier, there is of course a long history of the US military, and its strategic studies advisors, mobilizing abstract geostrategic discourses of the Middle East (Klein 1994). The lead-up to the Gulf War in 1991, for example, was a particularly fertile period for airing reductive military visions (Sidaway 1998); and there is a continuum of essentialist scriptings of the Middle East that extend back to at least the late 1970s when the military-strategic studies complex began to assiduously assert US geopolitical and geoeconomic designs for the region in the name of national security (Morrissey 2008). These strategic studies scriptings have collectively served to establish a register of ageographical spaces, have long spoken of terrains and not worlds, and have been typically indifferent to the lives of "Others" (Epstein 1987; Record 1981a; Ullman et al 1996).

Critical to our reading of the military-strategic studies complex, moreover, is the recognition that it does not operate outside of the political, decision-making process; as shown above in relation to the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Upon taking up office in 1981, the Reagan administration actively consulted with the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in planning an effective US geopolitical strategy for the Middle East, and promptly followed its recommendations (and those of its chief specialist, Jeffrey Record) in initiating, and budgeting for, US Central Command as a military necessity to defend US national interests in the Gulf (Record 1981a). The long-standing influence on US foreign policy of American pro-Israel lobby groups and think tanks has been recently demonstrated by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2006). Others have shown the influence of the Project for the New American Century on the current Bush administration's particular brand of aggressive foreign policy (Dalby 2006). And one of the architects of that policy, Donald Rumsfeld, as Secretary of Defense, was not averse to sitting down for panel discussions to review the findings of, for example, Brookings Institution surveys (US Department of Defense 2003).

It is important to remember too that many of the leading Pentagon and Congressional advisors on the Middle East, such as Kenneth Katzman, for instance, are typically also research analysts in strategic



studies institutes (Katzman is an external researcher for the Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College); thus enabling the “government–strategic studies” loop (Katzman 2006). Thomas Barnett, too, who worked as the Assistant for Strategic Futures in the Office of Force Transformation at the DoD from the end of 2001 to mid 2003 simultaneously held a professorship in strategic studies at the Warfare Analysis and Research Department at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. His combined DoD and strategic studies work culminated in the publication of his influential and commercially successful *The Pentagon’s New Maps* in 2004, in which he envisages a new grand strategy for the USA in a post-Cold War and post-9/11 age: closing the gaps of neoliberal economic order across the globe (Barnett 2004; cf Dalby 2007a).

Such “academic” strategic scriptings of US national security have long proved a supporting and legitimating intellectual cache for military action; they have been instrumental in the advancement of what Bradley Klein calls a “cultural hegemony of organized state violence” (1988a:136). A recent case in point was provided by the current Commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq, General David Petraeus. Writing in 2006, the much-heralded military saviour for the Iraq War did not just see an infantry surge as the key to success. He recognized too the importance of what has become a buzz word in US military circles in recent years, “culture”:

Knowledge of the cultural terrain can be as important as, and sometimes even more important than, the knowledge of the geographical terrain. This observation acknowledges that people are, in many respects, the decisive terrain, and that we must study that terrain in the same way that we have always studied the geographical terrain (2006:51).

A subsequent publication of a Professor of East Asian Studies at Oberlin College in Ohio, entitled *On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge*, variously echoed and held up Petraeus’ sentiments. In it, Dr Sheila Jager (2007:1) sets the tone for her appraisal of the importance of “culture” for the Iraq War thus:

Faced with a brutal war and insurgency in Iraq, the many complex political and social issues confronted by U.S. military commanders on the ground have given rise to a new awareness that a cultural understanding of an adversary society is imperative if counterinsurgency is to succeed.

Dr Jager was writing from, and for, the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, where she was then a Visiting Fellow in National Security Studies. She concluded her analysis of the “uses of cultural knowledge” for the US military by suggesting that “perhaps

it not too late [sic.] for culture to also rescue the United States from the *strategic* failures of the Bush Doctrine” (2007:24; emphasis added).<sup>26</sup>

As Derek Gregory (2008a:8) correctly notes, the recent development of “culture-centric warfare” did not emanate from “academics, military theorists or think-tanks”; it emerged largely from the “improvised tactics developed and shared by responsive commanders in the field”. However, the military’s “cultural turn” was quickly supported, expedited and legitimized by strategic studies. For both Jager and Petraeus, the cultural terrain of the military landscape now needs to be increasingly studied—strategically. Moreover, as Gregory has also shown, the US military’s cultural turn “does not dispense with killing” but rather is “a prerequisite for its refinement” (2008a:10). That the US military has reached a dangerously clinical appreciation of culture, and why knowledge of it matters in wartime, should shock us but it should not surprise us. What is even more troubling is that uncritical elements of the intellectual academy—from East Asian studies to geography, from international relations to psychology—are being increasingly mobilized in the service, support and sustenance of the military; developments that are of course entirely consistent with the increased neoliberalization of war and use of private contractors.

For more than a decade, the GIS sub-field in geography has been buoyed by advances in technology that have resulted in various collaborations with the DoD in the areas of defense and surveillance.<sup>27</sup> Other examples of the enlistment of elements of academia into DoD service include: the use of anthropologists in the US Army’s *Human Terrain System (HTS)* project (Fattah 2007);<sup>28</sup> the contribution of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in the design of the new US Army and Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*;<sup>29</sup> the contracting of the University of Southern California’s Institute for Creative Technologies to develop the *Virtual Humans* project for the US Army, whose “simulated training” is opening up “whole new horizons for teaching and learning”;<sup>30</sup> the involvement of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in running the DoD-sponsored program in “National Security Studies”, which, as Don Mitchell (2005:203) has shown, is touted as the “premier professional development and training program for the Defense Department”; and the role of that same school’s Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (launched in 2004) in liaising with and learning from its more established Israeli counterpart, the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, in organizing projects, symposiums and conferences focused on such issues as the “shortcomings of international law and policy in responding to asymmetric warfare mounted by non-state terrorist groups”.<sup>31</sup>

## Alternative Military–Strategic Visions

So has there been any meaningful opposition to the Bush administration’s hawkish defense strategy from the military–strategic studies complex? Voices of criticism, for sure, have emanated from within the US armed forces, and I certainly do not wish to paint the military with the same brush as many in the broader strategic studies community. Indeed, unlike so many strategists who fall into the “chicken–hawk” category, US military leaders on the ground are frequently the most vocal in seeking a principled orientation of the values they profess to stand for. In early 2007, for example, a number of senior ranking generals were reported to have threatened resignation if an attack was ordered on Iran (Smith and Baxter 2007). In March 2008, the top military commander of the US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, Admiral William Fallon, resigned “after weeks of behind-the-scenes disagreements with the White House over the direction of American foreign policy” (Reid 2008).<sup>32</sup> And no doubt reflecting a desire of US troops on the ground for a change in the US foreign policy of the Bush administration, a recent analysis of campaign contributions by the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics shows that Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama has received “nearly six times as much money from troops deployed overseas” than has Republican candidate and decorated Vietnam War veteran John McCain (Rosiak 2008).

Former officers and enlisted personnel have been the most vocal in their opposition to both the war in Iraq and the military practices employed by the US military in the war on terror. The Service Academy Graduates Against the War (SAGAW), for instance, formed in New York in October 2006,<sup>33</sup> came about after an “overwhelming response by alumni of United States service academies to the anti-war efforts of West Point Graduates Against the War”.<sup>34</sup> SAGAW “calls on graduates of all service academies to speak out against the destruction of the honor of the United States and the dissipation of its military caused by the deceitful policies of the [Bush] administration”; it calls too “for the impeachment of the president of the United States for high crimes and misdemeanors” (Common Dreams New Center 2006). They are unequivocal about the import of resistance:

The war in Iraq was launched illegally. It has since killed hundreds of thousands of innocents, causing incalculable damage to Iraq and the Iraqi people, as well as the reputation of the United States of America . . . When we took our commissioning oath of office one past graduation day, we swore to protect our nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic. The deceitful connivances of the current administration have resulted in a war catastrophic to our nation’s interests: politically, economically, militarily, and morally. We now stand to protect our nation from these deceivers.<sup>35</sup>

The Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) have perhaps been the most active in networking resistance to contemporary US foreign policy from former military personnel.<sup>36</sup> Many have bravely spoken up about US military conduct in the war on terror. Benjamin Thompson, for example, a former US Army specialist and prison guard at Abu Ghraib, has recently drawn attention to the bigger fallout from the torture scandal that so few are willing to address:

The public was told the problem was resolved when a few people were prosecuted . . . But the culture and the political reality that turned Abu Ghraib into a concentration camp was never addressed. Nothing in the camp really changed (Doherty 2008).<sup>37</sup>

The campaign of IVAW activists builds particularly on the work of their predecessors as “Winter Soldiers”, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW); the recently recorded IVAW testimonies of atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan recalling in such a harrowing and depressing fashion the Winter Soldier testimonies of VVAW protesters 37 years ago.<sup>38</sup> But depressing as they may be, just as Vietnam veterans exposed atrocities well beyond My Lai in the original Winter Soldier Investigation in Detroit, Michigan, in 1971, Iraq veterans at their Winter Soldier hearings in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 2008 have reminded us that Abu Ghraib and Haditha are not isolated incidents perpetrated by “bad apples”, but rather are symptomatic of endemic, routine abuse allowed for up the chain of military command. The IVAW have networked political resistance to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in other important ways too. Though sadly not well covered by the US television networks, at the 2008 Republican National Convention in Saint Paul, Minnesota, a lone IVAW protester hung a double-sided placard from the balcony as John McCain accepted the Republican presidential nomination: “YOU CAN’T WIN AN OCCUPATION” and “McCAIN VOTES AGAINST VETS” were the simple but stirring messages.

One individual perhaps personifying the sense of both alarm and disgust felt by retired US service men and women at the integrity of military intelligence in the lead-up to the war in Iraq, and use of tactics in the broader war on terror, is former US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski. Dr Kwiatkowski was a specialist in Middle Eastern affairs for the Pentagon, where she held various posts for the National Security Agency. From May 2002 to February 2003, she served in the DoD’s Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA). There she came to share with many of her colleagues a growing unease in the months prior to the attack on Iraq. What troubled her was the “strong and open pro-Israel and anti-Arab orientation” in what she describes as the “policy-generation staff within the Pentagon” (Kwiatkowski 2003). Prior to the commencement of the war, Kwiatkowski left NESA and

soon thereafter retired from the Air Force. In April 2003, she began writing a series of pieces for the libertarian website LewRockwell.com, and her “insider articles” detail among other things a litany of corrupting political influences on the circulation of military intelligence leading up to the Iraq invasion.<sup>39</sup> She continues to write and engage in public speaking against the Bush administration’s national security strategy today. In a recent conference paper addressing US foreign policy, she optimistically likened her political opposition to “Tolstoy’s majority”—mobilizing against the “current order of empire”:

We are Tolstoy’s majority, ten times more numerous than those who enforce the current order of empire. We are de La Boétie’s heirs, who take his advice and end the support that upholds the state Colossus. And we are Patrick Henry’s vigilant, active and brave army, seizing today and tomorrow every opportunity to live free, honest, prosperous and honorable lives in a re-emergent American Republic (Kwiatkowski 2008).

In US strategic studies, there have also been some important alternative visions to the more aggressive and abstracted geopolitics envisioned by so many uncritical foreign policy commentaries emanating from Washington’s think tanks. Two notable exceptions at DC’s policy institutes are Ted Carpenter and Charles Peña at the Cato Institute; both have been highly critical of the Bush administration’s national security strategy (Carpenter 2007; Peña 2003).<sup>40</sup> Carpenter, in particular, has long been a lone voice enunciating alternative strategies of regional security in the Middle East that do not involve aggressive US military action.<sup>41</sup> There are of course conservative “critics” too, including Michael O’Hanlon at the Brookings Institute and former US Deputy Secretary of Defense, John Hamre, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who have variously challenged the evolving “grandiose” defense plans of the Bush administration on the grounds that they have not adequately consulted the State Department, US Congress or major US allies.<sup>42</sup> Both Hamre and O’Hanlon, however, can still be viewed as “realist” IR commentators. O’Hanlon’s recent critique of the ongoing transformation of the DoD’s *Global Defense Posture Review*, for example, is ultimately channelled to offer a more efficient and interagency approach to what he believes is “unfinished business” for the United States military presence in the Middle East in the twenty-first century (O’Hanlon 2008).

The Center for International Policy does admirable critical work in “promoting a US foreign policy based on international cooperation, demilitarization and respect for basic human rights”.<sup>43</sup> However, a specific regional focus on the Middle East is glaringly absent, given the extent to which Orientalism is “revivified and hideously emboldened” in our contemporary moment (Gregory 2004:18). One of the most quoted

critics of the Orientalist notion of Islamic irrationality and inherent violence is John Esposito at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. His work is admirably nuanced and is an important rejoinder to so many knee-jerk conceptualizations of Islam and the Muslim world (Esposito 2000a, 2002). However, when speaking “on the inside” on the pages of the US military’s most read and influential journal, *Joint Force Quarterly*, Esposito changed to an atypically reductive track and, echoing the progenitor of the “crisis in Islam” thesis, Bernard Lewis, he gave readers the choice of “Islamic Threat” or “Clash of Civilizations?” in simplistically conceiving the West’s relationship with the Middle East (2000b:51; cf Lewis 2004).

Although I do not wish to denigrate efforts to effect change “from the inside” in strategic studies, the military or more broadly the government, it is difficult to escape the lingering suspicion that academics typically speak and write apologetically “on the inside”, whether seduced by power or the feeling of being “enlisted to the cause”. The 2003 offering, *The Geographical Dimensions of Terrorism*, by the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in conjunction with the National Science Foundation’s Geography and Regional Science Program, is a case in point. Philip Rubin, in the introduction, writes patriotically about the necessary enlistment of geography into the cause of providing “the knowledge, tools, techniques, and trained scientists that are needed if we are to be prepared to understand, prevent, mitigate and intervene where required” (Rubin 2003:xix—the same sentiments are on the back cover). He grandiosely calls this utterly uncritical position the “national research agenda” for the discipline (Rubin 2003:xx). Although the majority of AAG members would surely beg to differ, the important point here is that any critique of the apologists for empire of our time should not overlook its oldest disciplinary support, geography.

In strategic studies, it is certainly the case that various erstwhile “insiders”, such as Stephen Pelletiere, have had critical epiphanies since retiring from DoD service. Pelletiere has recently argued that US involvement in both the Gulf War and Iraq War was driven by a neoconservative, pro-Zionist, military–industrial cabal whose endgame was the control of Persian Gulf oil and its broader political economy (Pelletiere 2001, 2004, 2007). However, while Pelletiere was the senior CIA policy analyst on Iraq and Professor of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, he espoused a rather different reading of American geopolitics and its priorities in the Middle East. In a 1992 strategy recommendation report commissioned by CENTCOM and carried out with Douglas Johnson II—a colleague at the US Army War College—Pelletiere was at pains, for example, to warn of any humanitarian operations taking CENTCOM’s focus away from its long-term mission:

[We need] to focus all of CENTCOM’s efforts on the Gulf, abandoning practically all other responsibilities . . . missions like Somalia conflict with CENTCOM’s main mission which is guarding Gulf oil (1992:v).

## Conclusion: Resisting the Production of Military Space

Collusion between “knowledge” and “power” must be forcefully exposed, as must the purposes to which bureaucracy bends knowledge’s specialization. When institutional (academic) knowledge sets itself up above lived experience . . . catastrophe is in the offing. Catastrophe is indeed already upon us (Lefebvre 1991:415).

Henri Lefebvre may have been writing in 1974 but his perceptive thoughts are perhaps as vital today as ever. The “specialized knowledges” of the “military–strategic studies complex” have long been patronized, prioritized and actioned by the US military. The cosy “collusion” between the Pentagon and military–strategic studies has been instrumental in the contemporary “production of military space”. Reductive scriptings of national security, abstracted geopolitical visions and dreams of empire have collectively served to occlude geographies of the “lived experience” (Chandrasekaran 2006; Packer 2005). As Bradley Klein (1994:3) reminds us, “questions of war and peace are too important to leave to students [and practitioners] of Strategic Studies”. Strategic studies knowledges have long been “above lived experience”, yet their power has been instrumental in unleashing catastrophe, terror and abject misery for the very people whose lives they are “above”. But clearly there is “catastrophe” for “us” too: the catastrophe of being overwhelmed by the collusion of power and knowledge, the catastrophe of the militant and deeply unequal world in which we live and the catastrophe of inaction—politically, discursively and otherwise.

But of course there has been action, with some of the most significant resistance taking place outside the academy, such as that seen in the unprecedented global protests against the Iraq War in February and March 2003, and continued anti-war activism worldwide since then. Geographers and other academics have of course been variously actively involved. Within the academy, geographers have illuminated key aspects of the US-led war against “militant Islam”, including its place-making strategies, its territorial responses to terrorist attacks and its exceptional legal and biopolitical geographies (Coleman 2003; Elden 2007; Morrissey 2011; Reid-Henry 2007). Others have revealed the imperial historical geographies of contemporary geopolitics, and signalled its geoeconomic underpinnings (Cowen and Smith 2009; Harvey 2003; Kearns 2006; Smith 2003a). In addition, geographers have

depicted the violent geographies of recent western military interventions (Dalby 2006; Flint 2005; Graham 2005; Gregory and Pred 2007). And focus has been placed too on the state discourses of military power and broader imaginative and affective geographies legitimating that violence (Bialasiewicz et al 2007; Hannah 2006; Ó Tuathail 2003; Woodward 2005). Such counter-geographies are important, yet their disruptive power, as Matthew Sparke notes (2007:347), is perhaps ultimately “practically limited”. In spite of the above work, and after a cultural turn in the US military that has produced a “powerful rhetorical effect” that justifies “more killing to stop the killing” (Gregory 2008a:21), reductive vernaculars, reifying essentialist tropes of terror, threat, correction and security still prevail and discursively underpin the war in Iraq and broader war on terrorism. The military–strategic studies complex plays a central role in advancing such discourses, and possesses vital forums through which to enunciate their endgame: legitimized state violence. I want to conclude more positively, however, by suggesting ways to effectively oppose them.

As an academic working in political geography, a key starting point of resistance for me is the careful detailing of the largely unseen inner workings of empire in our contemporary world, ultimately in order to be better able to resist it (which is what this paper has been about). That resistance can manifest itself in counter-scriptings in a variety of contexts, from lecture halls to town halls, from academic journals to online blogs. And in a variety of public forums, many geographers have played, and continue to play, important roles in critiquing the war on terror and advancing more nuanced, reasoned and humane geographies and histories of Islam and the Middle East (Gregory 2005). Such academic and public intellectual work can also crucially liaise with, learn from, and be transformed by grassroots activists in peace and social justice movements throughout the world.<sup>44</sup> And linking to their work in our teaching especially has more power than perhaps we sometimes realise; especially given the multimedia teaching and learning tools available today.<sup>45</sup>

A recent *Antipode* special issue saw a number of insightful reflections on the possibilities of “practising public scholarship” [volume 40(3), 2008]. The contributors outline various ways in which critical geographies can support and enable political and social activism. In addition, Don Mitchell makes an important point in reminding us that academic “intellectual” and “bureaucratic” work are also “vital parts of any activism” (Mitchell 2008:448). Disrupting and countering the abstracted geopolitical scriptings of strategic studies can take on a variety of forms. But both inside and outside the academy, a key intellectual task, I think, is theorizing anti-imperialism—both historically and in our contemporary moment. Effective counter-discourses for our time must surely incorporate the lessons learned



from the anti-imperial/anti-colonial struggles of history—from Ireland to India, from Algeria to Vietnam. Appellations like “insurgents” do the same discursive work today as the historical preference “rebels” did in reductively demonizing whole populations and delegitimizing their right to resistance. But more importantly, perhaps, they serve too to disengage us from unpacking the discourses and practices of contemporary anti-imperialism. Yet historical contexts of resistance have much to offer if our endgame is articulating critical and humane geographies of our contemporary world. And this is a crucial challenge, given the sheer pervasiveness of strategic geopolitical discourses that negate human geographical realities. Such scriptings are not only intellectually unconvincing; they are dangerous and hugely consequential.

In seeking to avoid dangerously reductive accounts of the world, geography for me has always had a particular responsibility and strength. In understanding conflict, past and present, discourse has perpetually played a troubled role. In reading the current proliferation of “geopolitical discourse”, it is useful to bear in mind history’s multiple reminders of the impossibilities of “colonial discourse” (Morrissey 2010). There is a need to spatialize and locate the material and corporeal geographies of war; not just its imaginative geographies. The spaces and agency of resistance or so-called “insurgency” in the war on terror, for example, are little theorized and frequently not even recognized; reflecting a power relations of knowledge familiar to any student of colonial history. This remains a key challenge for critical accounts of our contemporary geopolitical world. That said, however, connecting what James Sidaway calls the “banal geopolitics” of militarism to its brutal consequences will always be an urgent task too (Sidaway 2001, 2008). And the dots can be joined.

The military–strategic studies complex in contemporary America is a powerful producer of banal geopolitics, patronized and prioritized geographical knowledge and ultimately actionable geostrategic intelligence. Its experts and advocates are both architects of empire and apologists for its consequences. Their dominant national security discourse is about positing legitimized, aggressive US military action against the threat of irrational terrorism emanating from the Middle East; it is about presenting the USA as the guardian of global economic health; and it is about imperial ambition too. This paper has sought to expose the military–strategic studies complex as playing a central role in support of that imperial ambition and in the advancement of its aggressive geopolitics. I hope it has signalled too the imperative of resistance. In the face of ubiquitous scriptings of insecurity, war and geopolitics in our contemporary world, the task of both exposing the geoeconomic stakes and insisting on real places with real people, with bodies and rights just like us, is as urgent as ever.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Others have pointed out how in the penultimate draft of Eisenhower's speech, the word "congressional" was included—ie the "military–industrial–congressional complex"; see Griffin (1994). The burgeoning "military–industrial–academic complex" of the Cold War has also been theorized as the "military–intellectual complex"; see Robin (2001).

<sup>2</sup> The temporal and spatial focus of the paper does not of course negate the longer history (particularly in the USA) of strategic studies of the Middle East and other regions, which, though certainly less concerted and visible, stretches back to at least the early stages of the Cold War, as others have shown above.

<sup>3</sup> There is a long history of war-gaming in the US military that extends at least as far back as the 1920s when the Naval War College first initiated war games to postulate the potential defense of the Philippines against Japan. See Rubel (2006; see especially pp 121–125).

<sup>4</sup> Defense Budget Project (subsequently renamed the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments), <http://www.csbaonline.org>; Institute for National Strategic Studies, <http://www.ndu.edu/inss>; Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org>. The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (<http://www.cacianalyst.org>) was also founded in 1996 after the break-up of the Soviet Union and the opening up of the energy-rich region for potential US geoeconomics (all sites accessed 8 May 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Brookings Institution, <http://www.brookings.edu>; Center for Strategic and International Studies, <http://www.csis.org> (both sites accessed 8 May 2008).

<sup>6</sup> This broad neoliberal concern, of course, had considerable international support from the major industrial powers; the Trilateral Commission, for example, had been expressly established in 1973 to foster closer economic cooperation between the USA, Europe and Japan.

<sup>7</sup> Strategic Studies Institute, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil> (accessed 8 May 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Center for Naval Warfare Studies, <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/cnws> (accessed 8 May 2008).

<sup>9</sup> School of Advanced Military Studies, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/sams> (accessed 8 May 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Center for Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, <http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Centers/CTIW> (accessed 8 May 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Chalmers Johnson (2004) points out that there are approximately 150 military educational institutions in the USA today. Nicholas Turse (2004) has listed the DoD's main education and training establishments, which include various schools in: Air University; Air Force Institute of Technology; Army War College; Defense Acquisition University; Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center; Industrial College of the Armed Forces; Information Resources Management College; Joint Forces Staff College; Joint Military Intelligence College; Marine Corps University; National Defense University; National War College; Naval Postgraduate School; Naval War College;

School for National Security Executive Education; and Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

<sup>12</sup> *Joint Force Quarterly* is the flagship military journal for strategic studies for the US armed services; designed “to inform members” on “joint and integrated operation” and “national security policy and strategy” ([http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/NDUPress\\_JFQ\\_List.htm](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/NDUPress_JFQ_List.htm) accessed 9 February 2008).

<sup>13</sup> European Center for Security Studies, <http://www.marshallcenter.org> (accessed 10 February 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, <http://www.apcss.org> (accessed 10 February 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, <http://www.ndu.edu/chds> (accessed 10 February 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, <http://www.africacenter.org> (accessed 8 February 2008). President George W. Bush directed the establishment of AFRICOM on 6 February 2007. Headquartered at Kelley Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany (as a sub-unified command subordinate to EUCOM), it reached its target for initial operating capabilities on 1 October 2007. It was established as a separate regional unified command with full operational capabilities on 1 October 2008, and the long-term plan is to relocate the AFRICOM HQ to the African continent (<http://www.africom.mil> accessed 10 October 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, <http://www.ndu.edu/nesa> (accessed 10 February 2008). NESA participating countries include: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE and Yemen.

<sup>18</sup> They also co-organize conferences—for example, the Marshall Center’s *Disaster Preparedness in Central and South Asia Conference*, co-organized with CENTCOM in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, 11–14 September 2006.

<sup>19</sup> See the current publications of its staff at [http://www.ndu.edu/nesa/publications/nesa\\_faculty\\_pubs\\_sep07.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/nesa/publications/nesa_faculty_pubs_sep07.pdf) (accessed 11 February 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Adams was the director of the Defense Budget Project from 1983 to 1993. From 1993 to 1997, he served as the White House senior national security budget official at the Office of Management and Budget, where he oversaw all US foreign policy and national security budgeting. Subsequently, he became Deputy Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies from 1998 to 1999, and then returned to academia at George Washington University, where he took up the post of Professor of the Practice of International Affairs and Director of Security Policy Studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the CSBA’s connections to the US government, see its current Board of Directors list at [http://www.csbaonline.org/2006-1/5.AboutUs/Board\\_of\\_Directors.php](http://www.csbaonline.org/2006-1/5.AboutUs/Board_of_Directors.php) (accessed 27 July 2008).

<sup>22</sup> There are strong echoes of Thomas Friedman’s *The World is Not Flat* throughout the document; see Friedman (2005).

<sup>23</sup> Other popular works include Jeremy Scahill’s 2007 *New York Times* best seller and George Polk award winner, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army*.

<sup>24</sup> This of course is neither an exclusively American nor contemporary development; see, for example, Agamben (1998); Curtis (2004).

<sup>25</sup> The front page headline accompanying Miller’s photograph in *Rupert Murdoch’s New York Post* on 10 November 2004, for example, was “Marlboro men kick butt in Fallujah”. Miller, dubbed the “Marlboro Marine” due to the cigarette dangling from his mouth in the photograph, has sadly since been discharged from the Marines due to post-traumatic stress disorder; he subsequently separated from his wife, and on the subject of the Iraq War now wonders “what have we gained as a country” and “what

have we actually accomplished other than the loss of some damn fine people"; see Sinco (2007b).

<sup>26</sup> See also: Corum (2007), Gregory (2008b) and Heuser (2007).

<sup>27</sup> See a useful overview at <http://gislounge.com/military-and-gis> (accessed 5 December 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Many anthropologists have been appalled by this development, of course—the American Anthropological Association statement on the issue was clear-cut: "In the context of a war that is widely recognized as a denial of human rights and based on faulty intelligence and undemocratic principles, the Executive Board sees the HTS project as a problematic application of anthropological expertise, most specifically on ethical grounds" (<http://www.aaanet.org/about/Policies/statements/Human-Terrain-System-Statement.cfm> accessed 1 July 2008).

<sup>29</sup> The manual is introduced by Sarah Sewall, Director of the Carr Center at Harvard, and is published by the largest university press in the United States, the University of Chicago Press; see <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/presssite/metadata.epl?mode=synopsis&bookkey=263154> (accessed 5 May 2008).

<sup>30</sup> Institute for Creative Technologies, *Virtual Humans*, [http://ict.usc.edu/projects/virtual\\_humans](http://ict.usc.edu/projects/virtual_humans) (accessed 14 July 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, *New Battlefields, Old Laws*, <http://insct.syr.edu/Battlefields/overview.htm> (accessed 10 July 2008). In strategic studies, debating and revising the legalities of military actions in contemporary asymmetric warfare is very much in vogue at present. In July 2008, for example, NESAI in collaboration with the Inter-University Center for Legal Studies at the International Law Institute, co-hosted in Washington a conference on the "legal and moral environment" of "violent conflict" in the Middle East and South Asia (Rauert 2008:78). For a critique of the recent flurry of legal and biopolitical debate within strategic studies and the US military, see Morrissey (2009a).

<sup>32</sup> Admiral Fallon, viewed as a moderate by the Bush administration, will shortly be replaced as Commander of US Central Command by the more conservative strategist favoured by the White House, General David Petraeus, who was recently confirmed for the position by the US Senate; see Taylor Rushing (2008).

<sup>33</sup> SAGAW was established by US Military Academy (West Point) graduates, Bill Cross, Jim Ryan and Joe Wojcik, US Naval Academy graduate, Dud Hendrick, and US Air Force Academy graduate, Terry Symens-Bucher; see <http://www.sagaw.org/about.htm> (accessed 14 July 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Formed in April 2006, [westpointgradsagainsthewar.org](http://westpointgradsagainsthewar.org) received 33,000 visitors in its first month online; see McEwan (2006).

<sup>35</sup> Service Academy Graduates Against the War, <http://www.sagaw.org/about.htm> Accessed 14 July 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Iraq Veterans Against the War, <http://ivaw.org> (accessed 2 December 2008). See, for example, their march at the 2008 Republican National Convention in Saint Paul at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBHN1LXd07E> (accessed 2 December 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Others, including Tony Lagouranis (a former US Army interrogator) and Samuel Provnance (a former US Army sergeant in military intelligence), have echoed Thompson's reporting of broader abuse in Iraq; see: Democracy Now! (2005, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> See the IVAW testimonies at <http://ivaw.org/wintersoldier/testimony> (accessed 1 December 2008).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.lewrockwell.com/kwiatkowski/kwiatkowski-arch.html> (accessed 11 July 2008).

<sup>40</sup> More critical readings of US foreign policy have also been forwarded by various international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and the International Peace Academy.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Carpenter (2000). The subtitle “an alternative view” reflects Carpenter’s largely marginalized position within strategic studies.

<sup>42</sup> See Klaus (2004:4–6). Similar calls for greater interagency planning in military policy execution have been echoed by Tyler Rauert at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies and Joseph Collins at the Institute for National Strategic Studies; see (Rauert 2008; Collins 2008).

<sup>43</sup> Center for International Policy, <http://www.ciponline.org> (accessed 3 December 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Key such movements include: Avaaz: The World in Action, <http://www.avaaz.org>; Code Pink: Women for Peace, <http://www.codepink4peace.org>; Move On: Democracy in Action, <http://www.moveon.org>; No Bases: International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases, <http://www.no-bases.org>; Peace One Day, <http://www.peaceday.org>; and United for Peace and Justice, <http://www.unitedforpeace.org> (all sites accessed 3 December 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Connecting to the inspiring work of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), for example, with the help of YouTube or other online video provider in both our lecture halls and Blackboard sites is, I think, a hugely effective way of networking resistance and raising the sadly low number of hits; see, for example, the IVAW’s re-enactment of the terrifying everyday actions of US troops in Iraq on the streets of Denver during the Democratic National Convention in August 2008 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbSXKSKQ-DI> (accessed 2 December 2008). The potential of networking student interest, commitment and activism online is undoubtedly considerable—as recently demonstrated by Barack Obama, who on Facebook alone engaged over 3.25 million supporters (most of whom are either students or recent graduates) in his run to win the 2008 US election.

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