



Beyond Either/Or: A Feminist Analysis of September 11th¹

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Abstract 'Feminist geopolitics' offers a critical framework for analyzing the events and aftermath of September 11th. This grid of intelligibility seeks to provide a more accountable, embodied understanding of intersections of power and space at multiple scales. It challenges the logic of either/or reasoning, and related responses to September 11th. The escalation of violence, such that terror begets more terror, is not the only possible response to the murder and destruction in New York City and Washington, yet the dominant geopolitical discourse leads us to believe it is. Critical and feminist geopolitics are crucial if we are to go beyond the binaries and establish a third space of 'neither/nor'. Finally, to generate a more accountable and embodied political vision, feminist geopolitics is employed in relation to body counts at two distinct geographical and geopolitical sites.

The events and aftermath of September 11th ineluctably ended the already precarious distinction between domestic space, that within a sovereign state, and more global space where transnational networks, international relations, multilateral institutions, and global corporations operate. If it existed, any comfortable distinction between domestic and international, here and there, us and them, ceased to have meaning after that day. Acts of violence perpetrated by people who entered the country legally from states *outside* the US, using *domestic* aircraft, imploded any notion that political borders contain political conflict. Feminists have long argued that private-public distinctions serve to depoliticize the private domestic spaces of 'home' compared to more public domains. The attacks certainly exposed the limitations of 'domestic' space, somehow bounded and separated from the processes and politics of economic, cultural, and political integration.

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This paper interrogates highly the spatialized imaginary of politics and violence in the context of September 11th.

Writing about 'spaces of terror' is a daunting task, in part because the political landscape 'post 9-11' changes from one week to the next, and also because no analysis can capture the loss or pain experienced by those affected by such events. While I do aim to *analyze* the events and aftermath of September 11th, I also want to position myself politically in relation to the violence they embody. To my mind, nothing justified the killing of innocent people on September 11th. Nothing justifies the retaliatory killing of innocent people anywhere else. The perpetrators of such destruction and killing should be brought to justice, though I lament the fact that no civilian venue has yet been identified.² Equally, I do not condone US and British bombing in Afghanistan, which has killed uncounted civilians and imperiled the lives of hundreds of thousands more. Such 'collateral damage', as these deaths are euphemistically referred to by the perpetrators, are unlikely to ever be prosecuted. Terror in the US on September 11th has been met with more terror in Afghanistan since October 7th, continuing into 2002.³

The surge of insecurity experienced by Americans after the attacks has been stoked by fears of anthrax infection and repeat attacks. In this climate of fear, public consent has been mobilized to reconstitute the country as a bounded area that can be fortified against outsiders and other global influences. In this imagining of nation, the US ceases to be a constellation of local, national, international, and global relations, experiences, and meanings that coalesce in places like New York City and Washington DC; rather, it is increasingly defined by a 'security perimeter' and the strict surveillance of borders. Such notions of place as bounded space have been displaced by more cosmopolitan and less static geographical notions of place: "what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus.... It is, indeed, a *meeting* place (Massey, 1997: 322).⁴ In contrast, bounded thinking about discrete places

² In November 2001, President Bush signed an order creating special military tribunals where foreigners charged with terrorism could be tried in secret (Dao, 2001). Mr. Bush would personally determine who is tried, and cases would be heard before juries of military officers, not jurors (*The Globe and Mail*, 2001). Verdicts may include the death penalty, and the tribunals include no appeals process. The authority of such tribunals to facilitate due process and mete out justice under the rule of law is, accordingly, very limited.

³ As noted, the perpetrators of the crimes committed on September 11th should be captured and brought to justice. I contend, however, that intelligence networks and targeted covert police operations informed by such networks would minimize the terror experienced by civilians who otherwise risk becoming casualties.

⁴ The popular, if fictionalized, imaginings of the nation and its vulnerable borders were televised in the season's premiere of the US political teledrama, *The West Wing*. In the episode, the White House is shut down due to a security breach, with specific reference to a terrorist threat at the Ontario - Vermont border. The threat attests to a widespread feeling at the time that the Canadian border was linked to the attacks of September 11th, and while no evidence to date has shown this to be the case, the US has pledged to triple border patrols along this border. Given the focus on geopolitics in this paper, this story is amusing because the Ontario - Vermont border is itself a fiction; Vermont is contiguous only with Québec, but this is irrelevant. The amorphous 'Canada' is the weak link in the security perimeter propagated further by the show. Like the highly satirical

has had concrete implications for airline security, immigration and visitor visa regulations (in the US and Canada), and customs control, especially at the land border between the US and Canada. But it has more reactionary, if less tangible, implications for American politics, US immigrants, and questions of how 'civil' society should be. Anti-terrorist legislation, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and public support for a military response are as much an expression of outrage and insecurity as they are evidence of government resolve and a heightened need for increased security in the face of heinous attacks of September 11th. What has been disturbing, however, is the shrinking space and number of venues available for open dialogue about the attacks and responses to them. I attempt to reclaim some of this space by calling for what might be thought of as a feminist geopolitics, a more accountable and embodied notion of politics that analyzes the intersection of power and space at multiple scales, one that eschews violence as a legitimate means to political ends (Hyndman, 2001).

In what follows, I outline the theoretical underpinnings of what I refer to as feminist geopolitics, tracing its antecedents in critical geopolitics and feminist critiques of international relations theory. Employing this analytical framework, I construct a political space beyond the binary logic of 'either/or' and advocate more embodied ways of seeing and knowing by examining the casualties in the wars of/on terrorism.

Feminist Geopolitics

For the purpose of this article, I define 'feminist' as analyses and political interventions that address the inequitable and violent relationships of power among people and places based on real or perceived differences. While gender remains a central concern of feminist politics and thought, its primacy over other social, political, and economic locations is not fixed across time and place. Feminist geopolitics attempts to develop a politics of security at multiple scales, including that of the (civilian) body. It decentres state security, the conventional subject of geopolitics, and contests the militarization of states and societies with a 'world system' perspective. It seeks embodied ways of seeing and material notions of protection for people on the ground. Feminist geopolitics is not a new theory of geopolitics nor a new ordering of space (Hyndman, 2001). It is an analytic and politics that is contingent upon context, place, and time. Just as place is constituted at multiple scales (Massey, 1997), so too is geopolitics.

Within geography, Eleonore Kofman imagines a feminist geopolitics as one which would incorporate feminist analyses and gender into an extant set of geopolitical practices.

The most successful incorporation of feminist insights and gender issues into geopolitics would dismantle and democratize geopolitics such that it no longer involved the personnel of statecraft located with the most repressive echelons of the state. Real groups would then begin to figure in the landscapes and maps of the global economy and power relations. Geopolitics would open out into a broader context which we could call global political geography, in which comparative analyses and the local, however that is defined, would also be included (Kofman, 1996: 218).

South Park film of 1999, 'Blame Canada' is as obvious as it is ludicrous. The *South Park* television series also produced a cutting critique of the US response to September 11th in its 2001 season opener.

Kofman's description of feminist geopolitics is uniquely situated within both political and feminist geography. It aspires to a less punitive version of the state-centric realist geopolitics. It also tacitly identifies a gap in the geographical literature: that the scale at which security is generally conceptualized precludes collective concerns, civil groups, and individual protection. A feminist geopolitics might be viewed at once as a critical approach and a contingent set of political practices operating at multiple scales that include, but are not restricted to, the nation-state (Hyndman, 2001).

Feminist geopolitics owes a significant debt to feminists in political science who have developed substantial critiques of international relations theory (Whitworth, 1994; Enloe, 1989, 2000; Pettman 1996; Peterson 1992, 1996). These authors, among others, have provided sustained and incisive critiques of international relations (IR) theory. Feminist critiques of security, for example, challenge the tacit territorial assumptions of states by asking whether states actually render their populations secure (see Peterson, 1992). Many of these analyses, however, have failed to go beyond the neo-realist narratives of international relations. That is, feminist critics and IR proponents alike are working within a singular problematic of modern geopolitics. While a few feminist critics of IR are interested in taking apart this dominant discourse (Weber, 1994), most are engaged in a more oppositional stance in relation to IR and modern geopolitics.

Critical geopolitics, however, as a sub-field of political geography aims to fill this gap. Critical geopolitics emerged in the late 1980s, and provides a useful departure point for making sense of the responses to September 11th. Critical geopolitics is a less a theory of how space and politics intersect than a taking apart of normalized categories and narratives of geopolitics. It is about questioning assumptions in a taken-for-granted world and examining the institutional modes of producing such a world vis-à-vis writing about the world, its geography and politics.

This sub-field of political geography is about suspending modernist assumptions of pre-given centres from which politics and knowledge are constructed and meaning imposed (Dalby, 1991). It analyzes the discursive practices by which scholars spatialize international politics in a single world characterized by specific groups of people, places, and stories. Within geography, “[c]ritical geopolitics is one of many cultures of resistance to Geography as imperial truth, state-capitalized knowledge, and military weapon. It is a small part of a much larger rainbow struggle to decolonize our inherited geographical imagination so that other geo-graphings and other worlds might be possible” (Ò Tuathail, 1996: 256). This struggle to create other possible worlds overlaps with the project of feminist geopolitics.

While critical geopolitics is useful for a feminist geopolitical analysis, its deconstructive impulses are to my mind insufficient to generate change for building alternative futures. Critical geopolitics decentres the nation-state and exposes the investments that our dominant geopolitical narratives embody, but it doesn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again, so to speak. Nor does it question why Humpty is always falling off the wall. We are left with well-interrogated categories, but no clear way forward in practice (Hyndman, 2001).

A feminist imaginary invokes a universe of politically possible interventions, actions, and alliances, but its subject is neither postmodern nor universal. The distinction between a universe of potential modes of engagement (my notion of feminist geopolitics) and universalist notions of what engagement should look like (in which modernity is

singular and fixed across space) is another way to get at this difference. I employ this feminist geopolitical imaginary broadly as a grid of intelligibility to analyze the military response to the attacks and the aftermath.

Michael Shapiro's (1996) critical take on international relations theory provides a useful framework for mapping cultures of war. His work distinguishes between strategic and ethnographic perspectives: strategic perspectives deepen identity attachments and formal boundaries by treating them as 'real,' whereas ethnographic approaches aim to unsettle such taken-for-granted attachments by questioning the boundary-making narratives through which they are shaped. Through ethnographic perspectives embedded identities and strategic ways of seeing conflict and its consequences can be undone. Likewise, a feminist geopolitics does not attempt to introduce new strategic perspectives for mapping war, rather it attempts to challenge the binary between those perspectives already entrenched, and ultimately dismantle it.

As Matt Sparke (2000) has argued, there are 'real-worlders' and more critical geographers who are committed to revealing the relations of power that underwrite the knowledge production of 'real-worlders'. The real-worlders are unable to question the premises on which their knowledge is enabled and limited. Critical geography, like feminist geography, is committed to exposing the investments embedded in knowledge production. A feminist geopolitics takes this deconstructive impulse one step further – back into the 'real world' so to speak – so that identities, ways of seeing, and intervention on the ground can also reconstruct alternative futures. Feminist geopolitics allow for "new ways of seeing, theorizing, and practicing the connections between space and politics and between nature and culture" (Murphy Erfani, 1998).⁵ Such politics navigate between nations and across space, cross-cutting the dominant framing of territorial sovereignty, interrogating security as a concern not only for states, but also for the people who comprise the citizenry of states. Moreover, I am concerned about the consequences of 'terror' for unsuspecting citizens on both ends of this continuum of violence.

Either/or—Neither/nor

In his televised address on September 20th, President Bush drew a clear line between the two sides in 'the war against terrorism': "if you are not with us, you are against us." On October 7th, Osama Bin Laden stated that the world is divided into two regions – one of faith and another of infidelity (Hensmen, 2001). Such binary thinking has become part of the dominant geopolitical narrative, garnering support for both sides, and leaving little space in between for those who fail to identify with either side. This narrative device relies on what Chantal Mouffe (1995) has called 'the constitutive outside.' Subject constitution and legitimacy require definition, something to define one's project *against*. Not only are such binaries logically questionable, they are also politically bankrupt, reproducing the dominant geopolitical narrative as the only political option. "President Bush's ultimatum to the people of the world – 'If you are not with us, you're against us' – is a piece of presumptuous arrogance. It's not a choice that people want to, need to, or should have to make" (Roy, 2001a). In the aftermath of the attacks on September 11th, the

⁵ Murphy Erfani argues that classical geopolitics posits a neutral mind detached from the body which observes space "objectively." Her own feminist geo-politics focus on the interstices of mind and body as an inseparable borderland location of the corporeal subject (see pp. 5-6).

existence of an antagonist and an enemy territory (i.e. Afghanistan) has been crucial to the US government's response. Evidence that fifteen of the nineteen men on the four hijacked flights that crashed were Saudi nationals, and that Al Qaeda is a transnational network with operatives in 34 countries, including Germany, the US, and Canada, has been glossed over. A target was sorely needed and quickly identified.

Feminist political sociologist Cynthia Cockburn (2000) rejects the logic of 'either/or' militarization in the context of NATO attacks on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. As forces of the Milosevic government attacked ethnic Albanians in Kosova/o, two options were presented: *either* NATO attacks the Serbs (including some civilian targets), *or* ethnic Albanians in Kosova/o will be annihilated. Cockburn contests the militarized either/or ultimatum with a logic of her own, noting that "neither/nor" was an option that received little attention (Cockburn, 2000). The same feminist logic, I contend, applies to the events and aftermath of September 11th: neither is the killing of thousands of innocent civilians in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania warranted, nor is the killing of thousands of innocent civilians in Afghanistan. The space to voice this kind of dissent has, however, been highly restricted in North America since the attacks, a point to which I will return.⁶

Few Degrees of Separation

A brief political geography of the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden's early years also breaks down the convenient shorthand of 'either/or.' Certainly, an analysis of the history of all US foreign policy and its consequences is neither possible nor appropriate here, but a brief survey of US foreign policy as it relates to the formation and activities of the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden is surely justified. Mutually exclusive spaces of 'here' and 'there' and political dyads of 'us' and 'them' allow us to see the world more clearly, but less honestly. Michel Chossudovsky (2001) attempts to unsettle the dominant geopolitical narrative that emerged after the attacks of September 11th, highlighting instead the connections between the US, the Taliban, and Osama Bin Laden. He notes that the largest covert operation in the history of the CIA was launched in 1979 in response to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. Working together with the Pakistan Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), the CIA actively encouraged political instability in Afghanistan and beyond, with the idea that Muslim states could eventually defeat the Soviet Union. Between 1982 and 1992, some 35,000 radicals from 40 Islamic countries joined Afghanistan's fight. Tens of thousands more went to study in madrassas (Koranic schools) in Pakistan, as refugees fleeing the fighting in Afghanistan (Rashid, 1999).

Pakistan's ISI was the go-between between the CIA and the Mujahadeen (which included Osama Bin Laden) in Afghanistan. The CIA's support was covert and indirect, so as not to reveal its own geopolitical investments. While the Cold War began to fade and Soviet troops withdrew in 1989, the Islamic jihad based out of Pakistan did not, and the

⁶ There are numerous examples to illustrate the policing of dissent in the North American context alone. On September 11th, while watching the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's live television coverage, I witnessed a reporter interview a US passenger who had been diverted to a Canadian airport due to the attacks. When asked his opinion on the attacks, the passenger said that the killings were tragic and that he had sympathy for the families affected, but that US foreign policy was bound to produce consequences and that this was one result. Another passenger standing beside him began hitting him with his carry-on luggage, and the camera panned away.

civil war in Afghanistan continued unabated. *Jane's Defense Weekly* (cited in Chossudovsky, 2001) reported that "half of Taliban manpower and equipment originate[d] in Pakistan under ISI." What is more disturbing is that the Clinton Administration appears to have known about links between Pakistani Intelligence (ISI) and Al Qaeda, including the former's use of Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan to train covert operatives for use in a war of terror against India. The 'evildoers', as they have been called, were once US allies. One can speak more accurately, then, about degrees of separation between the US and the Taliban, than about historic enmity, longstanding hatreds, or the absence of political ties.

Just as Cold War geopolitics connected the US with Central Asia, the Taliban, and indirectly to Osama bin Laden, tracing the geopolitics of oil interests goes some distance in explaining the United States' hands-off approach to the Taliban and its treatment of women in Afghanistan, one which parallels US treatment of Saudi Arabia, its most important oil ally. When the Taliban won control of Kabul in 1996, Washington said nothing. In December 1997, Taliban leaders met with US State Department officials in Washington and visited Houston, Texas to meet with UNOCAL oil executives (Pilger, 2001). "At that time the Taliban's taste for public executions and its treatment of Afghan women were not made out to be crimes against humanity" (Roy, 2001b). Assured access for an oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves to the Indian Ocean would decrease US reliance on Middle Eastern sources. Turkmenistan, which borders on Afghanistan, holds the world's third largest gas reserves and an estimated six billion barrels of oil reserves. The desire for political stability in this region has a subtext.

The political economy of oil, underwriting an earlier war in the Persian Gulf, combined US efforts to destabilize the USSR not so long ago, illustrate the geopolitical designs of superpower on this region. Such designs shape what we see and hear in the mainstream media. Conventional state-centred and resource-driven geopolitics promote a dominant geopolitical narrative that ensconces the 'us'/'them' binary.⁷ Such politics obfuscate minor voices and non-militarized responses to the attacks, and muffle dissent where it finds expression. After September 11th, a dominant geopolitical narrative generated all-knowing maps of meaning that have been disseminated through the mainstream media. These god's-eye cartographies of peopleless places, mostly in Afghanistan, have mobilized consent for more violence in subtle ways. They enable military manoeuvres to proceed, despite significant opposition to attacks that would harm innocent civilians.⁸

⁷ The travesties of the Gulf War should be a reminder of the opportunism and expediency with which alliances are forged. Neither Kuwait nor Iraq was a democratic country, but Kuwait's 'promise' of democracy were sufficient grounds to warrant forging an alliance for the sake of future democracy (and oil). As Dan Hiebert reminds us, "the war became about fighting for the right of a dictator to save "his" country from another dictator so eventually democracy could be introduced. Of course all those democratic reforms were quickly forgotten at the end of the war" (personal correspondence, 11 December 2001).

⁸ In Canada, a poll taken in September before the bombing began, found that 73% of Canadians (compared to 80% of Americans) favoured joining the United States in its battle against terrorism. When asked if they approved of such a response if innocent civilians were killed, the approval rate dropped to 43% (McCarthy, 2001). According to the poll, men are far more supportive of the war against terrorism than women, with some 79 per cent of men supporting a war on terrorism compared to 68% of women.

Such maps construct particular sightlines that enable one to see 'enemy' positions and movements via remotely-sensed satellite data, but omit images of the Afghan civilians killed by the American and British attacks. Acts of omission are as much acts of commission in this context, and more accountable maps are in short supply. Matt Sparke (2001) has asked what other maps we might draw: "maps that might trace where bin Laden's financial support has come from over the years; maps that might show how he has been 'harbored' by other states that the US would be much less inclined to bomb; and, maps that show how the dead terrorists themselves were once 'harbored' in states across America itself." Maps that forge links and recognize extant networks among political actors resist 'either/or' reasoning and have the potential to enhance their accountability.

Embodied Vision and Visible Bodies

Despite the valuable interventions of critical geopolitics, one of its shortcomings is the highly disembodied mode of its critique (Sparke, 2000; Sharpe, 2000). In contrast, embodied vision is ontologically committed and admittedly partial in perspective. Such commitments do have the potential to subvert prevailing ways of understanding 'the problem', actions that might have concrete effects on the lives of people who are players in such events. A feminist geopolitics demands revisiting the horrific violence of September 11th and its aftermath, especially the casualties. The visibility, or lack thereof, of civilian deaths contributes to a geopolitics of body counts.

Since September 11th I have read the short, often moving, biographies of hundreds of the people killed, in *The New York Times*. Until the spring of 2002, an updated body count of the people lost in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and on the flights that never arrived at their destination was published every Sunday.⁹ As an audience, the human face of these horrific acts of violence in the US was everywhere apparent. It took a long time, however, before the same paper began to publish photos of civilians who had lost family members to the bombings in Afghanistan, and to cover controversial statistics about how many civilians had been killed in that country by US military planes equipped with smart and not-so-smart bombs (Bearak, 2002). The audible silence around the equally preposterous deaths of a people already ravaged by war and, in many regions, starvation was remarkable.

On January 3rd, 2002, a Canadian newspaper ran the headline, "Thousands of Afghans likely killed in bombings" (Campbell, 2002a), more than a month before *The New York Times* covered the same story. This first article cites an estimate by Dr. Marc Herod, a New Hampshire economics professor, that 4,050 ordinary Afghans had been killed to date based on media reports, some of which were unverified. Two weeks later a similar story by the same reporter ran under the headline, "Afghanistan civilian toll notably high: Death rate four times higher than it was in bombing of Kosovo, Serbia, study says" (Campbell, 2002b). This report hints at the debate around the number of Afghan civilians killed, citing the estimate of 1,000-1,300 by Project on Defense Alternatives in

⁹ In *The New York Times* on February 24, 2002, for example, "[o]fficials estimate that as of Friday, 3,062 people had died, or were missing and presumed dead, as a result of the attacks on Sept. 11, not including 19 hijackers."

Cambridge, Massachusetts compared to the significantly higher figure cited by Dr. Herod. Both figures and sources are cited in the February 10th article that appeared in *The New York Times*. An excerpt from this piece is worth citing at length:

Scrutiny has grown since a pre-dawn raid on Jan. 24, when U.S. commandos killed at least 21 men presumed to be Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. *Officials in the interim Afghan government* have since joined grieving survivors in calling the attack a tragic mistake, with some surmising the Americans were duped with false information by a scheming warlord....

Most often, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and military spokesmen have dismissed accusations of mistakes as enemy propaganda. They express confidence in their targeting and regret any "collateral damage." They maintain that extraordinary efforts have been taken to minimize civilian losses, something that even most critics of the war effort would not dispute.

Nevertheless, certainly hundreds and perhaps thousands of innocent Afghans have lost their lives during American attacks, a scattering of bodies extraordinarily difficult to tabulate.

Many mournful Afghan families demand a reckoning.

"Tell me why our homes were destroyed and 55 people – even little children – are dead?" (Bearak, 2002; emphasis added).

The article goes on to say that an Air Force assessment team has reviewed several "scores" of reports and acknowledged a handful of bomb malfunctions that led to unintended casualties. It would seem that the installation of the interim government in Afghanistan may have had a role in publicizing these fatal incidents.

Reports of civilian deaths in Afghanistan took time to filter back to the US mainstream media, but once they did, an alarmingly visible landscape of death and destruction emerged. Bearak (2002) chronicles attacks on five towns and villages, 'mysteries' that remain unresolved in which large numbers of civilians were killed. With information from other reporters, his article discusses the questionable use of cluster bombs, some of which fail to detonate on contact and are littered 'live' around the countryside of Afghanistan.¹⁰ While the tragedies at both of ends of this violence are not disproportionate, in terms of lives lost, the patriotic values placed on them (or not) vary tremendously. Body counts provide a reality check: violence kills civilians and is unwarranted wherever it occurs. Yet where is the space beyond retribution and the 'either/or' logic of militarization?

As Neil Smith (2002: 635) has argued, the "need to nationalize September 11 arose from the need to justify war." Smith argues that the World Trade Center catastrophe was a profoundly local and also global event, yet it was produced as a *national* tragedy. This politically strategic rescaling of September 11th serves at once to limit public and media

¹⁰ He also notes that approximately 60% of the 18,000 bombs, missiles and other ordnance used between October 7, 2001 and February 10, 2002 were precision-guided, as compared to fewer than 10% during the Gulf War.

expression that questions government tactics of combating terrorism and forces citizens to see these tactics as a matter of *national* interest and security.

The Privatization of Women in Public War

Women inside Afghanistan have been virtually invisible since the bombings began on October 7th. Of course, Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001 ensured that unaccompanied women were not found in public space. As I wrote the first draft of this paper late in November 2001, media images of men in Afghanistan outnumber those of women by at least 100 to one. Despite the ‘fall of Kabul’ to the Northern Alliance on November 13th, the spectacle of celebrations has shown mostly men and boys celebrating on the streets. The odd well-placed woman can be seen, uncovering her face (for example, on the cover of *The Globe and Mail*, November 14th) or returning to paid work (for example, on the cover of *The National Post*, November 14th), but both represent highly charged notions of ‘progress’ published in Western, in this case Canadian, media. It was not until Northern Alliance forces captured Kabul on November 13th, 2001 that the Western media ‘celebrated’ women with uncovered faces walking on the street and returning to jobs outside the home. Neither was the emancipation of Afghan women a political objective until this apparent military victory. Nor is the emancipation of Saudi women a political objective at this time. Promoting the greater civility and promise of the Northern Alliance over the Taliban has been conducted with such enthusiasm that one cannot help but be skeptical. As noted by Kathy Gannon (2001), the Northern Alliance has no better record in its treatment of women than does the Taliban.

Without conclusion

The war on terrorism continues. In this context, feminist geopolitics represents a third space, beyond the binaries of either/or, here/there, us/ them. As an ethnographic, rather than a strategic, perspective it does not promote an oppositional stance in relation to particular political principles or acts. Rather, as an analytic, it attempts to map the silences of the dominant geopolitical position[s] and undo these by invoking multiple scales of inquiry and knowledge production. Scrutinizing the prevailing nation-state-centred discourse of the war on terrorism is critical in recognizing the international and global dimensions of the terror perpetrated on September 11 and in seeing the terror invoked on Afghan civilians, in the name of justice.

In February 2002, Daniel Pearl, a Wall Street Journal reporter was abducted then killed in Pakistan. His tragic death was no doubt fuel for the fire in the war on terrorism, but the words of his wife upon his death are instructive:

Revenge would be easy, but it is far more valuable in my opinion to address this problem of terrorism with enough honesty to question our own responsibility as nations and as individuals for the rise of terrorism....

[I hope] I will be able to tell our son that his father carried the flag to end terrorism, raising an unprecedented demand among people from all countries not for revenge but for the values we all share: love, compassion, friendship and citizenship, far transcending the so-called clash of civilizations (*The Globe and Mail*, 2002).

While the language of patriotism is clear in Ms. Pearl's commentary, her dismissal of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis makes it clear that her husband's death should not become a justification for more violence, couched in the language of national security.

Dominant geopolitical narratives shape what we see and hear in profound ways. However, islands of opposition to the state-sponsored attacks on Afghanistan generate snippets of hope that dissident voices have not been silenced. On September 15th, the House of Representatives voted on a resolution permitting the President to use "all necessary force against those nations, organization or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks" (Ibbitson, 2001). Defying unprecedented unity in Congress, all but one member voted for this resolution. The sole voice of dissent was lodged by Barbara Lee, congresswoman for the district of Berkeley and Oakland. She has since received numerous death threats and hate mail. Her dissent does not mean that women are categorically more peace-oriented than men. Many other US congresswomen supported the resolution. Rather her position has to do with a confluence between her politics and the geography of the district she represents. Berkeley City Council was the first municipal government in the US to pass a resolution criticizing the military campaign against Afghanistan. Its history of peace marches and anti-war activism are well-known. Lee has taken a courageous stand in a climate of patriotism that has been intolerant of criticism against the US government.¹¹ Her stance has been applauded by feminists from countries whose experience of terrorism span decades for her ability to connect terrorism in the US with terrorism elsewhere (Cat's Eye, 2001). There are few degrees of separation between here and there, us and them, either/or. A feminist geopolitics aims to trace the connections between geographical and political locations, exposing investments in the dominant geopolitical rhetoric, in the pursuit of a more accountable and embodied geopolitics that contests the wisdom of violence targeted at innocent civilians, wherever they may be.

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¹¹ In the US, the geopolitical heartland of freespeech, President Bush employed a media strategy just after the bombing began that dissuaded American television news organizations from broadcasting pretaped statements from Osama bin Laden, arguing that he may be using television news to deliver coded messages to his supporters (Stanley, 2001).

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